



Forgiveness Sunday Liturgy & Vespers

Divine Liturgy Propers

Kontakion, Triodion - Tone 6

O Master, Teacher of Wisdom,
Bestower of virtue,
who teaches the thoughtless and protects the poor:
strengthen and enlighten my heart.

O Word of the Father,
let me not restrain my mouth from crying to Thee: //
Have mercy on me, a transgressor, O Merciful Lord.

The Prokeimenon - Tone 8

Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God! *(Ps 75 [76]: 11)*

verse: In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel! *(Ps 75 [76]: 1)*

The Epistle

§112: Romans 13: 11 - 14: 4 (Sunday of Forgiveness)

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans.

BRETHREN, now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.
The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.
Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness,
not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and envy.

Rather, let us clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ;

and in fulfilling the needs of the flesh, transform them not into lust.

Receive him that is weak in the faith not disputing over opinions.

For one believes he may eat all things, but another, who is weak, eats only herbs.

Let not him that eats despise him that eats not, and let not him that eats not, pass

judgment on him that eats; for God hath received him.

Who art thou to judge another man's servant?

It is before his own master that he stands or he falls.

Yea, he shall be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

The Alleluia - Tone 6

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

verse: It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High.
(*Sunday*) (Ps 91 (92): 1)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

verse: to declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night. (Ps 91 (92): 2)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Gospel

§17: Matthew 6: 14 - 21 (*Sunday of Forgiveness*)

THE LORD SAID: if ye forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses,
neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶ Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance:
for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.
Amen I say unto you, They have their reward.

¹⁷ But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

¹⁸ That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret:
and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,
and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! (*Sunday*) (Ps 148: 1)

Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday

Priest: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen.

[If not served after Liturgy or the Ninth Hour, O Heavenly King ... Holy God ... Our Father ... and exclamation, Lord have mercy. 12 times, Glory Now and ever ... and:]

Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ,
our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself,
our King and our God!

Psalm 103 [104]

Reader: Bless the Lord, O my soul!

O Lord my God, Thou art very great!

Thou art clothed with honor and majesty,
who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment,
who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent,
who hast laid the beams of Thy chambers on the waters,
who makest the clouds Thy chariot,
who ridest on the wings of the wind,
who makest Thine angels spirits,
and Thy ministers a flame of fire.

Thou didst set the earth on its foundations,
so that it should never be shaken.

Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.

At Thy rebuke they fled;

at the sound of Thy thunder they took to flight.

The mountains rose, the valleys sank down
to the place which Thou didst appoint for them.

Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.

Thou makest springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,

they give drink to every beast of the field;
the wild asses quench their thirst.

By them the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.

From Thy lofty abode Thou waterest the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy work.
Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the heart of man,
oil to make his face shine,
and bread to strengthen man's heart.
The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.
In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has her home in the fir trees.
The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the badgers.
Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
Thou makest darkness, and it is night,
when all the beasts of the forest creep forth.
The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
When the sun rises, they get them away
and lie down in their dens.
Man goes forth to his work
and to his labor until the evening.
O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all!
The earth is full of Thy creatures.
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with things innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
and Leviathan which Thou didst form to sport in it.
These all look to Thee,
to give them their food in due season.
When Thou givest to them, they gather it up;
when Thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things.
When Thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed;
when Thou takest away their breath,
they die and return to their dust.

When thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created;
 and Thou renewest the face of the ground.
 May the glory of the Lord endure for ever,
 may the Lord rejoice in his works,
 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
 who touches the mountains and they smoke!
 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
 I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
 for I rejoice in the Lord.
 Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
 and let the wicked be no more!
 Bless the Lord, O my soul!
 The sun knows its time for setting.
 Thou makest darkness, and it is night,
 O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
 In wisdom hast Thou made them all!
 Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
 now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God.
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God.
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God.

The Great Litany

At the conclusion of the Introductory Psalm, the deacon says the litany:

Deacon: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: **Lord, have mercy.**

Deacon: For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: **Lord, have mercy.**

Deacon: For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: **Lord, have mercy.**

Deacon: For this holy house and for those who enter it with faith, reverence, and the fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: **Lord, have mercy.**

Deacon: For our Metropolitan the Most Blessed Tikhon, for our Archbishop, the Most Reverend Benjamin, for the honorable presbytery, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: **Lord, have mercy.**

Deacon: For this country, its President, civil authorities, armed forces, and people, let

us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this city (*or* village, *or* holy habitation), for every city and countryside, and for the faithful dwelling in them, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For seasonable weather, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For travelers by land, by sea, and by air; for the sick and the suffering; for captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To thee, O Lord.

