

If we're troubled by anger and it urges us to consider an injury and to return with interest the damage that someone has inflicted on us, then we should think upon the words of the Lord, Who said: "For unless you forgive people their trespasses, Your Father will not forgive you yours." (Matt. 6, 15)

It follows, therefore, that people who want their sins to be forgiven are obliged first and foremost to forgive others with all their heart.

Because this is how God has taught us to seek forgiveness for our own transgressions. And if we don't forgive, it's obvious that our sins won't be forgiven.

... This is why we should never become angry, nor do any harm to our fellow human beings, not only with words and deeds, but even by changing the way we look at them. Because we can disdain others merely by a look, according to the Fathers.

The perfect victory over thoughts of anger is to pray for the person who has provoked them, as Abba Dorotheos advises when he says: "God, help my brother, and through his prayers have mercy upon me, sinner that I am. Because to pray for other people means love and affection, and to ask for their prayers means humility."

Saint Nil Sorsky

**Sunday 2 March 2014 is
Forgiveness Sunday**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

Kontakion:

O Master, Guide to wisdom, Giver of prudent counsel, Instructor of the foolish and Champion of the poor, make firm my heart and give it understanding. Word of the Father, give me a word. For see, I shall not stop my lips from crying out to you: In your mercy have mercy on me who am fallen.

**If you would like to receive
Evangelion by email, you can
email evangelion@goarch.co.za
and put "Subscribe" in the
heading.**

**Back issues are
available online at
[http://www.goarch.co.za/
media/evangelion](http://www.goarch.co.za/media/evangelion)**

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Isaiah 1:1-20; Genesis 1:1-13; Proverbs 1:1-20
Martyrs Eutropius, Cleonicus and Basiliscus; Theodoretos the Holy Martyr of Antioch

Tuesday: Isaiah 1:19-2:3; Genesis 1:14-23; Proverbs 1:20-33
Gerasimus of the Jordan; Martyrs Paul and Julianna

Wednesday: Isaiah 2:3-11; Genesis 1:24-2:3; Proverbs 2:1-22
Conon the Gardener; Mark the Ascetic

Thursday: Isaiah 2:11-21; Genesis 2:4-19; Proverbs 3:1-18
42 Martyrs of Amorion; Finding the Precious Cross by St. Helen

Friday: Isaiah 3:1-14; Genesis 2:20-3:20; Proverbs 3:19-34
7 Hieromartyrs of Cherson; Lavrentios of Megara

Saturday: 2 Timothy 2:1-10; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-5
Theophylact, Bp. of Nicomedia; Hermas the Apostle of the 70



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

2 March 2014

Forgiveness Sunday

Today is the final Sunday before the beginning of Great Lent, the time of grace in which the Church challenges us to return to God in fasting and repentance. And on this threshold of Lent we hear Jesus Christ's somewhat frightening words on the importance of forgiveness. He tells us that if we forgive others then God will forgive us, but if we do not forgive others then we will not be forgiven.

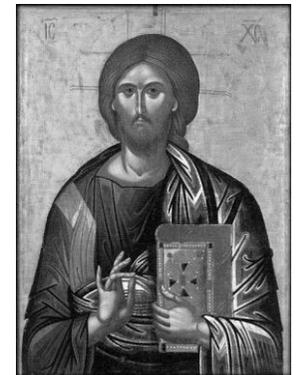
Fasting is common to many religions and some even keep stricter fasts than Christians do. The point of fasting for Christians is not the accumulation of our own ascetical efforts, but rather the softening of our hardened hearts so that we may be transformed into people who truly love God and our neighbours.

The Church therefore begins the fasting period by encouraging us to ask forgiveness of our brothers and sisters, and we are likewise called to forgive those who have offended and hurt us. This is no small task, especially in cases where we have been deeply hurt, or where the person concerned does not acknowledge what they have done or ask for forgiveness. Yet Jesus Christ nevertheless sees forgiveness as belonging to the very heart of the Gospel.

Moreover, it is not enough to simply say that we forgive people and to continue to hold grudges against them. Rather, we are called to "lay aside all memories of evil" so that the forgiveness that we offer with our lips may also take root in our hearts and may transform our relationships with those around us. This is something that we cannot do on our own. We need God's help. And it is only as we begin to see that we too are sinners who need God's mercy that we will be able to find the wellsprings of compassion within us that will enable us to forgive others from the heart.

Let us all make haste to humble the flesh by abstinence, as we set out upon the God-given course of the holy Fast; and with prayers and tears let us seek our Lord and Saviour. Laying aside all memories of evil, let us cry aloud: We have sinned against Thee, Christ our King; save us as the men of Nineveh in days of old, and in Thy compassion make us sharers in Thy heavenly Kingdom.

From Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday



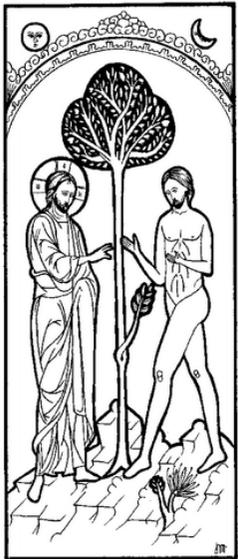
Adam's Lament

Today is not only Forgiveness Sunday, but is also known as "The casting out of Adam from Paradise." On the eve of Great Lent, the Church calls us to identify with Adam and Eve, whose sin caused them to be cast out of Paradise. Like Adam and Eve, we are in a state of exile. Like them, we were created in God's Image and Likeness, yet that Image in us has become corrupted through our enslavement to sin. Yet we also know that Jesus Christ has opened up the way for us to return to Paradise. Lent, and the way of repentance that it offers, is the gate through which we can return to God. It looks towards the great events of Pascha in which Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, took all of our human reality on Himself, destroying the power of death. Adam represents all of humanity who long for liberation in Christ, the New Adam. Saint Silouan the Athonite writes:

Adam, father of all mankind, in paradise knew the sweetness of the love of God; and so when for his sin he was driven forth from the garden of Eden, and was widowed of the love of God, he suffered grievously and lamented with a great moan. And the whole desert rang with his lamentations, for his soul was racked as he thought, 'I have distressed my beloved God'. He sorrowed less after paradise and the beauty thereof; for he sorrowed that he was bereft of the love of God, which insatiably, at every instant, draws the soul to Him.

In the same way the soul which has known God through the Holy Spirit, but has afterwards lost grace experiences the torment that Adam suffered. There is an aching and a deep regret in the soul that has grieved the beloved Lord.

Adam pined on earth, and wept bitterly, and the earth was not pleasing to him. He was heartsick for God, and this was his cry:



My soul wearies for the Lord,
and I seek Him in tears.
How should I not seek Him?
When I was with Him my soul was glad and at rest,
and the enemy could not come nigh me;
But now the spirit of evil has gained power over me,
harassing and oppressing my soul,
So that I weary for the Lord even unto death,
And my spirit strains to God,
and there is naught on earth can make me glad,
Nor can my soul take comfort in any thing,
but longs once more to see the Lord,
that her hunger may be appeased.

I cannot forget Him for a single moment,
and my soul languishes after Him,
and from the multitude of my afflictions I lift up my voice and cry:
'Have mercy upon me, O God. Have mercy on Thy fallen creature.'

Church Services during Lent

If one looks at the calendar of most Orthodox parishes, one soon sees that Great Lent is a very special time in the Christian year. This is a time when the Church encourages us to make a greater spiritual effort. Let us look briefly at some of these Lenten services.



Forgiveness Vespers

This service this afternoon marks the real beginning of Lent. It begins joyfully, but with the evening Prokeimenon the tone changes: "Turn not away Thy face from Thy servant for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily. Attend to my soul and deliver it." After this is sung five times, the bright vestments are set aside, the choir responds in a different "key," and the Prayer of St Ephrem is said, accompanied by prostrations. The service ends with all present asking forgiveness of one another.

Great Compline

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday Great Compline is often prayed in the evening. Ordinary Compline is a fairly short service that forms part of the Church's daily cycle of prayers. However, in Lent it is replaced by Great Compline which is a fairly long service of psalms and hymns that teach us the real meaning of this season.

The Canon of St Andrew of Crete

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of the first week of Lent, the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete is chanted, together with Great Compline, with a different section being read each evening. The Canon is a long hymn that was written in the seventh century and that focuses on repentance. It takes the form of a dialogue between a penitent and his own soul. It offers a richly biblical meditation on the theme of repentance and forgiveness, providing many examples from the Scriptures which we are called to identify with as we repeat: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me."

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

We do not normally celebrate the Liturgy during the week in Lent. However, on Wednesdays and Fridays there may be a Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. This is not a Eucharistic Liturgy in the full sense, but a Liturgy in which the priest distributes Holy Communion from the Gifts that have been consecrated at a previous Liturgy. The service for this Liturgy is combined with Vespers and so should strictly speaking be held in the evening although it is often anticipated in the morning.

The Akathist to the Holy Theotokos

This is a profound devotional poem of praise to the Holy Mother of God that was composed by St Romanus the Melodist in the sixth century. It is usually recited or sung on Friday afternoons or evenings during Lent. It is divided into four parts, with each of these parts being used for each of the first four Fridays of Lent. They are then all repeated on the fifth Friday.

The Liturgy of St Basil the Great

On Sundays during Lent the Liturgy of St Basil the Great is used. This is somewhat longer than the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom that is used for most of the rest of the year, although it is really only the priest's prayers that are noticeably different.