

Forgiveness Sunday

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... (*Mk. 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.

Fr. Alexander Schmemann

Vespers

The Priest and Deacon exit through the North door to the Solea and the Deacon says:

Deacon: Arise! Bless, Master!

The Priest, standing on the Solea facing the closed Holy Doors, says:

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

Reader: Amen.

Glory to You, our God; glory to You!

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, You are everywhere and fulfill all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One!

The Trisagion Prayers

Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3x)

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!

O Lord, cleanse us from our sins!

O Master, pardon our transgressions!

O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake!

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

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

All: Our Father, Who are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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

the evil one.

Priest: For Yours 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.

Reader: Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (12x)

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

When another service precedes Vespers, the service begins here:

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!

The Priest, standing in front of the Holy Doors, reads the Prayers of Light silently. The Deacon enters the Sanctuary through the South Door.

The Introductory Psalm¹

Psalm 103 (104)

Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, You are very great,
You are clothed with praise and majesty,

wrapping Yourself in light for a garment,
stretching out the sky like a tent-skin;

¹ We use here a translation of the Septuagint (LXX), the Old Testament of the Orthodox Church.

Who covers His upper rooms with water,
Who makes clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,

Who makes spirits his angels
and His servant a flame of fire,

Who poises the earth on its axis;
it will not be moved throughout the ages.

The deep like a garment is its clothing.
On the mountains the waters stand.

At Your rebuke they run,
At the crack of Your thunder they are afraid.

Mountains rise up and plains sink down
to the place which You have appointed for them.

You have set a bound the waters will not pass,
so they will never return to cover the earth.

You send torrents in the ravines,
the waters run between the mountains.

They give drink to all the beasts of the field;
wild donkeys wait to quench their thirst.

The birds of the sky perch on them;
from among the rocks they pipe their calls.

You water the mountains from above.
The earth is filled with the fruit of Your works.

You make grass spring up for the cattle
and vegetation for the service of men,

for them to produce food from the earth
and wine which cheers man's heart,
that his face may be bright with oil
and that bread may strengthen man's heart.

The trees of the plain will be drenched,
the cedars of Lebanon which You planted.

There the sparrows build their nests,
the house of the heron at the top of them.

The high mountains are for the deer,
a rock is a refuge for hares.

You made the moon to mark the months,
the sun knows his going down.

You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
in which all the wild beasts of the forest prowl:

young lions roaring to seize their prey
and seeking their food from God.

The sun rises and they gather together
and lie down in their dens.

Man goes out to his work
and to his business until the evening.

How great are Your works, O Lord!
You have made all things in wisdom,
the earth is filled with Your creation.

This is the great and wide sea:
there live reptiles without number,
living creatures small and great;

There ships go to and fro;
there, too, is that sea serpent
which You have made to play in it.

All look expectantly to You
to give them their food in due season.

When You give it to them, they gather it;
when You open Your hand,
all things are filled with goodness.

But when You turn away Your face they are troubled.
You will take their spirit and they will die
and they will return to their dust.

You will send Your Spirit and they will be created,
and You will renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord be forever;
the Lord delights in His works.

He looks upon the earth and makes it tremble,
He touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord all my life,
I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

May my conversation be pleasing to Him,
and I will rejoice in the Lord.

May sinners vanish from the earth,
and the lawless so as to be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The Deacon, standing at the Southwest corner of the Altar Table, passing the High Place, exits the Sanctuary, through the North door and stands before the icon of the Theotokos until the conclusion of the Psalm.

You made the moon to mark the months,
the sun knows his going down.

How great are Your works, O Lord!
You have made all things in wisdom,

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 You, O God. (3x)

At the conclusion of Psalm 103, the Deacon and the Priest bow to each other. The Priest returns to the Sanctuary through the South door and stands at his place before the Altar Table.

The Deacon moves to stand before the Holy Doors, lifts his Orarion and says:

The Great Litany

Deacon: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: 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 people, let us pray to the Lord.

People: 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.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For His Beatitude Metropolitan _____; for His Grace [or Eminence] our Bishop [or Archbishop] _____; for the honorable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the President and all civil authorities of this country, and for those serving in its Armed Forces, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this city, [*if a monastery*: For this holy habitation,] for every city and countryside, and for the faithful dwelling in them, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

The Deacon moves to stand before the icon of Christ.

People: To You, O Lord.

Priest: For to You belong 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.

People: Amen.