Priest, exclamation: For unto Thee are due all glory, honor, and worship; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

We sing "Lord, I Call ..." in the Tone of the week, with 10 stikhera, four penitential stikhera in the tone of the week, three from the Triodion for the Sunday, and three from the Menaion for the saint of the day.

"Lord I Call ..."

Psalm 140 [141]

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me.

Hear me, O Lord!

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me.

**Receive the voice of my prayer,
when I call upon Thee! //**

Hear me, O Lord.

**Let my prayer arise
in Thy sight as incense,
and let the lifting up of my hands
be an evening sacrifice! //**
Hear me, O Lord.

Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord,
keep watch over the door of my lips!
Incline not my heart to any evil,
to busy myself with wicked deeds
in company with men who work iniquity;
and let me not join their chosen ones.
Let a good man strike or rebuke me in kindness,
but let the oil of the wicked never anoint my head;
for my prayer is continually against their evil deeds.
When they are given over to those who shall condemn them,
my words will be heard then
As a rock which one cleaves and shatters on the land,
so shall their bones be strewn at the mouth of Sheol.
But my eyes are toward Thee, O Lord; Lord in thee I seek refuge;
take not my soul away
Keep me from the trap which they have laid for me,
and from the snares of evildoers!
Let the wicked together fall into their own nets,
let me alone pass through.

Psalm 141 [142]

I cry with my voice to the Lord,
with my voice I make supplication to the Lord,
I pour out my complaint before him,
I proclaim my sadness before him.
When my spirit departs from me,
Thou knowest my way!
In the path where I walk
they have hidden a trap for me.
I look to the right and watch,
but there is none who knows me;
no refuge remains to me,
no man cares for my soul.
I cry to thee, O Lord;
I say, Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.
Give heed to my cry;
for I am brought very low!
Deliver me from my persecutors;
for they are too strong for me!

INSERT FOUR STIKHERA IN THE TONE OF THE WEEK

*Tone 1 – pg 8. Tone 2 – pg 9. Tone 3 – pg 10. Tone 4 – pg 11. Tone 5 – pg 12.
Tone 6 – pg 13. Tone 7 – pg 14. Tone 8 – pg 15.*

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone One

x

***verse:* Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 1

The multitude of my transgressions is like the deep waters of the sea,
and I drown in my iniquities.

Give me Thy hand, O God my Savior:
save me as Thou hast saved Peter, //
and have mercy on me.¹

***verse:* The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

Because of all my wicked thoughts and deeds I stand condemned:

put into my heart, O God my Savior,
the thought of turning back to Thee,
that I may cry: //

Save me, loving Benefactor, and have mercy on me.

viii

***verse:* Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Another world awaits thee, O my soul,
and the Judge will there reveal all thy secret sins.

Tarry not among the things of this life,
but run quickly to the Judge and cry before it is too late: //
God be merciful to me and save me.

***verse:* Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

Reject me not, my Savior,
though I am held fast by the slothfulness of sin.

But rouse my thoughts to repentance,
and make me a tried laborer in Thy vineyard;
grant me the reward of the eleventh hour, //
and show me Thy great mercy.²

Continue on page 16.

1 Matt. 14: 30 – 31.

2 Matt. 20: 9.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Two

x

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 2

Like the Prodigal Son,
I have sinned against Thee, O Savior.
Receive me as I repent, O Father, //
and have mercy upon me, O God.³

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

With the voice of the Publican
I cry unto Thee, O Christ my Savior.
Take pity on me as Thou hast on him, //
and have mercy upon me, O God.⁴

viii

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

When I think upon the wicked things that I have done,
I flee for refuge to Thy tender mercy,
like the Publican, and the Harlot with her tears, and the Prodigal Son.
Therefore I fall down before Thee, merciful Lord.
Condemn me not, O God, //
but spare me and have mercy upon me.⁵

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

Turn Thine eyes from my transgressions,
O Lord born of the Virgin,
and cleanse my heart, making it a temple of Thy Holy Spirit.
Cast me not away from before Thy face, //
for measureless is Thy great mercy.

