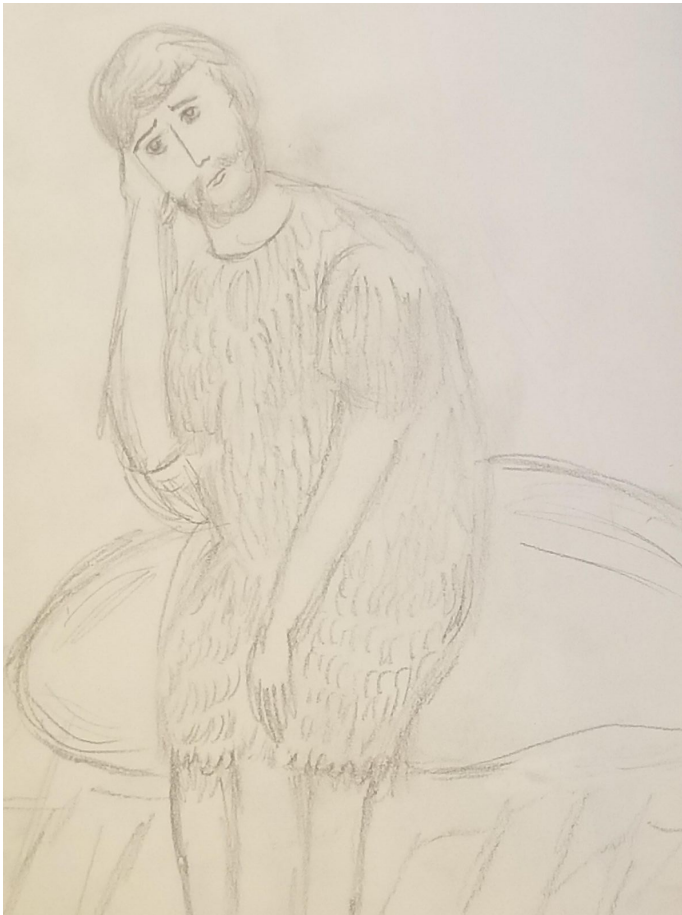


## **Forgiveness Sunday**

The Gospel According to Matthew 6:14-21

*"The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses..."*



### **Oikos.**

*In times of old did Adam sit and cry in sorrow opposite the delights he had in Paradise; his hands*

*did upon his forehead strike, as he said this: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.*

*Beholding the angel thrusting him, and closing the holy garden's gate, Adam wailed mightily to*

*state: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.*

***On the day before Meatfare Sunday, on which we remember the Last Judgment, the Orthodox Church prays for those of its members who may have died unexpectedly because of wars, plagues, starvation, or any other sort of death while they were in a foreign country, or while they were traveling by sea, by land, or by air. The Church also prays for the poor, or for those who may not have received a proper burial, or who had no one to request Memorial Services to be offered for them.***

On Friday Shawn banned a person from the mission. This person had been loud many times lately and he had been breaking all kinds of rules. We only have a few rules at the mission and that man managed to break most of them. I was tempted many times to ask him to leave, but he somehow succeeded in coming across as a good guy who just had a problem with self control. We tried to relate with him in different ways. One day he even volunteered and did work outside, eating in return all the burgers we had received as a donation for lunch. The trade seemed fair at the time. I thought we were on the way of figuring out a different way of relating with one another. Only it didn't last long. We went back to the same relationship. We kept welcoming and feeding him, and he kept swearing aloud in the morning, intruding on our morning silence in the chapel and destroying any chance of normal conversation with each other in the main hall.

When he came back on Friday he did not care that he had been banned. He rushed into the washroom as he was in need. Coming out he was blaming everyone for being unfair with him, concluding that we were bullying him. He is a homeless person, struggling with a mental illness, and he is right not to understand the few rules we have, he thought. We definitely didn't look like a church and we seemed to lack any understanding or compassion when it came to this person.