The Deacon enters the Sanctuary through the South door, goes to the High Place, bows, turns, bows to the Priest, takes up the censer and presents it to the Priest, saying:

Deacon: Bless, Master, the incense.

Priest: **+** We offer You incense, O Christ our God, for a perfume of spiritual fragrance. Receive it upon Your heavenly Altar, and send down upon us in return the grace of Your all-Holy Spirit.

Deacon: Amen.

Lord, I Call

Psalm 140 (141):1-2

People: Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Hear me, O Lord.
Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Receive the voice of my prayer, when I call upon You.
Hear me, O Lord.

The Deacon begins the Great Censing.

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

Psalm 140 (141):3-10

Reader: Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth,
and a door of enclosure and protection around my lips.

Do not incline my heart to evil words,
to make excuses for sins.
With men who practice lawlessness,
not even with their chosen ones will I be joined.

A just man will correct and rebuke me with mercy,
but may the oil of a sinner never anoint my head,
because again and again my prayer is against their pleasures.

Their judges and kings drown holding rocks:
they will hear my words, for they are sweet.

As a clod of earth is crushed on the ground,
our bones have been scattered beside the grave.

For my eyes look to You, O Lord;
O Lord, in You I trust, do not take away my life.

Keep me from the trap they have set for me
and from the snare of the evildoers.

Sinners will fall into their own net;
I am alone until I pass on.

Psalm 141 (142)

I cry to the Lord with my voice,
I pray with my voice to the Lord.

I will pour out before Him my prayer,
I will tell my trouble before Him.

When my spirit departs from me,
You know my paths.
In this way that I was going,
they hid a trap for me.

I look to the right hand and watch,
but there is no one who knows me.
Escape is cut off from me,
but there is no one seeking my life.

I cried to You, O Lord, and said,
“You are my hope,
You are my portion in the land of the living.”

Attend to my prayer,
for I have been brought very low.
Deliver me from those who are persecuting me,
because they are stronger than I am.

Bring my soul out of prison
that I may confess Your name,

People: [Sticheron of Repentance in the Tone of the Day – Appendix B]

Reader: The righteous are waiting for me
until You reward me.

People: [Sticheron of Repentance in the Tone of the Day]

Psalm 129 (130)

Reader: Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord;
O Lord, hear my voice.

People: [Sticheron of Repentance in the Tone of the Day]

Reader: Let Your ears be attentive
to the cry of my prayer.

People: [Sticheron of Repentance in the Tone of the Day]

Reader: If You, O Lord, should take note of our sins,
O Lord, who would survive?
But with You there is forgiveness.

Tone 2 (When from the Tree...)

People: 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 for we have sinned against You!
Save us, Christ our King, as You saved the men of Ninevah,//
and make us partakers of Your heavenly Kingdom, O compassionate
One!”

Reader: For Your name’s sake, O Lord, I wait for You,
my soul waits for Your word,
my soul hopes for the Lord,

People: 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 Your commandments, O Savior.
I have spent my life as a prodigal.
I pray to You, only merciful One:

“Cleanse me by repentance,
enlighten me through prayers and fasting,//
and despise me not, most gracious Benefactor of all!”

Reader: from the morning watch until night.
From the morning watch
let Israel hope for the Lord.

People: 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!

Reader: For with the Lord there is mercy
and with Him there is great redemption.
And He will redeem Israel
from all his sins.

People: [Sticheron to the Saint of the day from the Menaion]

During the singing of the Stichera, the Priest puts on the Phelonion.

The Deacon receives the censer from the Server.

Psalm 116 (117)

Reader: Praise the Lord, all you nations,
praise Him, all you peoples!

People: [Sticheron to the Saint of the day from the Menaion]

Reader: For great is His mercy to us,²
and the truth of the Lord continues forever.

² Lit., “For His mercy has been strengthened upon us”.

People: [Sticheron to the Saint of the day from the Menaion]

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

People: [Doxasticon, if any]

Reader: ...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

As the People sing “now and ever...” the Holy Doors are opened, the Deacon asks the Chief Celebrant to bless the censer, they both kiss the Altar Table, and preceded by the Acolytes, passing by the High Place, they proceed out of the Sanctuary through the North door, and go to the solea in front of the Holy Doors.

People: [Sing the Theotokion from the Menaion, or from the Appendix to the Menaion if there be a Doxasticon]

The Vespers Entrance³

As they proceed:

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

Priest: In the evening, in the morning, and at midday, we praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You: O Master of all, O Lord, the Lover of mankind, let our prayer arise in Your sight as incense, and incline not our hearts to words or thoughts of evil, but rescue us from all who seek after our souls. For our eyes are toward You, O Lord: Lord, in You we put our hope. Put us not to shame, O our God. For to You belong 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.

