

OUR ANNUAL SPIRITUAL "CHECK-UP"

Medical authorities stress that it is important for all of us to have an annual physical examination – in fact, many companies require this of their employees. While this isn't anything that any of us truly enjoy, we cannot dispute the fact that our very lives may depend on this periodic check-up, which will allow us to see if we need to improve our health by making changes in the way we are living.

In like manner, the Church has long taught that we need a similar examination for our spiritual well-being every year. We refer to this "check-up" as the Great Fast. In this 40-day period, we will be called upon to pray more fervently and fast more severely. We will be implored to do good works and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. We will be urged to cleanse our souls by confessing our sins. But most importantly, during Lent we will be asked to take an honest look at our lives and evaluate the condition of our heart and our soul. Just as it is unwise not to be truthful with our doctor, it is equally foolish for us to try to deceive the Great Physician – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Are we in "good shape" spiritually? Are we showing complete and total love for God in all that we do? Do we really love our neighbor as we love ourselves? Are we harboring any hatred or hard feelings towards anyone? Are we willing to forgive those who may have wronged us as we have been instructed to do by Christ in today's Gospel lesson: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt 6:14-15) Is it time for your check-up?

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey Litho in U.S.A.

ABOUT COMMUNION

We are happy that you have joined us today. Indeed, we pray for the "unity of the Faith" for the day when all of Christianity are united as ONE and can share a common Chalice. However, this is not the case as yet. Please note that Holy Communion, the actual Body & Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is only for Members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and confession, & arrived before the Gospel reading. However, everyone is welcome to partake of the blessed bread and receive a blessing from the pastor at the dismissal. If you are interested, you may inquire with the pastor how you can become a member.

If you are a guest or otherwise not a regular communicant, please give your baptismal name when receiving.

May we all take advantage
of the wonderful opportunity
for healing that the Church
provides for us during



The Great Fast



St. Anthony The Great Antiochian Orthodox Church

4031 Aurora Rd.; Melbourne, Florida
Mailing address : P.O.Box 267, Melbourne, FL 32902
Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor & Dean of South Florida Deanery
Phone: (305) 812-4940 , E-Mail: elia_shalhoub@yahoo.com

WELCOME TO ST. ANTHONY'S

Where people from around the world come together to serve God and our community. We are glad you are worshipping with us today! This Church is one community of many in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Church of Antioch belongs to two thousand years of evangelization, teaching, history, and tradition which expresses the continued commitment of its members to the Orthodox Christian faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

St. Anthony Church is a Pan-Orthodox community, under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA within Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

If you are a first time visitor, please fill out the guest form located on the literature table.

We want you to feel at home in prayer and worship. Please submit your names to the ushers and introduce yourself to Fr. Elia at the end of the service so he may welcome you personally.

Following services, please join us for sharing of fellowship, coffee, and food.

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, MARCH 02, 2025 SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS (CHEESE FARE)

MARTYR HESYCHIOS THE SENATOR; THEODOTOS, BISHOP OF CYRENE IN CYPRUS;
VIRGIN-MARTYR EUTHALIA OF SICILY

~ During the Little Entrance, chant the Resurrectional Apolytikion. The Eisodikon (Entrance Hymn) is "O come, let us worship... save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead..." After the Little Entrance, chant these hymns in the following order:

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

~ Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT

Thou didst become like the zealous Elijah in his condition, and followed John the Baptist in his up-right ways. Becoming a dweller in the wilderness, and an establisher of the universe by thy prayer O Father Anthony. Wherefore intercede thou with Christ our God to save our souls.

KONTAKION FOR FORGIVENESS SUNDAY IN TONE SIX

O Thou Who guidest to wisdom, and givest understanding and intelligence, the Instructor of the ignorant, and Helper of the poor, strengthen my heart and grant it understanding, O Master. Give me word, O Word of the Father; for behold, I shall not refrain my lips from crying to Thee, O merciful One, have mercy upon me who am fallen.

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ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

2025 Annual General Meeting Proxy

February 9, 2025

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS:

The undersigned voting member(s) of St. Anthony the Great Antiochian

Orthodox Church hereby constitute and appoint

_____ as PROXY with powers of
substitution for and in the name and place of the undersigned, to act on my
behalf to establish a quorum and vote on any issues that are presented for
a vote by the membership at this Special Meeting on Sunday, February 9th, 2025
at St. Anthony the Great Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church located at
4031 Aurora Rd, Melbourne, FL 32934.