I thought for a moment he might have a point, knowing that we do lack real compassion and that we do make mistakes, so I decided to talk more with him and to see where we misunderstood and mistreated him. It is true at the end that we don't see how people repent but only their sins. (St Dorotheos of Gaza). However, I might be wrong, but after listening to him I got no feeling that he was sorry for anything. He did not see anything wrong in his behaviour, so his intention was to come back and to act the same. We had to accommodate his needs and change our way of being and to apologize for making this mistake in the first place. Even with the risk of being wrong and not able to understand him I thought that would not work. The only thing we could offer was to meet with him outside with coffee and warm food. Definitely not inside, because in time he might be the only person left in there, chasing away all the other people who come for food and normal conversations and silence in the chapel. He did not like the proposal.

The sorrow for one's own actions does not come easily within the human heart. It is hard to forgive anybody if we are not moved with sorrow for our own sins. The tradition is telling us, through the voice of the fathers, that Adam did not repent after the sin, that's why he was asked to leave the garden (St Simeon the New Theologian). He would have approached the Tree of Life, which is The Word of God (St Maximus the Confessor) within his own sinfulness. When man approaches God without repentance, we see through the cross what happens. The consistency in lacking remorse for what we do wrong becomes an open gate for more evil to pour into the garden. It is even hard to see and understand where it's coming from. It is coming from the heart, but it is not easy to figure out why and how it is that we are shameless when it comes to our own deeds. This

consistency and shamelessness is not static by any means. It lets an ocean of evil within the world. Through each human heart that is persistent in its wrongful deeds an ocean of poisoned water washes the innocents in sin. And then, we ask ourselves how could God forgive this in us? How could He make this straight? And how could we live with that and forgive others who are persistent in this incremental lack of remorse within the heart for what has been lived and for what is desired, with a wrong desire, to be lived again. This persistency in doing evil is so present around us today. Bill 7 was passed this week and thus, today, people with mental disabilities qualify for euthanasia in Canada. It was evil in the first place, but because of the lack of remorse of those who live in this strange land, the evil continues to pour into our lives and the life of our children even more in Canada. It pours on those who are the most vulnerable, as usual.

Today we are reminded of the need to forgive, but how could one forgive what has been done? How can one forgive the progressive desire to harm life? How could you make peace with those who are not peaceful today? Definitely not by linking our own need to rediscover our sorrow with the lack of repentance in those who are opening a path to harming the innocence of life. We need no complicity with that. We had enough already. We need to detach from that as far as possible, by remembering and searching within the heart the sorrow that we trust.

It is comforting for us to see Adam, in the days of old, crying and holding his head in his arms, being moved from within by what he lost. He is outside the gate, he could not do it inside. It is good enough and not too late. It gives us hope and faith that we could reach out that part of our heart as well.

*"There is none that does good, there is not so much as one...Know this also, that in the last days shall come difficult times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, savage with no love of the good...Woe therefore to us, for we have come upon the extreme of evil. Tell me, who of us has no part in the aforesaid evils? Is not the prophecy fulfilled in us?...Are we not all vainglorious? Are we not all hypocrites? Are we not all deceitful? Are we not all jealous? ... Are we not all full of evil? ... We, who now bear the great name of Christ, are we not become worse than the Jews? And let no one be vexed at hearing the truth." (St Maximos the Confessor)*

It is also refreshing to listen to St Maximos the Confessor talking about what it means to be Christian. What it means not to live a parallel life with those with whom you share the strange land in captivity. We know the taste of freedom and the sweetness of forgiveness, the Truth of Life and the Hope that surrenders all. It is as refreshing and hope giving as the image of Adam crying by the gates of the garden. Because today, we primarily see and hear the blame of the Christians on those who are outside the gate,

without noticing that we are there all together. Today it feels that we live on parallel planets that pass by each other with every second lost for nothing good in return. The logic though makes you wonder, if we are scared about all the evil that comes upon us from the parallel planet in which some live - and we are entitled to feel that way because there is a growing evil without shape and form - how come we are not excited about the goodness that could come their way from our planet? Maybe because we are afraid that there might not be much goodness left in us after all. Or too little to share, so we could keep the little we have for ourselves, hidden under the basket.

