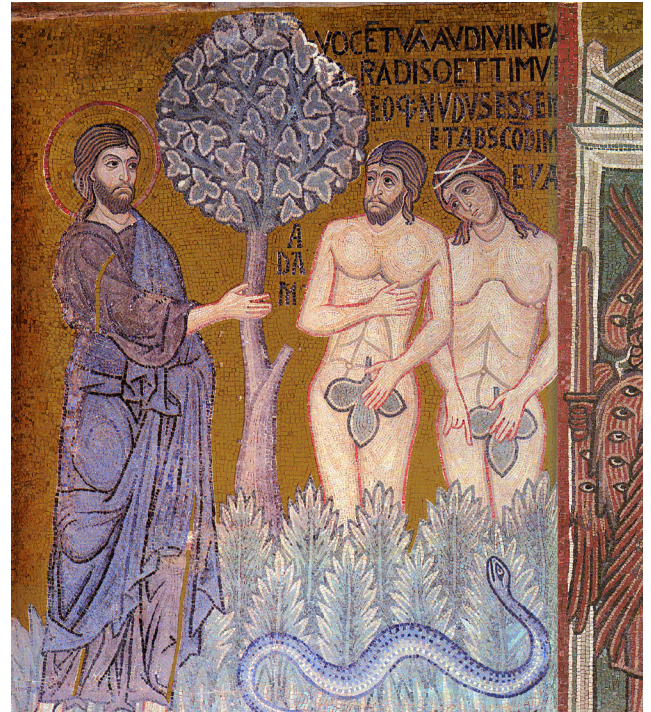


# FAMILY GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 6:14-21

This lesson on forgiveness comes the day before Clean Monday, the first day of Great Lent. As Christians, we must forgive others and seek their forgiveness. We reaffirm this every time we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." In His ministry, Jesus makes it clear that God forgives us only if we forgive others. This Gospel passage additionally draws our attention to how we should approach the Lenten period and where our focus should be—on laying up treasures in heaven. On this Sunday, we also commemorate all the saints who excelled in ascetic living (living a spiritually disciplined life). We look to these holy ascetics as examples to inspire us toward fasting, praying, and doing acts of mercy. Today is the last day dairy products are permitted before the fast.



*The Lord Confronts the Disobedience of Adam & Eve; "The Expulsion from Paradise", Nave Mosaics from Palatine Chapel, Palermo, Sicily. Mid 12th Century.*

## For Consideration

- What happens if we do not forgive people who do us wrong?
- How should we fast? What are ways we can "lay up" for ourselves treasures in heaven?
- What does this Gospel passage mean for our lives?

# TO DO TOGETHER

## Agape Canister

This Sunday has been designated Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) Sunday. Take some time to learn about this ministry and ways you can support it. Consider participating in the Agape Canister program by collecting spare change during the Lenten period to further missionary activities. Visit [www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org) for some more information.

## Fast as a Family

Take some time to talk about fasting as a family. Consider having family cooking night where everyone helps to plan and prepare a Lenten meal. Consider making extra and donating it to a shelter or someone in need. This may be more work for the adults initially, but the fruit will be worth the effort.

## Forgiveness Vespers

As tomorrow is Clean Monday, today we seek forgiveness not only from our family members and friends but also from our parish family. Make plans to attend Forgiveness Vespers as a family. In addition, ask your priest for prayers from the service to read at home as a family. After reading these prayers, have each family member ask for forgiveness with a prostration and a kiss of peace.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Both now and forever, Amen.*

*The season of the virtues now has come, and the Judge is at the door. Let us not hold back with darkened face, but let us keep the fast, offering tears, repentance, and almsgiving; and let us cry: our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea; Deliverer of all, forgive each one of us, that we may receive an incorruptible crown.*

-from the Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday

## FINAL THOUGHT

There once lived a holy archbishop who was sought out by pilgrims because of his great spiritual insight. As his popularity and the demands on his time grew, he wished to retreat into a life of noetic prayer—ceaseless prayer of the mind and heart. He was granted permission to move back to his native island where he lived more fully a monastic life. One day, a man desperately knocked at the monastery door, he had committed a murder and was trying to flee from the villagers seeking revenge. The man confessed his sins to the holy archbishop, now the abbot of the monastery. As he listened, the abbot realized that the person who the man had murdered was the abbot's own brother. God helped the abbot see into the heart of this man and see how sorry he was. He forgave the man who murdered his brother and read the confessional prayers of absolution. The abbot then helped the man to escape the authorities so that he could live the rest of his life in prayer and repentance at a monastery. This holy abbot is St. Dionysios of Zakynthos. He exemplifies true forgiveness.

