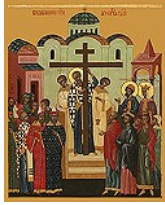


## ✠Bulletin✠

Week of August 24th to August 30th



## Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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### 11th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 2

Hieromartyr Eutychius, disciple of St. John the Theologian (1st c.). Translation of the Relics of St. Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia (1479). Ven. Arsenius, Abbot of Komel (Vologda—1550). Martyr Tation (Tatio) of Claudiopropolis (305). Virgin Martyr Cyra of Persia (558). St. George Limniotes the Confessor of Mt. Olympus (8th c.). Repose of New Hieromartyr Cosmas of Aetolia, Equal-to-the-Apostles (1779). “Saint Peter of Moscow” Icon of the Mother of God (ca. 1306).

### Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

#### Sunday August 24, 2025

9:10 am - Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

#### Friday August 29th

9:00 pm — Divine Liturgy

Beheading of St. John the Baptist

### Weekly Schedule

#### Sunday August 24, 2025

- Choir Practice for Sept 14th
- Inquirers & Catechism classes following Divine Liturgy

## Forgiveness and the Healing of the Soul

By Fr. Philip LeMaster

Sometimes the truth has to come to us in an unusual way in order to get our attention. That is because most of us are really good at hearing only what we want to hear and seeing only what we want to see. Unfortunately, that means we are skilled in ignoring uncomfortable truths, including the simple teaching of our Lord that we must forgive others if we want God to forgive us. In today's Gospel text (Matthew 18-23-35), Jesus Christ spoke a very disturbing parable that should make that truth clear to us all.

A servant owed his ruler more money than he could possibly earn in his entire life. When he could not pay, the master was ready to sell him and his entire family in order to cover the debt. But the servant begged for more time to pay, and the master showed mercy even beyond his request. He actually forgave the huge debt; the man then owed nothing, and he and his family were safe from punishment of any kind. This was an unbelievably good turn of events for the servant and his family.

Then that same servant found another servant who owed him a much smaller sum of money. Since the second man did not have enough to pay the debt, the first servant had him put in prison until he could pay. He refused to show him even a small measure of mercy or patience. When the king heard about it, he was enraged that the man to whom he had forgiven so much would be so cruel to his fellow servant. So the king put the first servant in prison until he could pay all that he owed. The Lord ended this parable with the harsh warning: So, My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

This parable gets our attention because we all find it hard to forgive at least some of the people who have wronged or offended us in the course of our lives. Regardless of whether the wrongs occurred days, years, or decades ago, it is difficult to forgive. At times we actually enjoy holding grudges against others; maybe it serves our pride to think that we are better than those who have wronged us and thus justified in looking down on them. We sometimes hate our tendency to remember past offenses, but unpleasant memories can play over and over in our minds, inflame our passions, and make us feel powerless against them.

Like everything else in the Christian life, forgiveness is a process of healing as we participate more fully in the life of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the Lord concluded the parable by saying that we must forgive others from our hearts, from the depths of our souls. Though it is a necessary and important first step, simply putting on a good face and not striking back is just the beginning of the journey. Our goal is not only to be a bit better at self-control, but to be fully reconciled with our neighbors, to be so filled with love that we forgive, forget and show them the same mercy that the Lord has shown us with a pure and whole heart. When we realize how far we are from fulfilling that high goal, our need for His mercy should become all the more clear.

Even as we always want God to forgive us when we sin, there is no limit to the forgiving, reconciling love that He calls us to give our enemies. When St. Peter asked how many times he was to forgive his brother who sinned against him, maybe seven times, Christ said, no, seventy times seven (Matt. 18:22). In other words, we should always forgive; there is never a point where the Christian becomes justified in judging, condemning, and refusing to show mercy. We are instead to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect in His providential love, care, and blessing for the just and the unjust. (Matt. 5:48)

None of us is anywhere near fulfilling that divine calling, but we must not give up and despair about our struggle to forgive others. Instead, we must remember that to be a Christian means to participate personally in the life of the Holy Trinity by grace. Jesus Christ brings us into eternal life such that we share in His victory over sin and death. Already in this life, in the world as we know it, the holiness, mercy, and love of the Lord must become active in us, must become characteristic of us as unique persons as we find greater healing for our souls.

The more we participate in Him, the more we will extend His forgiveness to those who have wronged us. If we refuse to do so, however, we refuse Christ and reject His mercy. And when we refuse Him, we condemn only ourselves. In moments of anger and pain, it is usually much easier to judge, hate, and condemn than to love and forgive. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, we humans have distorted our relationships with one another, allowing fear, judgment, and insecurity to divide us. Early in the book of Genesis, their descendent Lamech brags that he will avenge himself seventy-seven-fold (Gen. 4:24). In other words, he was like a bloodthirsty gangster who never showed mercy to anyone. We are not that far gone, but we probably do find it beyond our present strength to forgive seventy times seven as Christ forgives us.

