



**Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and Ireland
St George's Antiochian Orthodox Society**

Sundays 10 March - 17 March 2019

**Archbishop: Metropolitan Silouan Oner
Archpriest Samir Gholam
Priest Michael Touma**

**Newsletter Issue:
04/19**

Regular Services:

Saturdays: Vespers 16:30
Sundays: Matins 10:00
Liturgy 11:00

Orthodox Calendar:

04 March – Gregory Bishop of Constance

06 March – Finding the precious Cross by St Helen

08 March – Hermas the Apostle of the 70, Hieromartyr Theodoret of Antioch

10 March – Forgiveness Sunday

11 March – Theeodora the Righteous

12 March – Symeon the new Theologian

16 March – Julian the Martyr

17 March – Sunday of Orthodoxy

Repentance and Confession

As Christians, we have many ways to make sure that our relationship with God continues to grow; the first of which is prayer. Both a strong personal prayer life and participation in the sacramental life of the Church are vital to keeping our spiritual tank full of fuel. The Church in her wisdom also provides us with a guide - a Spiritual Father, who will serve as our navigator assisting us along the way.

There are three main elements to the act of formal repentance. The first is our need to have sincere sorrow for our sins and for breaking our communion with God. The second is our open and heartfelt confession of sins. The third element is the formal prayer of absolution through which the forgiveness of God through Christ is sacramentally bestowed on us as repented sinners. The fulfillment of the Sacrament of Confession is the reception of Holy Communion and the genuine reconciliation of the repentant sinner with God and all men according to the commandments of Christ.

Confession, by definition, is the open and public acknowledgement of sin before God and all mankind. It is important to remember that through confession God does not wish to harm us, but rather help us turn away from sin and once again live our lives according to His Teachings. In order to do this however, we must take the time and prepare ourselves by praying to God to grant us the wisdom to thoroughly examine our conscience, courage to make a sincere and complete confession and strength to amend our ways.

Story and Lessons:

The pencil's tale

An old pencil maker took his newest pencil aside, just before he was about to pack him into a box. Imagining the little fellow as a person he recalled a few things about the pencil.

"There are five things you need to know," he said to his pencil, "before I send you out into the world. Always remember these five things - never forget them - and you will become the best pencil you can be!

"The first thing is to remember that you will be able to do many great things, but only if you put yourself in someone else's hands.

"From time to time you will experience a painful sharpening, but remember that this will make you a better pencil.

"Also, keep in mind that you will be able to correct any mistakes you might make along the way.

"And the most important part of you is what's on the inside.

"And remember this, as well, upon every surface that you are used, you must leave your mark. No matter what else happens, you must continue to write."

It seemed the pencil listened to him and promised he would remember these five things so that he could live his life with heart and purpose.

Forgiveness Sunday **(Archpriest Alexander Schmemmann)**

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..." (Mark 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 memories, with the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations – we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation.

forgiveness stands at the very centre 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 fulfil 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.

Fathers quotes:

"If you have sinned, acknowledge the sin and repent. God will forgive the sin and once again give you a new heart.... and a new spirit (Ez.36:26). There is no other way. Either do not sin, or repent".

St Theophan the Recluse

"Prayer is food for the soul. Do not starve the soul, it is better to let the body go hungry. Do not judge anyone, forgive everyone. Consider yourself worse than everyone in the world and you will be saved. As much as possible, be more quiet".

St Joseph of Optina

"Where shall I begin to lament the deeds of my wretched life? What first-fruit shall I offer, O Christ, for my present lamentation? But in Thy compassion grant me release from my falls.

Come, wretched soul, with your flesh, confess to the Creator of all. In future refrain from your former brutishness, and offer to God tears in repentance".

Canon of St Andrew of Crete

Announcements:

برعاية الميتروبوليت سلوان أونر تدعوكم مطرانية الجزر البريطانية وايرلندا الانطاكية للروم الأرثوذكس الى **مؤتمر العام 2019**
بعنوان : **العمل في كرم الرب، رعاية الأطفال وتربيتهم على الإيمان**، وذلك من نهار الاثنين 27 لغاية 29 أيار 2019، الدعوة عامة،
للاستفسار الرجاء مراجعة الأب ميخائيل.

Romania pilgrimage: With the blessings of Metropolitan Silouan and request of some members of Hamelat el Teeb; we have organised a Pilgrimage trip to Romania from 21 to 27 June 2019, which co-insides with the celebrations of St John, there will be visits to several Monasteries, touristic places, museums and shopping in Bucharest. The Price is £ 575.00 includes 6 nights' accommodations + transport +guide +half board (6 breakfast and 5 dinners). If you are interested, please contact Fr Michel Touma 07955716299 before the end of March.

