

The third point that today's meaningful gospel passage underlines, is the struggle against avarice, the measureless pursuit of material goods. If the avaricious, money-loving and possession-loving person, does not perceive the passion, and does not struggle to be delivered from the evil "friendships", he will not be able to advance spiritually. Otherwise, he will resemble someone who was voluntarily bound with heavy rocks, and is trying to keep himself on the surface of the sea, and to swim. May we make the correct choices.

Archim. A. A.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 6 2022 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY (CHEESE FARE SUNDAY)** *42 Martyrs of Amorion in Phrygia, Finding the Precious Cross by St. Helen, Hesychios the Wonderworking*

**TONE OF THE WEEK** : *Fourth Tone*

**EOTHINON** : *Fourth Eothinon*

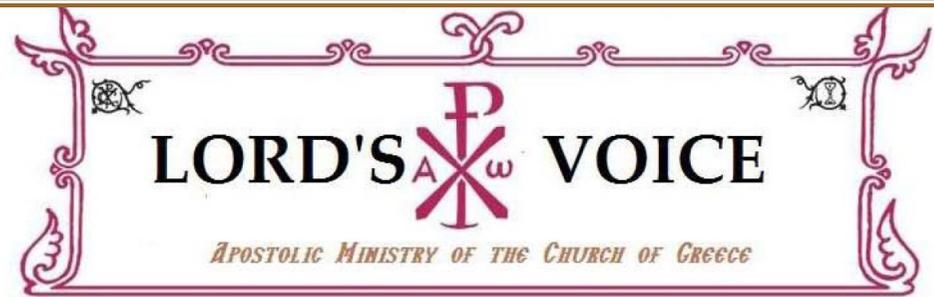
**EPISTLE READING** : *St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4*

**GOSPEL READING** : *Matthew 6:14-21.*

**SUNDAY, MARCH 13 2022 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY** *Removal of the relics of Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, Pouplios the Martyr, Bishop of Athens, Christina the Martyr of Persia, Gerald, Bishop of Mayo.*

**EPISTLE READING** : *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40*

**GOSPEL READING** : *John 1:43-51.*



**70<sup>TH</sup> YEAR MARCH 6 2022 PAMPHLET # 10 (3588)**

## **THE BEGINNING OF THE SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE**

The arena of Holy and Great Lent is opening before us, Cheesefare Sunday today, and since our Church, as our loving-caring mother and pedagogue "introduced us "to Christ" without any imposition, slowly slowly into the climate of fasting from foods, since first, in a discerning manner, she urged us to be deprived only of meat, she is now calling us to joyfully hasten to enter into the ocean of Holy and Great Lent, of asceticism and fasting, of the journey to the Passion and the Resurrection of our Lord.

She does this, not leaving us unaided, but offering us experienced spiritual lifesavers, primarily today, during the Divine Liturgy, with the choice of a very didactic excerpt from the sacred Gospel of the Evangelist Matthew.

### **The Church does not leave us unaided**

The first saving means of our relationship with God and with our fellow man, who is, His image in the world, simultaneously also a recommendation for the salvation of each

## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (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.

"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."

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one of us personally, is forgiveness. This daughter of love, that brings, as a spiritual dowry to all who adopt it, the gift of peace in the hearts of people. Every effort to fast, if we do not decide today, without delay, to long for the virtue of forgiving, accepting and offering a wholehearted forgiveness, is simply a change in diet. Only forgiveness is able to comprise an unbroken foundation for our effort, delivered by the grace of God from the demonic vain toiling of seeking the justice of this world. We all know well that, when once the disciples asked the Lord to teach them how to pray, He answered them: handing down to them the familiar Lord's Prayer, the "Our Father", which the faith of our Orthodox mother, and our Orthodox grandmother taught us, together with

the sign of the cross, already from a very small age. So, in this prayer, handed down by our Lord, the value of forgiveness is stressed, precisely as in today's Gospel reference.

"Forgive in order to be forgiven" is the message in both places. God, the Father, is not asking us for something theoretical, He is not ordering something from the height and blessedness of His godhead, but He is asking for something that He Himself has implemented, as a compassion-loving Father. Awaiting, standing up, His creature, at the door of His paternal home, in all the ages of the Old Testament, He again gave the capability of salvation with His incarnation within the Trinity "of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary". Thus, again, heaven opened up for those toiling and burdened of this world.

### The spiritual accounts

And our mother, the Church, proceeds to her "good accounts" evangelically ringing for us the bell about the most dangerous of all the tares that sprouted in the field of asceticism and fasting, but also more widely, of the Christian life, which is none other than the demon of hypocrisy. The sooner we realize that no matter what effort we do, we are doing it with God's help, and whatever we achieve in spiritual matters, we are achieving it with His grace, all the better it is for us. We are responsible only for our mistakes, our missing the marks, our omissions and our sins. For this reason, working our virtues "in secret" has value, otherwise people give us the reward with the 'well done' and their admiration, even if we are not awaiting anything from the just-judging God.