Like any other area of weakness in the Christian life, our struggle to forgive must begin with a sincere confession that we hold a grudge against someone else. So we must ask for God's forgiveness and help in being healed. We must also pray for those who have offended us, asking God's blessings on them. And when we are tempted to remember what they have done or to judge them, we must immediately turn our attention to the Jesus Prayer and remembrance of our own need for forgiveness from the Lord, and from those whom we have offended throughout the course of our lives. We are not the blameless judges of others, but those who stand in constant need of grace, mercy, and healing together with those who have wronged us.

It is a long struggle, but if we consistently turn away from unholy thoughts, they will lose their power over us. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). The less attention we give to our temptations, the more they will diminish. The challenge is harder if the others involved in these relationships continue offending us. But remember what the one who told us to forgive seventy times seven said from the cross, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34). There is no limit to the forgiving love of Jesus Christ. And if we are in Him, there can be no limit on our forgiveness either. We who want His mercy must show it to others. **Otherwise, we reject Him and condemn ourselves.**

Every human being bears the image of God, including our enemies. **In that we have done something harmful to anyone, we have done it to the Lord.** Remember the words of St. John: If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar (1 John 4:20). It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and souls that we will be able to live out our love of God in relation to every human being we encounter.

The more we share in His life, the more His mercy will become characteristic of us in relation to our enemies. We fool only ourselves by thinking that we may accept His forgiveness without also showing that same forgiveness to our neighbors. If we do that, we will become the hypocritical judges of others, like the servant in today's parable who shut himself out of his master's mercy. Whether we acknowledge it or not, that is who we risk becoming every time that we refuse to extend the great forgiveness that we have received in Jesus Christ to those who have wronged us. So let us all convey our Lord's mercy to our enemies, for that is how we open ourselves to the grace that we all desperately need for the healing of our souls.

### Quotes

Elder Thaddeus

*"It is of great significance if there is a person who truly prays in a family. Prayer attracts God's Grace and all the members of the family feel it, even those whose hearts have grown cold. Pray always."*

St. John Chrysostom

*God does not forsake you. It is because He wishes to increase your glory that oftentimes He permits you to fall sick. Keep up your courage so that you may hear Him say: 'Do you think I have deal with you otherwise than that you may be shown to be just?'"*

St. Ephraim of Katounakia

*"If I read a hundred prayers in the silence of Mount Athos a day, and you, in the noise of the city, with work and family responsibilities, read three prayers, then we are in the same position."*

### Inquirers & Catechism Class

Classes will be on Sundays following Divine Liturgy. For those new to understanding Orthodoxy or for those who want to expand your foundation, please join us for our classes. Please check the schedule for changes.

### Holy Cross 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – September 14<sup>th</sup>

In preparation for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Holy Cross and the visit of Bishop Gerasim, we have established committees for this big event. Please see the following people for more information & to help prepare for our big day!

John & Viktoria Graham - Lunch following Divine Liturgy

David Bartos – Exterior of the Church/Landscaping

Maria Flemmer & Svitlana Canko – Interior of the church/cleaning

### Prayer Requests

Carolyn – Robert & Debra's Forster's daughter

Anne and Scott Peatross

Robert (John) Forster

Robert Kozera

Megan – David & Phyllis Bartos' daughter

Rosemary – Friend of David & Phyllis Bartos

### Please pray for our families in Ukraine

Leonid, Nadiia, Andrii, Halyna,  
Volodymyr, Maryna, Dmytro, Bohdan,  
Nadiia, Oleksandr, Tetiana,  
Roman, Mykola  
Anatoly, Olga, Maria, Andrei

**Please let us know of anyone you would like to add to the Prayer Lists.**

### [tithe.ly.com](https://tithe.ly.com)

Another way to "donate". This app can be downloaded to your phone and Holy Cross can be accessed via this app. Also, [tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly) can be accessed through the church website [www.HolyCrossFtMyers.org](http://www.HolyCrossFtMyers.org)

## The Divine Liturgy

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

### **Tone 2 Troparion** (Resurrection)

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal,  
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.  
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,  
all the powers of heaven cried out://  
"O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!"

### **Tone 4 Troparion** (St. Eutychius)

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles,  
you became a successor to their throne.  
Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine contemplation,  
O inspired one of God;  
by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, even  
to the shedding of your blood.//  
O Hieromartyr Eutychius, entreat Christ God to save our souls!