Dated: _____

Member

Dated: _____

Member

If you are unable to attend our General Meeting,
please sign this form and give it to Fr. Elia prior to the event.

THE EPISTLE

Sing praises to our God, sing praises. Clap your hands, all ye nations.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. (13:11-14:4)

Brethren, now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and licentiousness, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. But as for the one who is weak in faith, receive him, but not for disputes over opinions. For one believes he may eat anything; but the weak person eats herbs. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to be the judge over the servant of a stranger? To his own master he either stands or falls; but he will be made to stand; for God is able to make him stand.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (6:14-21)

The Lord said to His Disciples: 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. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.



Please pray for the healing of Michealle Carey, Debbie Thieme, Adriana Theodoropoulos, Beverly Delida, Alix Hall, Nina and Diogo Penas, Beth Manzini, John Archambeau, Alex & Soula, Susan Moran, William Snell, Vasilika Yardines

Upcoming Events

This Week
Sunday, 3/2
8:45 am: Matins Service
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy, followed by Forgiveness Vespers
Coffee Hour: After Liturgy, all are welcome
Parish Council Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, 3/5
5:30pm: Great Vespers
6pm: Choir Practice

Saturday, 3/8:
4:00 pm: Catechism Class
5:30 pm: Great Vespers
followed by Confessions

The Annual Parish General Meeting has been postponed to Sunday March 9th after the Divine Liturgy

Upcoming Sunday Calendar
Below lists the upcoming Sundays from January 26th until Holy Pascha, which falls on April 20th this year. We invite you to join us each week for Sunday Liturgy to celebrate this special commemoration of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. Please mark these special dates on your calendar.

March 2: Cheesefare Sunday (Forgiveness Sunday)
March 3: Beginning of Great Lent
March 9: 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) (Bring your Icon to Church for the procession)
March 16: 2nd Sunday of Lent
March 23: 3rd Sunday of Lent (Elevation of the Holy Cross - wear your crosses)
March 30: 4th Sunday of Lent
April 6: 5th Sunday of Lent
April 13: PALM SUNDAY
April 18: GOOD FRIDAY
April 20: HOLY PASCHA
April 27: THOMAS SUNDAY

FIRST WEEK OF LENT SCHEDULE

MONDAY MARCH 3RD (BEGINNING OF OUR JOURNEY OF GREAT LENT)

WE WILL HAVE SERVICE EVERY DAY:

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY (GREAT COMPLINE) AT 5:30 PM

FRIDAY PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY AT 5:00 PM FOLLOWED BY THE AKATHIST SERVICE AT 6:30PM AND A POTLUCK DINNER.

!SUNDAY, MARCH 9 AT 2AM CLOCK MOVES 1 HOUR FORWARD!

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 9TH, ORTHODOXY SUNDAY (ICON PROCESSION - BRING YOUR ICON TO CHURCH)

May the blessing of the Almighty God come upon you, all those who support this worthy effort, and all the recipients of its benefit who will see the face of Jesus Christ through your offering of love, care, and thoughtfulness.

With prayers for an edifying and enriching Great Lent and a glorious celebration of Pascha, I remain,

Yours in the Service of Christ,

T. Saba

+SABA
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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Food for Hungry People 2025 51 st Anniversary Lenten Calendar						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	MARCH 3 How many clocks do you have in your home? Deposit .25 for each in your Food for Hungry People Box because "time" is running out for those who are hungry!	4 "Put a little love in your heart," get FFHP off to a good start. Put in a nickel for all the "loves" in your life.	5 Count the number of Bibles in your home and deposit .50 for each, because Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me food."	6 Count the number of soda cans, juice boxes and water bottles in your home. Put in .15 each, because Jesus said, "I was thirsty and you gave me a drink."	7 How many tablets do you own? Deposit .25 each. Tablets can be a means of communication. Let's communicate our love for the hungry.	8 Count the number of steps (inside and outside) of your home. Pay .10 for each step. Help the hungry "step" into a new future.
9 How many mirrors are in your home? Pay .15 for each. Let your "mirror" reflect the image of one who cares.	10 Count the locks in your home. Pay .20 for each lock. Let's "unlock" the door that gives hope to the hungry.	11 How many rings do you have? Deposit .15 per ring. This will help us b"ring" food to the hungry!	12 Count your number of sports balls, (basketballs, soccer balls, tennis balls, etc.) Pay .15 for each. Let's help the hungry "score" a meal!	13 How many doors does your home have? Pay .20 for each. Help open a "door" to a better future for those who are hungry.	14 Have everyone in the family deposit all the loose change they have in their pockets or purses. It just makes "cents" to help the hungry.	15 How many electrical outlets and phone chargers are in your home? Pay .15 each. You'll get a "charge" out of feeding the hungry.