People: Amen.

The Priest stands in the center facing the Sanctuary.

The Deacon approaches the Holy Doors to the right of the Priest and then he censes the Holy

³ There is an Entrance for two reasons: it is the “leave taking” of the Lord’s day and there is a Great Prokeimenon.

Doors, the icons of Christ and the Theotokos, and the Priest. After this he transfers the censer from his right hand to his left, bows to the Priest and, pointing to the Holy Doors with his Orarion in his right hand, he says quietly:

Deacon: Bless, Master, the holy entrance.

Priest: + Blessed is the entrance into Your Sanctuary always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

After this, the Deacon stands in the middle of the Holy Doors and, at the conclusion of the Theotokion, makes the Sign of the Cross with the censer and says:

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

The Deacon proceeds into the Sanctuary, censes the Altar Table on all four sides and the High Place.

The Priest(s) kisses the two small icons located on the sides or pillars of the Holy Doors area, blesses the People, kisses the Altar Table, and goes to the High Place, makes the Sign of the Cross and a small metania and stands to the right of center (Southeast corner of the Altar Table) facing the people.

The Deacon gives the censer to the Acolyte, kisses the Altar Table, goes to the left side of the Sanctuary, makes the Sign of the Cross on himself facing the High Place, bows to the Priest, and stands to the left (Northeast corner) of the Altar Table at the High Place facing toward the people.

Gladsome Light

People: O gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, Holy, blessed Father: O 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 it is right, at all times,
To worship You in voices of praise,
O Son of God and Giver of life.
Therefore all the world glorifies You.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Priest: + Peace be unto all.

Deacon: Wisdom!

The Great Prokeimenon

Deacon: The Great Prokeimenon in the eighth tone:

Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted;
hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

People: Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted;
hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Deacon: Let Your salvation, O God, uphold me.

People: Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted;
hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Deacon: Let the poor see and be glad!

People: Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted;
hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Deacon: Seek God and your soul shall live!

People: Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted;
hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Deacon: Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted...

People: ...hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

The Priest and the Deacon turn, make the Sign of the Cross (lesser metania) to the High Place, and proceed to their places.

The Holy Doors are closed for the remainder of the service.

At this point the Great Fast begins. The vestments of the clergy and servers and the altar cloths are changed from light to dark. At the Evening Litany, we begin using the Lenten melody in the responses.

Grant, O Lord

Reader: Grant, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin.

Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your name forever. Amen.

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

Blessed are You, O Lord: teach me Your statutes.

Blessed are You, O Master: make me to understand Your commandments.

Blessed are You, O Holy One: enlighten me with Your precepts.

Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

To You belongs worship, to You belongs praise, to You belongs glory; to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Deacon bows to the Priest, passing the High Place, exits the Sanctuary through the North door and goes to his place before the icon of the Theotokos.

The Evening Litany

The Deacon moves to stand before the Holy Doors, lifts his Orarion and says:

Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: For an angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: For pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

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

People: Grant it, O Lord.

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

People: Grant it, O Lord.

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

People: Grant it, O Lord.

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

The Deacon moves to stand before the icon of Christ:

People: To You, O Lord.

Priest: For You are a good God, and You love mankind, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen

The Priest turns to bless the People:

Priest: + Peace be unto all.

People: And to your spirit.

The Priest faces the East as the Deacon says:

Deacon: Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

People: To You, O Lord.

The Prayer with Heads Bowed

Priest: O Lord our God, Who bowed the heavens and came down for the salvation of the human race; look upon Your servants and Your inheritance; for to You, the awesome Judge, Who yet love mankind, have Your servants bowed their heads and submissively bent their necks, not waiting for help from men, but asking for Your mercy and looking confidently for Your 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, from vain thoughts, and from evil imaginations. Blessed and glorified be the majesty of Your kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Deacon enters the Sanctuary through the South door, bows to the High Place, turns, bows to the Priest, and goes to his place.

The Aposticha

Tone 4

People: Your 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!

Reader: I lift up my eyes to You, the One Who lives in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of slaves are on the hands of their lords, and as the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God until He has compassion on us.

People: Your grace has shown forth... (*repeat above*).

Reader: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have had our fill to the full of scorn, our soul is more than filled. Let the reproach be for the prosperous and the contempt for the proud.