Continue on page 16.

3 Luke 15: 11 - 32.

4 Luke 18: 13.

5 Luke 18: 13; 7: 37 - 39; 15: 11 - 32.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Three

X

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 3

With incense and with spiritual songs,
we offer unto Thee, O Christ, our evening hymn. //
Have mercy upon our souls, O Savior

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

Save me, O Lord my God,
for Thou art the salvation of all.
The billows of my passions sorely trouble me,
and the burden of my transgressions drags me down.
Stretch out Thine hand in help
and lead me up to the light of compunction, //
for Thou only art compassionate and lovest mankind.

VIII

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Gather together my scattered mind, O Lord,
and purify my dry and barren heart,
giving me like Peter repentance,
like the Publican sighs of sorrow, and like the Harlot tears,
that I may cry with a loud voice unto Thee: //
Save me, O God, for Thou only art compassionate and lovest mankind.⁶

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

Often when I offer praise to God,
I am found to be committing sin;
for while I sing the hymns with my tongue,
in my soul I ponder evil thoughts.
But through repentance, Christ my God,
set right my tongue and soul, //
and have mercy upon me.

Continue on page 16.

⁶ Matt. 26: 75; Luke 18: 13; 7: 37 – 39.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Four

X

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 4

I want to wash away with tears
the record of my sins, O Lord,
and through the rest of my life to please Thee by repentance;
but the enemy deceives me and fights against my soul. //
Before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord.⁷

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

If a man takes refuge from the tempest in this harbor,
will he not be saved?
If in his agony he kneels before this house of healing,
will he not be cured?
O Maker of all and Physician of the sick, //
before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord.

VIII

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Wash me with my tears, O Savior,
for I am defiled by many sins.
Therefore I fall down before Thee: //
I have sinned, have mercy upon me, O God.

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

I am a sheep of Thy spiritual flock,
and to Thee I flee for refuge, O Good Shepherd.
I have gone astray, O God: //
seek me and have mercy upon me.⁸

Continue on page 16.

⁷ Col. 2: 14.

⁸ John 10: 11; Ps. 118: 176; Matt. 18: 12.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Five

X

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 5

I cease not from sin, O Lord,
nor do I perceive the love Thou showest me.
Vanquish my blindness, for Thou alone art good, //
and have mercy upon me.

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

O Lord, from fear of Thee I tremble,
yet I cease not from doing evil.
When called to trial, who does not fear the judge?
What man, desiring to be healed, angers the physician, as I do?
Take pity on my weakness, O forbearing Lord, //
and have mercy upon me.

VIII

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Woe is me, for I am like the barren fig tree,
and I fear that I also shall be cursed and cut down.
But, heavenly Husbandman, Christ my God,
make my dry and barren soul bear fruit. //
Receive me as the Prodigal Son, and have mercy on me.⁹

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

O Lord born of the Virgin,
pass over my manifold transgressions and wipe out all my sins.
Grant me the firm intent to turn back unto Thee,
for Thou alone lovest mankind, //
and have mercy on me.

Continue on page 16.

⁹ Matt. 21: 19; John 15: 1 – 6; Luke 15: 11 – 32.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Six

X

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 6

I have no repentance and no tears.
Therefore I entreat Thee, Savior:
before the end comes cause me to turn back
and grant me compunction, //
that I may be delivered from torment.

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

At Thy fearful Coming, O Christ,
may we not hear the words: 'I know you not.'
For we have put our trust in Thee, O Savior,
though in our negligence we keep not Thy commandments; //
yet we entreat Thee, spare our souls.¹⁰

VIII

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Heal the wounds of my heart,
inflicted on me through my many sins,
O Savior and Physician of our souls and bodies;
for Thou dost always grant forgiveness of transgressions unto those that ask.
Give me tears of repentance and remission of my debts, O Lord, //
and have mercy on me.

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

Finding me naked, stripped of virtues,
the enemy wounded me with the arrow of sin;
but, O God, Physician of our souls and bodies,
heal the wounds of my soul //
and have mercy on me.

