



The Messenger

Sunday, March 17, 2023
Κυριακή, 17 Μάρτιος

Forgiveness Sunday
Κυριακή τῆς Τυροφάγου

Weekly Worship Guide

The Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation • Atlanta, GA
Alexios the Man of God, Paul the Righteous Martyr, Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland,
Marinos the Martyr, Theocteristos the Confessor

Sunday School Presentations

6th Grade
"Connected Through Prayer"

7th/8th Grade
"Symbolism Within the Holy Sacraments"

Today's Memorials

Service can be found on p. 127 of the Divine Liturgy Book

40 Day Memorial for Nickolaos Dragoumaniotis

1 Year Memorial for Georgia Coclin

1 Year Memorial for Despo (Despina) Lamas

1 Year Memorial for Michael Snider

5 Year Memorial for Demetrios Costarides

Many Years to His Eminence Metropolitan +ALEXIOS on His Name Day

Εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη, Δέσποτα!

Sunday of Forgiveness



On the evening of Forgiveness Sunday, we celebrate Forgiveness Vespers. At the end of this service, the priest stands before the ambon, and the faithful come up one by one and make a prostration before the priest. As we do this, we say, "Forgive me, a sinner," while the priest responds, "God forgives. Forgive me." The person responds, "God forgives," and receives a blessing from the priest. After receiving the priest's blessing, the faithful also ask forgiveness of each other.

While we do not know exactly when the Church began celebrating this beautiful service, we do know Forgiveness Vespers has been practiced since at least 520 A.D.; we see it mentioned in the story of the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, who lived around that time.

You might ask why you should ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to you, some of whom you might barely know. In Her wisdom, the Church shows us there are so many subtle ways of offending Divine Love. Indifference, selfishness, lack of interest/concern for others—in short, that wall we 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 our entire relationship to other humans is deeply fallen. It allows us to encounter one another as children of God, so we can feel that mutual "recognition" which is lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

For too many people, Lent means a simple change of diet, a way to fulfill requirements for what the Church doesn't want you to eat for some reason. They see fasting as an end in itself, as a "good deed" required by God and carrying in itself its merit and reward. But, the Eastern Orthodox Church makes clear that fasting is a means toward a higher goal: our spiritual renewal, our return to God through true repentance and reconciliation. If we turn fasting into a legalistic obligation, we endanger our very souls. As a Lenten hymn says: "In vain do you rejoice in no 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."

Moreover, forgiveness rests at the very center of the Christian faith and 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.

Order of Hymns Following The Small Entrance

Ἀναστάσιμον Ἀπολυτίκιον. Ἦχος πλ. δ'.

Ἐξ ὕψους κατήλθες ὁ Εὐσπλαγχνος, ταφήν κατεδέξω τριήμερον, ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἐλευθερώσης τῶν παθῶν. Ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡμῶν, Κύριε δόξα σοι.

Ἀπολυτίκιον τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἀλεξίου. Ἦχος δ'.

Ταχὺ προκατάλαβε.

Ἐκ ρίζης ἐβλάστησας, περιφανοῦς καὶ κλεινῆς, ἐκ πόλεως ἦνθησας, βασιλικῆς καὶ λαμπρᾶς, Ἀλέξιε πάνσοφε, πάντων δ' ὑπερφρονήσας, ὡς φθαρτῶν καὶ ρεόντων, ἔσπευσας συναφθῆναι, τῷ Χριστῷ καὶ Δεσπότη. Αὐτὸν οὖν ἐκδυσώπει ἀεὶ, ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.

Ἀπολυτίκιον τοῦ Ναοῦ. Ἦχος δ'.

Σήμερον τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τὸ Κεφάλαιον, καὶ τοῦ ἀπ' αἰῶνος Μυστηρίου ἡ φανέρωσις, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, Υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται, καὶ Γαβριὴλ τὴν χάριν εὐαγγελίζεται. Διὸ καὶ ἡμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ τῇ Θεοτόκῳ βοήσωμεν. Χαῖρε Κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ.

Κοντάκιον τῶν Κεκοιμημένων. Ἦχος πλ. δ'.

Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, ὡς ἀγαθὸς τῶν δούλων σου καὶ ὅσα ἐν βίῳ ἡμάρτον συγχώρησον· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀναμάρτητος, εἰ μὴ σὺ ὁ δυνάμενος καὶ τοῖς μεταστάσι δοῦναι τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν.

Κοντάκιον. Ἦχος πλ. β'.

Τῆς σοφίας ὁδηγέ, φρονήσεως χορηγέ, / τῶν ἀφρόνων παιδευτά, καὶ πτωχῶν ὑπερασπιστά, / στήριξον, συνέτισον τὴν καρδίαν μου Δέσποτα. / Σὺ δίδου μοι λόγον, ὁ τοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγος· / ἰδοὺ γὰρ τὰ χεῖλη μου, οὐ μὴ κωλύσω ἐν τῷ κράζειν σοι· / Ἐλεῆμον, ἐλέησόν με τὸν παραπεσόντα.

Resurrectional Apolytikion. Mode pl. 4.

From on high you descended, O merciful Lord. You accepted the cross and three days in the tomb to free us from the bondage of sin, O our life and resurrection. Glory to you, O Lord.

Apolytikion for Saint Alexios. Mode 4.

Come quickly.

Though you did bud forth from a renowned and notable root, * and though you did blossom from a city famed for her great imperial dignity, * yet did you scorn all things as corruptible and fleeting, * striving to be joined to Christ Your Master forever. * Entreat Him, O Alexios most wise, fervently for our souls.

Apolytikion of the Church. Mode 4.

Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the mystery which was hidden from eternity. The Son of God becomes the Virgin's Son, and Gabriel announces the grace of this Good News. Let us also join with him, calling to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Woman full of grace; the Lord is with you.

Kontakion for the Departed. Mode pl. 4.

Remember, O Lord, as You are good, Your servants, and forgive every sin they have committed in this life. For no one is sinless except You, Who have power to grant rest to those who have fallen asleep.

Kontakion. Mode pl. 2.

O guide to wisdom, provider of prudence, disciplinarian of fools, and defender of the poor, fortify and discipline my heart, O Master; You, give me a word, O Word of the Father. For behold, I will not hinder my lips from crying to You: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.

Epistle (St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4)

Reader: Alexia Spetseris

PROKEIMENON: Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.

VERSE: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

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."

DIVINE LITURGY CONTINUES ON PAGE 51 OF THE DIVINE LITURGY BOOK

Reminders for Receiving Holy Communion

Holy Communion is offered in the Orthodox Church only to those individuals baptized and/or chrismated (confirmed) in the Orthodox Faith. To participate in Holy Communion one must be in good standing with the Church spiritually (for example, married people must have had their marriage blessed in the Church; and, all must be without grave sin on their hearts). For all Orthodox Christians, the proper preparation for Holy Communion must be observed: that is, examination of conscience, confession, reading the prayers for Holy Communion, and the proper fasting. If you have any further questions about this, please speak with the clergy. Women should remove all lipstick when approaching for Holy Communion.

Thank you.

Support our Cathedral

Welcome, everyone!

We extend a warm welcome to our visitors worshipping with us today in our Cathedral. You are invited to join us for our fellowship, following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy in Carlos Hall next to the Church. Thank you for your visit! Please stop by our hospitality table and sign the register in the Narthex.

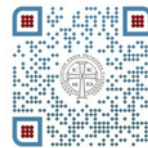
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Contact us

2500 Clairmont Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

office@atlgoc.org
(404) 633-5870
Fax (404) 633-6018

Rev. Fr. Paul A. Kaplanis, Dean
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