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA



Archbishop of New York
and Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Prot. no.: 023/2025

Great Lent, 2025

“In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.”
(2 Corinthians 8:2-3)

TO BE READ FROM THE PULPIT AND PRINTED IN THE BULLETIN

Beloved Hierarchs, Clergy, and Faithful of our Archdiocese,

Greetings in the name of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ!

During this holy season of Great Lent we are encouraged by the prompt of our Holy Church to be transformed into a “New Man” through repentance, which is the reformation and the changing of our way of life, attitude, and reaction to our daily surroundings and struggles.

The Holy Orthodox Church invites and encourages us to increase our daily prayers at our church community and at home. We are shown through the example of many luminary figures from the life of the Church how to break the bondage of our attachment to the hollow enticement of this world.

The “Journey” of Great Lent is a holy adventure of gaining more acute sensitivity in regard of reaching better detection of our sins, raising our sense of gratitude, and being more mindful of others’ needs, pain, and sufferings.

Every year new calamities strike in our midst, and we find more people that are in need to be comforted emotionally and physically. The Food for Hungry People Program is one of the ways that can bring hope to people by revealing to them that there are people who care about them even though they do not know who they are.

This program that has been inspired and effected for more than 50 years by the name and the power of Jesus Christ will continue to happen and transform lives through your generosity that stems from your Christian faith and love.

We encourage you to do as you have done in the past, to open your hearts and to extend a generous hand to those that are deprived and need your love. Comfort and encourage them by contributing to this program during this year’s Great Lent.

Announcements

March is Women’s month

During this month, women of will do all of the Epistle readings and Sermons.

We will also have basket raffle for our Annual Project.

	<i>Epistle Readers</i>	<i>Sermon</i>	
Mar 2	Susan Perers	Holly Dick	St. Paul to the Romans. (13:11-14:4)
Mar 9	Debbie Thieme	Patricia Smith	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (12:1-10)
Mar 16	Yuliya	Ceara Jacobs	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (1:10-2:3)
Mar 23	Kh. Odette	Yuliya	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (4:14-5:6)
Mar 30	Skylla Holland	Michealle Carey	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (6:13-20)

Mar 2– March 16 Fasting Calendar

*Abstain from meat: Sun 3/2

*Abstain from: meat, dairy, eggs, fish,
olive oil & wine: Mon 3/3-3/7 & Mon 3/10-14

*Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs & fish: Sat
3/8, Sun 3/9, Sat 3/15 & Sun 3/16

View calendar at <https://tinyurl.com/AOCfast2025>

Blessing of Homes 2025

Fr. Elia is doing House Blessings by request, only if you fill the Request Form (at info table) Please keep in mind that Fr. Elia is available only on the weekend.



THANK YOU TO IONICA AND YULIYA FOR TODAY’S MEAL

PLEASE SIGN UP ON THE CALENDAR IN THE NARTHEX
TO PREPARE AND SERVE FOOD FOR OUR COFFEE HOUR .

Happy International Women Day to all the ladies!

You just smile and the world changes.

*Let the harmony and colors of spring
shine in your life!*

*The willingness to listen,
the patience to understand, the strength
to support, the heart to care, and just to
be there, that is the beauty of a lady.*



FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE COIN BOX PROGRAM

Please make sure to pick up your coin BOX to take home.

Please see a calendar in the back to make collecting coins fun with kids.

Boxes will be due back on Sunday after Pascha.



THE VIRTUES: HUMILITY

In the Orthodox tradition, humility has often been called the “mother of all virtues,” and pride has been named “the cause of all sin.” The wise and honest person is the one who is humble. “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14.11; 18.14; Proverbs 3.34).