People: You are glorified
in the memory of Your saints, O Christ God.//
At their supplications, send down on us Your great mercy!

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

People: [Doxasticon, if any]

Reader: ...now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

People: [Sing the Theotokion in the same tone from the Common Theotokia if there be a Doxasticon]

otherwise:

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

The Canticle of Simeon

People: Master, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word.
For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before
the face of all people: a light for revelation to the gentiles and for the
glory of Your people Israel.

The Trisagion Prayers

Reader: Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3x)

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!
O Lord, cleanse us from our sins!
O Master, pardon our transgressions!
O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake!

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

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

All: Our Father, Who are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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 the evil one.

Priest: For Yours 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.

Reader: Amen.

The Deacons and Priests exit the Sanctuary through the Deacon doors and take their places.

The Lenten Troparia

*During the first three of the following Troparia, one prostration is made by **all** at each Troparion. During the fourth Troparion, **all** make a lesser reverence.*

Tone 8

People: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of grace! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb;// for you have borne the Savior of our souls. (*All make a prostration.*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

O Baptiser of Christ, remember us all,
that we may be delivered from our iniquities;//
for to you is given grace to intercede for us. (*All make a prostration.*)

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Intercede for us, O holy apostles and all the saints,
that we may be delivered from perils and sorrows;//
for we have acquired you as fervent intercessors before the Savior.
(*All make a prostration.*)

Beneath your 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.
(*All make a metania.*)

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (40x)

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

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare
than the Seraphim: without corruption you gave birth to God the Word:
true Theotokos, we magnify you!

In the Name of the Lord, father bless.

Priest: + Christ our God, The Existing One, is blessed, always, now and ever
and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen.

O Heavenly King, establish the Orthodox Christians, strengthen 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 You are good, and You love mankind.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim

Facing East, the Priest prays:

Priest: O Lord and Master of my life, do not permit me the spirit of laziness,
despair, lust of power, and idle talk. (*All make a prostration.*)

But give, rather, the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to
Your servant. (*All make a prostration.*)

O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to
judge my brother, for blessed are You unto ages of ages. Amen. (*All*

make a prostration.)

Then all make 12 lesser reverences, saying for each:

O God, cleanse me a sinner and have mercy on me.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim is repeated, with one prostration at the end.

During the rite of Mutual Forgiveness, it is customary for the choir to sing the Irmoi from the Canon of Pascha and the Paschal stichera (“Let God Arise”).

The Mutual Forgiveness

Priest: Forgive me, brothers and sisters, and pardon me, a sinner, all wherein I have sinned against you, in deed, in word, in thought, and in all my senses. *[Prostration]*

All: May God pardon and have mercy on you, holy father.

Forgive me, holy father and brothers and sisters, and pardon me, a sinner, all wherein I have sinned against you, in deed, in word, in thought, and in all my senses. *[Prostration]*

Priest: May God, through His grace, pardon and have mercy on us all.

At this point, all may approach to ask forgiveness, according to the local custom.

The Dismissal

The Deacon lifts his Orarion and says:

Deacon: Wisdom.

People: It is truly right to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God.

The Priest bows toward the icon of Christ on the Iconostasis, saying:

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

Standing in front of the Holy Doors, facing the people, the Priest says the Little Dismissal:

Reader: 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. (3x)

Father, bless.

Priest: May Christ our true God, through the prayers of His most-pure Mother; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of heaven; of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostles; of our father among the saints, St. (of the temple.....); of St. (of the day), whom we commemorate today; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us for He is good and loves mankind.

Reader: Amen.

The Clergy enter the Sanctuary through the South door, kiss the Holy Gospel and the Altar Table and then remove their vestments.

APPENDIX A

THE SEVEN VESPERS PRAYERS

I

O Lord, compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and of great mercy, give heed to our prayers, and attend to the voice of our supplications. Work upon us a sign for good. Guide us in Your way that we may walk in Your truth. Gladden our hearts that we may fear Your holy name, for You are great and You work wonders. You alone are God, and among the gods there is none like You, O Lord, powerful in mercy and good in might, to help and to comfort and to save all those who hope in Your holy name. For to You belong 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. Amen.

II

O Lord, in Your displeasure, rebuke us not, neither chasten us in Your wrath, but deal with us according to Your tenderness, O physician and healer of our souls. Guide us to the haven of Your will. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts to the knowledge of Your truth, and grant that the remainder of the present day and the whole time of our life may be peaceful and sinless, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints. For Yours is the majesty, and Yours are 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. Amen.