Continue on page 16.

¹⁰ Matt. 25: 12.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Seven

X

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 7

As the Prodigal Son, I also come to Thee, O compassionate Lord,
and I fall down before Thee. //

Accept me as one of Thy hired servants, and have mercy on me.¹¹

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

As the man who fell among thieves and was wounded,
I too have fallen through my sins and my soul is wounded.
To whom shall I flee for refuge, guilty that I am,
if not to Thee, the merciful Physician of our souls? //

Pour on me, O God, the oil of Thy great mercy.¹²

VIII

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Sinner though I be, O Savior,
cut me not down as the barren fig tree.
Grant me forgiveness for my many years of sin,
and water my soul with tears of repentance,
that as fruit I may offer Thee acts of mercy and compassion.¹³

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

Thou art the Sun of righteousness;
illumine the hearts of those who praise Thee, singing: //

Glory be to Thee, O Lord.¹⁴

Continue on page 16.

11 Luke 15: 18 - 21.

12 Luke 10: 30 - 34.

13 Matt. 21: 19.

14 Mal. 4: 2.

Sundays of Great Lent in Tone Eight

X

verse: **Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name!**

from the Triodion, Stikhera of Repentance

Tone 8

The angels praise Thee without ceasing,
O King and Master,
and I fall before Thee crying like the Publican: //
God be merciful to me and save me.¹⁵

verse: **The righteous will surround me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.**

Since thou art immortal, O my soul,
be not overwhelmed by the waves of this life;
but return to soberness and cry to Thy Benefactor: //
God be merciful to me and save me.

VIII

verse: **Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!**

Give me tears, O God,
as once Thou gavest them to the woman that had sinned,
and count me worthy to wash Thy feet that have delivered me from the way of error.
As sweet-smelling ointment let me offer Thee a pure life,
created in me by repentance;
and may I also hear those words for which I long: //
'Thy faith has saved thee, go in peace.'¹⁶

verse: **Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.**

When I call to mind the many evils I have done,
and I think upon the fearful day of judgement,
seized with trembling I flee to Thee for refuge,
O God who lovest mankind.
Turn not away from me,
I beseech Thee, who alone art free from sin;
but before the end comes grant compunction to my humbled soul //
and save me.

Continue on page 16.

¹⁵ Luke 18: 13.

¹⁶ Luke 7: 37 – 39, 50.

Then 3 Stikhera for this Sunday evening:

VI

verse: **If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with Thee.**

for Cheese-fare Sunday Evening, from the Triodion, by Joseph

Tone 2: Podoben: *“Joseph of Arimethea took Thee down from the Tree...”*

Let us humble the flesh by abstinence.

As we follow the divine path of pure fasting.

With prayers and tears let us seek the Lord who saves us.

Let us put an end to anger, crying out:

Save us who have sinned against Thee!

Save us, O Christ our King, as Thou didst save the men of Ninevah, //

And make us partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom, O compassionate One!

verse: **For Thy name’s sake I have waited for Thee, O Lord, my soul has waited for
Thy word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.**

When I think of my deeds, O Lord,

I am filled with despair,

and know that I am worthy of every torment.

I have despised Thy commandments, O Savior.

I have spent my life as a prodigal.

I pray to Thee, O only merciful One:

“Cleanse me by repentance,

enlighten me through prayers and fasting, //

and despise me not, most gracious Benefactor of all!”

IV

verse: **From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch,
let Israel hope on the Lord!**

for Cheese-fare Sunday Evening, from the Triodion, by Theodore

Tone 2

Let us begin the fast with joy!

Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts!

Let us cleanse our soul and cleanse our flesh!

Let us abstain from every passion as we abstain from food!

Let us rejoice in virtues of the spirit and fulfill them in love!

That we all may see the passion of Christ our God, //

And rejoice in spirit at the holy Pascha!

Then, 3 Stikhera from the Menaion for the Saint of the day: (May be read).

verse: **For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.**

Stikheron from the Menaion

II

verse: **Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!**

Stikheron from the Menaion

verse: **For His mercy is confirmed on us; and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.**

Stikheron from the Menaion

verse: **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**

Stikheron from the Menaion (if appointed)

verse: **now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

And then the theotokion in the same tone from the Menaion

Gladsome Light

Deacon: Wisdom. Stand upright.