Humility does not mean degradation or remorse. It does not mean considering oneself as the most vile and loathsome of creatures. Genuine humility means to see reality as it actually is in God. True humility for the sinful man is to know that indeed, according to one’s own possibilities and gifts, each one is truly the first and greatest of sinners (cf. 1 Timothy 1.15), for each one has sinned in his own way “like no other man” (Saint Andrew of Crete, Penitential Canon). The truly humble person is the one who, confessing his sins, is “faithful over little,” and doing so, is exalted by the Lord and is “set over much.” Only such a person will “enter into the joy of his Master” (Matthew 25.14–23, Luke 19.17). “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”. (Philippians 2: 3-4).

- Fr. Thomas Hopko 'The Virtues'

Your servant in Christ,
Fr. Elia Shalhoub
Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor

ARCHDIOCESE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

**(THE AMOUNT OUR CHURCH PAYS TO THE ARCHDIOCESE
IS BASED ON THE NUMBER OF THE PARISHIONERS - \$50 PER BAPTISED SOUL)
EVERY PARISHIONER IS RESPONSIBLE TO PAY
THIS ASSESSMENT ONCE A YEAR BESIDE YOUR PLEDGE TO THE CHURCH.
IF YOU HAVEN'T SUBMITTED THE ASSESSMENT MONEY YET,
PLEASE DO SO AS SOON AS YOU CAN.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**



Offering Holy Bread

It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church to offer Holy Bread for a Divine Liturgy for the health of a loved one; in memory of one who has fallen asleep in the Lord; a feast day, anniversary, birthday or other special occasion. The customary donation is \$25.00 per offering. Please fill out the form by the candles.

boundary between slavery and freedom; it is as wide and deep as the Red Sea.” Similarly, Abba Evagrius Ponticus (346–399), one of the Desert Fathers, reminds us: “Do not think you have attained virtue unless you have struggled for it to the point of shedding blood.” The same applies to forgiveness. Sometimes, our struggle to forgive is nothing less than an inner martyrdom, a shedding of our very being.

At the end of Forgiveness Vespers, believers bow before one another, asking for and granting forgiveness. What happens the next day, the first day of Lent, known as Clean Monday? In many places, there is a tradition of going out into the hills for an outing. During this annual outdoor celebration, children and adults fly kites together. There is a deep, spiritual parallel here. The moment we begin to forgive, we experience an inner transformation—a transition into springtime. We emerge from darkness into sunlight, from self-imprisonment into the open air of freedom. We ascend the hills, let the wind blow upon our faces, and release the kites of our hearts—kites of imagination, hope, and joy. And as the priest’s son said: “He is free because he forgives.”
Blessed Lent to all!

Food for Hungry People & Charitable Outreach 51st Anniversary Campaign

Our parish families collected over
193,016.11 last year.

With just a little extra effort from every parish
we can try to collect and distribute more this
year to those in need.



This year we celebrate **51 years** of raising
funds for our **FOOD FOR HUNGRY
PEOPLE & CHARITABLE OUTREACH**
program. Through your generosity, over \$6.5
million has been distributed to the hungry poor in
the United States, Canada and around the world.
During this past year, we made every effort to
reach out to those in need in our own parishes
and in our local communities.

Thank you for supporting
this important ministry!

he received his guest in the barn where he himself was living. Andrews gradually learned the priest's story. His two eldest sons had joined the resistance against the German occupation, but some traitors from the village informed the Germans of their whereabouts. They were captured, and no one saw them again. During that time, the priest's wife died of starvation. After the Germans left, Papastavros lived alone with his married daughter and her young child, while she was expecting a second child in a few weeks. One day, as he was returning home, he found his house in flames. He recounted to Andrews: "I saw them dragging my daughter outside and executing her. They emptied their bullets into her pregnant belly. Then, they killed the little boy right in front of me."

Those who committed these atrocities were not strangers from a distant land; they were local men, people whom Papastavros knew and encountered daily. One of the village women remarked to Andrews, "I'm amazed he hasn't lost his mind!" But the priest did not go mad. Instead, he spoke to the villagers about the need for forgiveness. He told Andrews, "I tell them to forgive and that there exists no other way" (p. 114). He added that they laughed in his face. When Andrews later spoke to the priest's surviving son, the young man did not laugh at his father's message but instead said: "He is free because he forgives" (p. 118).