### **Tone 2 Kontakion** (Resurrection)

Hell became afraid, O almighty Savior,  
seeing the miracle of Thy Resurrection from the tomb!  
The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee,//  
and the world, my Savior, praises Thee forever.

### **Tone 3 Kontakion** (St. Eutychius)

A successor of the Apostles and an excellent example to bishops,  
Eutychius, you were glorified as a martyr.  
You shone forth like the sun enlightening all,  
dispelling the dark night of godlessness.//  
Therefore, we honor you as truly a godly celebrant of the Mysteries of  
Christ.

### **Tone 2 Prokeimenon** (Resurrection)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He has become my salvation.  
(Ps. 117:14)

*V. The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over  
to death. (Ps. 117:18)*

### **1 Corinthians 9:2-12 (Epistle)**

If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

### **Tone 2**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

*V. May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble! May the name of the  
God of Jacob protect you! (Ps. 19:1)*

*V. Save the King, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call! (Ps. 19:9)*

### **Matthew 18:23-35 (Gospel)**

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

### **Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading**

By Blessed Theophylact

Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

**23. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.** The gist of the parable teaches us to forgive our fellow servants who have sinned against us, especially if they fall down before us begging forgiveness. To interpret the parable in its particulars should be done only by one who has the mind of Christ. Nevertheless, we shall attempt it. The kingdom is the Word of God, but it is not a kingdom of small extent, but of the heavens. The Word is likened to a man who was a king, that is, He Who became incarnate for our sake and appeared in the likeness of men, and He settles accounts with His servants as a Good Judge. He does not punish without first judging: that would be cruel.

**24-25. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.** It is we ourselves who owe ten thousand talents, receiving benefaction every day yet giving back nothing good to God in return. He who owes ten thousand talents is also that ruler who has received from God the protection and allegiance of many men, each man being like a talent, and then does not employ his sovereignty well. Selling the debtor along with his wife and children indicates alienation from God, for the one who is sold goes to another master. And is the wife not the flesh, being the mate of the soul, and the children, the evil deeds done by the soul and the body? He commands the flesh to be given to Satan for ravaging, that is, to be given over to illnesses or to the torment of the demons, but the children, that is to say, the doing of evil deeds, are given over to torture on the rack, as, for example, when God withers the hand that has stolen, or constricts it by means of a demon. See how the woman, which is the flesh, and the children, which is the doing of evil, have been given over to affliction so that the spirit might be saved, as in the case of that man who can no longer steal because his hand is crippled.

**26-27. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.** Behold the power of repentance and the Lord's love for mankind. For repentance caused the servant to fall down prostrate before the king and cease from wickedness, since he who stands firmly in wickedness cannot be forgiven. In His love for man God forgave the debt entirely although the servant was not asking for complete forgiveness of the debt, but for an extension of time in which to repay it. Learn, therefore, that God gives more than we ask for. His love for man is such that even what seems to be severe, the command that the servant be sold, God did not speak out of severity, but to terrify the servant in order to induce him to fix all his hope on entreaty and supplication.

**28-30. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.** He who had been forgiven "went out", departed, and as a consequence, took his fellow servant by the throat: the one who lacks

compassion is not he who remains in God, but rather he who departs from God and is a stranger to Him. So great was the servant's inhumanity that, although he had been forgiven the greater amount (ten thousand talents), he could not at all forgive the smallest amount (a hundred pence), nor even grant a postponement. And this despite the fact that the fellow servant spoke the very same words to him, reminding him of the words by which he himself had been saved: "Have patience with me and I will pay you all."

**31. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.** The fellow servants are the angels, who are shown here to be haters of evil and lovers of good. They do not tell these things to the Lord as if He were unaware of them, but in order for you, O reader, to learn that the angels watch over us and are angered by man's inhumanity.

**32-34. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.** The master in his love for mankind takes issue with the servant, to show that it is not the master, but the savagery and the ingratitude of the servant that has revoked the gift. To what tormentors does he deliver him? To the punitive powers for eternal punishment. For the meaning of "till he should pay all his debt" is this: "let him be punished until he should pay all that was due." But he will **never** be able to pay his debt, and therefore his punishment will never end.

**35. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."** He did not say "your, Father", but "My Father". For such as these are unworthy to have God as their Father. He wants us to forgive from our hearts and not only from our lips. Understand, then, what a great evil is remembrance of wrongs, since it revokes the gift of God; though God does not repent of His gifts, nevertheless they are revoked.

#### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*)  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!