Choir: **O Gladsome Light**

**of the holy glory of the immortal Father -
heavenly, holy blessed Jesus Christ!**

**Now that we have come to the setting of the sun
and behold the light of evening,
we praise God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**For meet it is at all times to worship Thee with voices of praise,
O Son of God and Giver of Life. Therefore, all the world doth glorify Thee!**

Deacon: Let us attend.

Priest: Peace be unto to all.

Great Prokeimenon

Deacon: Wisdom. The Prokeimenon in the EighthTone:

Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted. Hear me speedily.
Draw near unto my soul and deliver it! *Ps 68 [69]: 17, 18a*

Choir: **Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted. Hear me speedily.
Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!**

Deacon: Thy salvation, O God, hath upheld me. *Ps 68 [69]: 29b*

Choir: **Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted. Hear me speedily.
Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!**

Deacon: Let the poor see and be glad. *Ps 68 [69]: 32a*

Choir: **Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted. Hear me speedily.
Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!**

Deacon: Seek ye God, and your soul shall live. *Ps 68 [69]: 32b*

Choir: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted. Hear me speedily.
Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Deacon: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted.

Choir: Hear me speedily. Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Then "Vouchsafe, O Lord ..." is read slowly, to allow time for the vestments and hangings to be changed.

Vouchsafe, O Lord

Immediately after the Prokeimenon, the Reader reads the prayer "Vouchsafe, O Lord..."
VERY SLOWLY

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers,
and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. Amen.

Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord,
even as we have set our hope on Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes.

Blessed art Thou, O Master; make me to understand Thy statutes.

Blessed art Thou, O Holy One; enlighten me with Thy statutes.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever:
despise not the works of Thy hands.

To Thee belongeth worship, to Thee belongeth praise, to Thee belongeth glory,
to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Litany of Supplication for Evening.

Priest: Let us complete our evening prayer unto the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: That the whole evening may be perfect, holy, peaceful, and sinless, let us ask
of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Priest: An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us
ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Priest: Pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Priest: All things that are good and profitable for our souls, and peace for the world,
let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: **Grant this, O Lord.**

Priest: That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: **Grant this, O Lord.**

Priest: A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless and peaceful; and a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us ask.

Choir: **Grant this, O Lord.**

Priest: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: **To thee, O Lord.**

Priest, exclamation: For thou art a good God and lovest mankind, and unto thee do we send up glory: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: **Amen.**

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: **And to thy spirit.**

Priest: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

Choir: **To thee, O Lord.**

And the priest, with uncovered head:

O LORD our God, who didst bow the heavens and come down for the salvation of mankind: Look upon thy servants and thine inheritance, for unto thee, the fearful Judge who yet lovest mankind, have thy servants bowed their heads and submissively inclined their necks, awaiting not help from men but entreating thy mercy and looking confidently for thy salvation. Guard them at all times, both during this present evening and in the approaching night, from every foe, from all adverse powers of the devil and from vain thoughts and from evil imaginations.

Priest, exclamation: Blessed and glorified be the might of thy kingdom: of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: **Amen.** *And we sing the Apostikha from the Triodion:*

The Apostikha

Idiomelon for Cheese-fare Sunday Evening, from the Triodion, by Joseph

Tone 2

Thy grace has shown forth, O Lord,
the grace which illumines our soul.

This is the acceptable time!

This is the time of repentance!

Let us lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light,
that passing through the fast as through a great sea
we may reach the resurrection on the third day //
of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.

verse: **To Thee I lift up my eyes, O Thou Who art enthroned in the heavens!
Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maid to the hands of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
till he have mercy on us. *Psalm 122 (123): 1 - 2***

We repeat the Idiomelon: Thy grace has shown forth, ...

verse: **Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us,
for we have had more than enough of contempt.
Too long our soul has been sated with the scorn of those who are at ease,
the contempt of the proud. *Psalm 122 (123): 3 - 4***

To the Martyrs

Thou art glorified
in the memory of Thy saints, O Christ God. //
At their supplications, send down on us Thy great mercy!

verse: **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**

Stikheron from the Menaion (if appointed)

verse: **now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

*A stikheron on "Glory ..." and an matching Theotokion may be appointed in the Menaion,
otherwise we sing this Theotokion from the Triodion in the same tone:*

Theotokion - Tone 4 Podoben "As One Valiant ..."