Two statements illuminate this story: "There is no other way" and "He is free because he forgives."

"There is no other way." In certain situations - ones filled with profound suffering and complexity - there is only one path forward: forgiveness. Revenge only deepens the wound. As Mahatma Gandhi once said: "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind." Only through forgiveness can we break the endless cycle of vengeance and self-destruction. Without forgiveness, there is no hope for a new beginning. Papastavros, who had personally endured the horrors of enemy occupation and civil war, knew this truth firsthand. His words undoubtedly apply to many other conflicts across the world.

"He is free because he forgives." The words of St. Silouan the Athonite (1866–1938) resonate here: "Where there is forgiveness... there is freedom." If we compel ourselves to forgive—or at the very least, desire to forgive—we find ourselves in what the Psalms call a "place of respite" or "a place of freedom": "We went through fire and water, but You brought us into a place of abundance" (Psalm 65:12). Only forgiveness allows us to enter what St. Paul describes as "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). Yet how hard, how painfully hard, it is to forgive and to be forgiven! To borrow from another Orthodox Christian voice, Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh (1914–2003): "Forgiveness is not a small stream marking the



TODAY'S FEAST: SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS (CHEESE FARE SUNDAY)

The Holy Fathers have appointed the commemoration of Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight here, on the eve of the holy Forty-day Fast, demonstrating to us not by simple words, but by actual deeds, how beneficial fasting is for man, and how harmful and destructive are insatiety and the transgressing of the divine commandments. For the first commandment that God gave to man was that of fasting, which the first-fashioned received but did not keep; and not only did they not become gods, as they had imagined, but they lost even that blessed life which they had, and they fell into corruption and death, and transmitted these and innumerable other evils to all of mankind. The God-bearing Fathers set these things before us today, that by

bringing to mind what we have fallen from, and what we have suffered because of the insatiety and disobedience of the first-fashioned, we might be diligent to return again to that ancient bliss and glory by means of fasting and obedience to all the divine commands. Taking occasion from today's Gospel (Matt. 6:14-21) to begin the Fast unencumbered by enmity, we also ask forgiveness this day, first from God, then from one another and all creation.

HESYCHIOS THE MARTYR

Holy martyr Hesychius lived during the reign of king Maximian in 302. He was the first and the leader in the royal palace and the Senate, because he was magisterianus by office. When Maximian ordered that all Christians who were royal soldiers ought to be deprived of their belts (which were a sign of their royal merit) and live as civilians and without honour, many Christians preferred to live without any outward honour due to this illegal order than to be honoured and lose their soul. St. Hesychius was numbered with these Christians as well. When the king heard this, he ordered that the saint ought to be stripped of the expensive clothes, which he used to wear, and be dressed with a shabby mantle without sleeves woven from hair and to be as disgraced and disdained as to consort with women.

When this had been carried out, the king invited him and asked him: "Aren't you ashamed, Hesychius, that you lost the honour and office of magisterianus and that you have been debased to this kind of life? Or maybe you don't know that the Christians, whose way of life you preferred, have no power to restore you to your previous great honour and office?" The saint replied: "Your honour, o king, is temporary but the honour and glory which Christ gives is eternal and without end." Because of these words the king got angry and ordered his men to tie a great millstone around the saint's neck and then to throw him in the middle of river Orontus, which lies in Coele Syria and which is commonly called Oronge. Thus, the blessed man received the crown of martyrdom from the Lord.

PREPARING FOR GREAT LENT

CHEESE FARE SUNDAY (Sunday of Forgiveness) By Metropolitan ANTHONY of Sourozh

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The weeks that have preceded Forgiveness Sunday are weeks during which, in the form of stories that actually took place or of parables, we are presented with the basic sins, the basic brokenness of ours.

And now we have come to a point which is called Lent. Lent is an Old English word derived from the German

that means spring, the beginning of life. Lent is no longer the time allotted to us for repentance. It is the time which, having repented week after week, we should be able together to move along a path that will lead us, through the examples of saints, first to Calvary with Christ and see there what the consequences are of our own sinfulness; because as we read in the life of one saint, in response to a priest who was begging Christ to punish the evil-doers, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Never ask Me for that. If there was only one sinner in the world I would become man again, and again die upon the cross for him or her to be saved.'