III

O Lord our God, remember us, Your sinful and unprofitable servants, when we call on Your holy and venerable name, and put us not to shame in our expectation of Your mercy, but grant us, O Lord, all our petitions which are unto salvation, and make us worthy to love and fear You with all our hearts, and to do Your will in all things. For You are a good God and You love mankind, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

IV

O You to Whom the holy powers sing with unending hymns and unceasing doxologies, fill our mouths with Your praise that we may magnify Your holy name. And grant to us part and inheritance with all those who fear You in truth and keep Your commandments, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints. For to You belong 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. Amen.

V

O Lord, Lord, Who uphold all things in the most pure hollow of Your hand, Who are long-suffering toward us all, and Who turn away from our wickedness, remember Your compassion and Your mercy. Look on us with Your goodness. Grant to us also by Your grace, through the remainder of the present day, to avoid the various subtle snares of the Evil One. Keep our lives unassailed, through the grace of Your all holy Spirit. Through the mercy and love toward mankind of Your only-begotten Son, with Whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

VI

O God, great and wonderful, Who with goodness indescribable and rich providence, order all things and grant to us earthly good things; Who have given us a pledge of the promised kingdom through the good things already granted to us, and have made us to shun all harm during that part of the day which is past, grant that we may also fulfill the remainder of this day blamelessly before Your holy glory, and hymn You, our God Who alone are good and love mankind. For You are our God, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

VII

a

O great and most high God, You alone have immortality, and You dwell in unapproachable light. You have fashioned all creation in wisdom. You have divided the light from the darkness, and have set the sun to rule the day and the moon and stars to rule the night. You have also permitted us sinners at this present hour to come before Your presence with confession and to offer to You our evening doxology. O Lord, Lover of Mankind, direct our prayer as incense before You, and accept it as a sweet fragrance. Grant that our present evening and coming night be peaceful. Clothe us with the armor of light. Rescue us from the fear of night, and from everything that walks in darkness. Grant that the sleep that You have given us for rest in our weakness may be free from every fantasy of the devil.

b

O Master of all, leader of the good, may we, being moved to compunction on our beds, remember Your name in the night. Enlightened by doing Your commandments, may we rise up with joyful soul to glorify Your goodness of heart for our own sins and those of all Your people. Look on them in mercy, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos. For You are a good God and You love mankind, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

APPENDIX B

“Lord I Call...” (Stichera of Repentance)

The first 2 come from the Vespers Aposticha for Sunday evening, and the last 2 from the Matins Aposticha for Monday morning, in the tone of the week.

Tone 1

The sea of my transgressions is great, O Savior,
and I am sinking terribly because of my sins.

Give me your hand, as you saved Peter, O God,//
and have mercy on me!

My thoughts and deeds condemn me, O Savior.
Give me the thought of turning back,
that I may cry out to You://
“Save me, O God, and have mercy on me!”

Another world awaits you, my soul:
A Judge will soon reveal your secret and terrible thoughts and deeds!
Do not linger, then, among the things that are here.
Anticipate the Judgment and cry out to the Judge://
“Be merciful to me, O God, and save me!”

Do not reject me at the testing, O my Savior,
though I am held fast by the laziness of sin.
Arouse my thoughts to repentance;
make me a proven worker of Your vineyard://
Grant me the wages of the eleventh hour and great mercy!

Tone 2

I have sinned against You, O Christ our Savior,
like the prodigal son.

O Father, accept me in repentance.//
Have mercy on me, O God.

I cry to You, O Christ our Savior,
with the voice of the publican.
Be merciful to me, as to him.//
Have mercy on me, O God.

When I think of my detestable and horrible deeds,
I fly for refuge to Your compassion,
imitating the publican,
the weeping harlot and the prodigal son.
So, I fall before You, O merciful One:
before You condemn me, O my God//
rather spare me and have mercy on me!

Overlook my transgressions,
O Lord, born of the Virgin.
Cleanse my heart, making it a temple of the Holy Spirit!
Do not make me as nothing before Your face.//
since You have boundless mercy!

Tone 3

We offer You our evening hymn, O Christ,
with incense and spiritual songs.//
O Savior, have mercy on us!

Save me, O Lord my God:
You are the Salvation of all!
The storm of my passions troubles me;
the yoke of my sins weighs me down.
Stretch out Your hand to help me;
lead me to the light of repentance,//
for You alone are the compassionate Lover of mankind!