**It is better to know God than to know yourself.**

*"The Tree of Life" which is the Lord, has become nourishment and life for our souls...it is guarded by the cherubim and the flaming sword...and the cherubim is interpreted as "the fulness of knowledge". Through knowledge, the longing for God comes to exist in us..." (St Maximus the Confessor)*



The lived experience of forgiveness within the soul is the road that takes us through Lent as we enter the Holy Week and continue until the very morning when we shall find the open tomb. We start today with the desire to forgive so that on Pascha we may receive the forgiveness of God. Forgiveness becomes the reality of the resurrection. Today, when death has more adepts than before, forgiveness seems hard to reach within the heart. What we struggle with more is the lack of sorrow in a heart that has left paradise and still is out of touch with its own pain. We are by the gate forgetting to cry today with the door being left open. Those who produce harm in others with no remorse, harming for good the most innocent ones, and others with a lack of discernment

when it comes to hate, anger and forgiveness. Again, how could one forgive an evil act in action? We share in both, as we share in the strange land, in the general lack of sorrow and in the anger of watching without much hope the new social reality unfolding today. How could we live with this as Lent begins? How could we face Christ early in the

morning by the tomb, knowing that there is not much hope for the vulnerable ones to come and cry for joy at His feet? He brings us the good news, we bring Him the bad one. He shares universal forgiveness with us and we share our lack of sorrow with Him.

Lent however is not a time for self evaluation and self analysis. It is better to know God than to know yourself. Lent is a time for us to dare come close to Him who is present in those who are harmed. It is not a time to think much about how worthy we may or may not be, because at the end we cannot cry anymore. But it is a time to search for a deep desire to come His way, and not to try to do this alone, but by asking the Mother of God to show us the way. When we have our heart petrified by seeing too many evil deeds, we need the Theotokos to show us comfort. Because we cannot say no to her love. And also because she stayed by the cross and she knows, with pain, what men can do to God when the sorrow leaves their heart. She knows God from His vulnerability on the cross. From His crucified love. She can teach us to look and to behold Him as we left Paradise. We cannot find too much sorrow because we look only for our own. Adam was crying indeed by the gate because of what he lost. And this is good enough, today we don't remember what we lost but we can clearly see what we gain: the suffering of Christ. This is not hidden but clearly open in our eyes. This is what we are called to receive, to pray and to cry for. The longing that is alive in those who perish with no desire to die, only with the fault that they are seen as not being good enough. They are longing because they know Christ and Christ knows them.

Adam was crying by the gate. We don't know what Eve was doing because the Oikos does not tell us. But we can assume that she was crying, beholding God. Seeing what they did to Him. Seeing what God, who is without need, lost in us leaving the garden. He gained the cross, and that was enough for Him to show His love. The New Eve, The Theotokos, said yes to God and opened the gates of paradise for us again, because she remembered leaving Him behind the gates. She remembered His face. And she could not say no to Him again.

This week, a friend that I often listen to, talked to me again about his mother and the sorrow that she caused him. We already had long conversations about that before. I asked him this time if he prays to the mother of God. He said no, he prayed directly to Jesus, which I know he does. He wants to be with Him alone. I can relate with that and I see his point. For those of us who struggle greatly with a petrified, sorrowless heart, we should try to welcome the presence of the Mother of God in our life. For the sake of her Son and His presence in those who need our prayers and our tears.

***Keep in your prayers the catechumens:  
Eliana, Wayne, Atty and Madison.***

*Please pray for:*

Wafaa and Sana (cancer)

Raj (got knifed)

Rejoice

Cassandra's grandmother - Helen

Two children receiving treatment at Sick Kids and their mother Levelin.

Crisent

Ann Brown

Elizabeth

Sifie

Allen

Leon

Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly;Tom; Candice, Camelia,

Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting

Madison and her brother Aaron

**For health and salvation**

very difficult situation for a Christian family from Bangladesh

Sandra

Peter

Angel

Bless

Grace

Swetha family

Atlaw single mom at shelter

Vernevil family

the family of

Kenide

Sathiya

Sena

Vinothiny

Yvienne

Abdul

Sakanthalathevy

Jumke

Naimi

Anish

JOSHUA DANIEL

REALLY HEARTFELT REQUEST FOR PRAYER AS HE IS STRUGGLING TO KEEP ON A GOOD PATH

Maria Lolita Soliman Torres

Jonathan

Richard

Richard

Mary

Elizabeth

Michael

Rejoice

Bill

Robert

Alan

Joanne

deceased (Covid)

Maria

PLEASE DO NOT FORGET:

St. Silouan Chapel, March 13,, 2021

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