The angelic hosts glorify thee, O mother of God,
for thou gavest birth to God,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
Who created out of nothing the angelic hosts.
Beseech Him to deliver from corruption and to enlighten //
The souls of those who rightly praise thee, O all pure one!

St Symeon's Prayer

The Reader (ONE reader, singing this prayer is allowed only at Great Vespers):

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,
according to Thy word.
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,
which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people:
a light to enlighten the gentiles,
And to be the glory of Thy people, Israel. *Luke 2: 29 - 32*

Trisagion and Lord's Prayer

Reader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: Have mercy on us.
 Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: Have mercy on us.
 Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: Have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.
 Lord, cleanse us from our sins.
 Master, pardon our transgressions.
 Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread;
 and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

Priest, exclamation: For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, of the
 Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of
 ages.

Choir: Amen.

The Lenten Troparia

Choir: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary Full of Grace the Lord is with thee:
 Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
 For thou hast born the Savior of our souls. *Prostration*

verse: **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**

O Baptizer of Christ, remember us all,
 That we may be delivered from our iniquities,
 For to thee is given grace to intercede for us. *Prostration*

verse: **now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

Intercede for us, O holy apostles and all saints,
 That we may be delivered from perils and sorrows,
 For we have acquired you as fervent intercessors before the Savior. *Prostration*

Beneath thy compassion we take refuge, O Theotokos,
 Do not despise our supplications in adversity,

But deliver us from perils, O only pure and only blessed one.

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (40)

Reader: More honorable than the Cherubim,
and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim:
without corruption thou gavest birth to God the Word.
True Theotokos, we magnify thee.

Reader: In the name of the Lord, father bless.

Priest: Blessed be He Who Is, Christ our God,
always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen.

Reader: O Heavenly King,
establish the Orthodox Christians,
confirm the Faith,
quiet the heathen,
give peace to the world,
place our departed fathers and brethren in the tabernacles of the Righteous,
and accept us sorrowers and penitents,
for Thou art good, and the Lover of mankind.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim

Priest: O Lord and Master of my life,
give me not a spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk. *Prostration*

But give rather a spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Prostration

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions,
and not to judge my brother: for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Prostration

And then immediately the dismissal:

Dismissal

Priest: Glory to thee, O Christ our God and our hope, glory to thee.

Choir: **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Father, bless.

The priest, then, turning from the holy doors to the west, toward the people, says this prayer:

O MASTER, great in mercy, Lord Jesus Christ our God, through the intercessions of
our all-immaculate Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary: by the might of the
precious and life-giving Cross: by the protection of the honorable bodiless powers of

heaven: at the supplication of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John, of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable apostles, of the holy, glorious, and right-victorious martyrs, of our venerable and God-bearing fathers, of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, and of all thy saints: Make our prayer acceptable, grant us forgiveness of our trespasses, shelter us under the shelter of thy wings, drive away from us every enemy and adversary, give peace to our life, O Lord, have mercy upon us and on thy world, and save our souls, for thou art good and lovest mankind.

As the exchange of forgiveness continues the Paschal music in the book, "Open to me the Gates..." , and "By the Waters..." .

About Forgiveness Sunday Vespers

Commentary on the Vespers of Forgiveness from the booklet for Vespers published by the OCA Department of Religious Education booklet, 1975.

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent – the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated - is called *Forgiveness Sunday*. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ:

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Mark 6:14 – 15)

Then after Vespers – after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: "Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!", after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special melodies, with the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian, with its prostrations – we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin the Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too many people Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a "good deed" required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says:

In vain do you rejoice in not eating, O soul!
For you abstain from food,

But from passions you are not purified.
If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast.

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, whom He sends to us so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for, the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no “enemies”? Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them – in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being “polite” and “friendly” we fulfill God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize – be it only for one minute – that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual “recognition” which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world. On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the *other*, as the *other* comes to me – we begin to realize that it is Christ who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery – and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists – we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year, “opens to us the doors of Paradise.” We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage.

Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting – true fasting; our effort – true effort; our reconciliation with God – true reconciliation.

Father Alexander Schmemmann