O Lord, gather my scattered mind
and cleanse my barren heart!
Grant me repentance as You gave to Peter,
groans as You gave the Publican and tears as the Harlot,
so that I may cry to You with a loud voice://
“Save me, O God, as You alone are tender-hearted and the Lover of mankind!”

Often when I perform the singing of hymns,
I am found to be committing sins.
With my tongue I am singing praises,
but with my soul, I am pondering evil things.//
But correct both through repentance, O Christ God, and save me!

Tone 4

O Lord, I long to wash away with tears the record of all my sins,
and to spend the remaining days of my life
pleasing You through repentance,
but the Enemy continually deceives me.
He wages war against my soul.//
O Lord, save me, before I utterly perish!

Who, when caught in a storm, if he runs to this haven is not saved?
Or who that is sick, if he runs to this healing, is not made whole?
Creator of all and Physician of the sick,//
O Lord, save me, before I utterly perish!

Wash me in my tears, O Savior,
for I am defiled by many sins!
Therefore, I fall before You://
I have sinned; have mercy on me, O God!

I flee for refuge to You, the good Shepherd;
I am a sheep of Your rational flock.
O God, I have gone astray;//
seek me, and have mercy on me!

Tone 5

O Lord, I do not cease from sins;
I do not perceive that I am counted worthy of Your love for mankind.//
Conquer my hardheartedness, O only Good One, and have mercy on me!

O Lord, even though I fear You,
I do not cease from doing evil.
Who does not fear the Judge in the hour of judgment?
And who, desiring healing, chases away the physician as I do?
Have compassion on my infirmity,//
and have mercy on me, O long-suffering Lord!

Disregard the multitude of my transgressions,
O Lord, born of the Virgin!
Blot out all my iniquities;
grant me, I pray, a firm intention to change,//
for You are the Lover of mankind;
and have mercy on me!

Woe is me! Why have I become like the barren fig tree?
I fear being cursed and cut down.
But, O heavenly Gardener, Christ my God,
reveal my parched soul to be fruitful!//
Accept me as You did the Prodigal Son; and have mercy on me!

Tone 6

At Your terrible coming, O Christ,
may we not hear the words: “I know you not!”
For we have put our hope in You,
and though through neglect we have not kept Your commands,/
yet we entreat You to have mercy on our souls.

I have not gained repentance or tears,
therefore, I entreat You, O Christ God:
“Turn me back before I die,/
that I may find mercy and be delivered from torments!”

Finding me naked of virtues,
the Enemy wounded me with the arrow of sin,
but as Physician of souls and bodies,
heal the wounds of my soul, O God,/
and have mercy on me!

O Savior, heal the wounds of my heart left by my many sins!
O Physician of souls and bodies,
grant forgiveness of faults to those who ask!
Ever give me tears of penitence,
releasing me from what I owe You, O Lord,/
and have mercy on me!

Tone 7

Like the Prodigal I come and fall before You, O Lord:
accept me as one of Your hired servants,//
and have mercy on me, O compassionate One!

Like the man who fell among thieves and was wounded,
I have fallen, and my soul is bruised by my many sins.
To whom can I, the guilty one, run,
if not to You, the only merciful Physician of our souls?//
Pour out Your great mercy on me, O God!

O Savior, sinner that I am,
do not cut me down like the barren fig tree!
But grant me forgiveness all the year long,
watering my soul with tears of repentance,//
that I may bring forth acts of mercy as fruit for You!

Since You are the Sun of righteousness,
enlighten and guide the hearts of those who cry out to You://
“O Lord, glory to You!”

Tone 8

The angels never cease singing praises to You,
and I fall before You, O King and Master.
I cry out like the Publican://
“Be merciful to me, O God, and save me!”

Since you are without end, O my soul,
do not be overwhelmed by the waves of this life.
Come to your senses and cry out to the Benefactor:
“Be merciful to me, O God, and save me!”

When I grasp with my mind the great number of terrible things I have done,
and go in my thoughts to that terrible reckoning,
I tremble with fearfulness!
I flee for refuge to you, O God and Lover of mankind!
I humbly pray: “Do not turn from me, O sinless Lord,//
but grant my lowly soul repentance before the end and save me!”

Give me tears, O God, as You once did to the woman who had sinned,
and count me worthy to drench Your feet --
those feet which freed me from the path of error.
As fragrant ointment let me offer You a life of purity,
acquired by me through repentance,
that I too may hear that voice for which I pray, saying://
“Your faith has saved you; go in peace!”