When we will stand together at the foot of the cross on Great Thursday night or by the tomb of Christ on Great Friday, we must realize that this has happened because of each of us — not for the totality of mankind taken wholesale, but because of each of us. Christ died for each of us. And we must at that moment bring to Him ourselves in such a way as to show Him that for us, His death upon the cross was not in vain. And then move towards the Resurrection to rise with Him, to rise in exultation, to rise in gratitude, but to rise also renewed, a new creature — not perfect yet, because we have years during which we will have to follow the same path step by step, again and again, until we reach our full maturity and can enter into God's Kingdom.

Today we will ask forgiveness from one another. This is totally unrealistic if we imagine that we can approach each of those who have hurt us, wounded us, at times destroyed our lives, and say, 'Let us agree that the horror that you have brought into my life does not exist. I forgive you. Go in peace.'

We are not mature enough for this. The martyrs were capable of this; we are not. But a thing which we can do, which each of us can do, is to say, 'Because you are so loved of God, so loved by Christ, that He became man, lived, taught and died for you, and not only for me, I accept you as you are. Indeed, I would be so happy if you were different, if you were not a cross on my shoulders, a wound in my heart, a terror in my life, a humiliation. But there is still time ahead of us, and for the moment I accept you as you are and I shall carry you, this acceptance, on my shoulders. As St Paul says, 'Carry one another's burdens, because it is the way in which you will have fulfilled the law of Christ.'

And carrying the burden upon our shoulders means primarily to accept my neighbor as he is, hoping that things will change, praying for him or for her that the grace of God should transform, transfigure this person — but also me, because what judge am I of another's sins while I am a sinner, while I am a temptation, a wound in the life of so many others?

So let us make this attempt. When we come to one another and say, 'Forgive me' it will not mean, if you answer 'Yes I do' that nothing that was wrong between us is annihilated, exists no more. But it means 'I accept you as you are, sinful, a wound in my flesh, a wound in my heart, a problem in my life — but I accept you and I will carry this acceptance, and you, throughout life, and pray for God's blessing to be on you and pray for God to heal both of us, that I should become such that I do not lead you into temptation, be the cause of your own fall.

Let us therefore pray together during this service, bring to God true repentance of what we are and what we have been, but also bring one another to God. Moving towards Calvary, moving towards the resurrection has been compared by one of the ancient writers to travelers who board the same ship. They will never arrive safe if there are quarrels between them, if they are not at one. Let us be at one, with Christ who is at the rudder, with Christ who has given His life for each of us, however difficult we are for one another. And when we say, 'Yes, I forgive,' it means, 'I accept you as you are with whatever consequence.

PREPARING FOR GREAT LENT

Sunday of Forgiveness
(Cheese-Fare Sunday)

FASTING AND FEASTING

Lent should be more than a time for fasting.
It should also be a joyous season of feasting.
Lent is a time to fast from certain things and to feast on others.
It is a season in which we should:

Fast from judging others; feast on the Christ dwelling in them.
Fast from emphasis on differences; feast on the unity of all life.
Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute; feast on phrases that purify.

Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger; feast on patience.
Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.
Fast from worry; feast on divine order.
Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.

Fast from negatives; feast on affirmatives.
Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.
Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.
Fast from suspicion; feast on truth.

Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.

May God bless us all with Forgiveness and peace during the upcoming holy season!

Reflections on Forgiveness

From His Eminence Metropolitan Saba

(This article is excerpted from a lecture by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware.)
“And throughout eternity, I forgive you, and you forgive me. As our dear Savior said: ‘This is the Wine, and this is the Bread.’”—William Blake
“The fool neither forgives nor forgets; the naïve forgives and forgets; but the wise forgives and does not forget.”—Thomas Szasz
“**He is free because he forgives.**” In Kevin Andrews’ book The Flight of Ikaros, there is a story that encapsulates the essence of forgiveness. Andrews was studying medieval fortresses in Greece. In 1949, he traveled through a region devastated first by the German occupation during World War II and then by the brutal Greek civil war that followed, which was in its final stages at that time.
One evening, Andrews arrived in a village where he was hosted by the parish priest, Papastavros. His home had been burned down during the civil war, so