

Clean Monday (Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



The Journey to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

Good morning Prayer Team!

The Prayer Team begin on February 23, 2015. That year, February 23 was Clean Monday, the first day of Lent. I began the prayer team with the hope that thirty people would join and with the intention of writing only during Lent of 2015. By God's grace, and with your prayers and encouragement, the Prayer Team is now two years old, reaches thousands of people and has resulted in two books so far. The original intention of the prayer team was to get people to pray. That is still the intention. Please pray daily to God, for your own salvation. I humbly ask for your prayers for this ministry of the Prayer Team, for me, and for those who read this message. You will not know many, if any, of them, but they all share one goal, to grow closer to the Lord by reading these messages. Thank you for your prayers and your encouragement these past two years. By God's grace, may we continue to glorify Him in this ministry for a long time to come.



Today the Orthodox Church begins the journey of Great Lent. Today is known as Clean Monday. The reason why Lent begins on Monday is that we have a forty day fast PLUS Holy Week. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Week begins with the Saturday of Lazarus, so Lent ends the day before, on a Friday. Thus working back forty days from Saturday of Lazarus, we end up starting on a Monday.

The name of this day, Clean Monday. “Clean Monday” serves as a reminder that the purpose of Great Lent is to cleanse ourselves of sin and stain so that we can bask in the glory of the Resurrection.

In order to feel clean, one has to realize that he or she is dirty. Five minutes after we get out of the shower, we do not jump back in to clean ourselves again, because there is no recognition that we are dirty. When the day has passed, we desire to jump into the shower because we recognize that we are dirty. Some of the dirt on our bodies is there by choice—we choose to mow the lawn, or work on the car, or exercise and sweat. And some of the dirt on our bodies is not there by choice but by circumstance. Go outside and the “dirty air” sticks to us. We are exposed to car exhaust and other impurities every time we go outside. Even staying in the house exposes us to dust and allergens. So, showering regularly is necessary for good health and hygiene.

In order to be cleansed of sin, one has to realize that he or she is dirty. As times passes, our souls become dirty. Some of the dirt in our souls is there by our choice to sin. We choose to lie, cheat, steal, swear, gossip, covet, etc. and these things dirty the soul. And some of the dirt on our souls is not there voluntarily. How many

times we sin and we don't even know we have sinned. Or we've helped someone and inadvertently hurt someone else in the process. All of these things dirty our souls as well. If we stayed home and did nothing everyday our souls would be stained with the sin of idleness.

So, there is a need for cleansing, but in order for there to be a real cleansing, there has to be a recognition that our souls are dirty and in need of cleansing. There also has to be a real desire to feel clean and to stay clean.

The theme of Lent is really summarized in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. It is about a wayward son who returns to his father. The son has a moment where he comes to himself and recognizes that he needs to return. The father doesn't force a return. But when the son comes home, the father embraces, forgives, restores and celebrates with him. This is the journey of Great Lent. The Father, our Lord, waits for us to return. He is ready to forgive, embrace, restore and celebrate. We are the wayward children. The journey of Lent is the journey back to the Father. We know the end of the story—The Father is joyfully waiting for us. The challenge is, are we ready to make the journey back, with humility and repentance?

Clean Monday is the beginning of the Lenten journey. It's the reminder of our purpose, to ask God to create in us clean hearts and renewed spirits, to restore us to His salvation, and to guide us through Lent and beyond. Today's prayer is Psalm 51. It is the Psalm of repentance, the Psalm of the journey home, the Psalm of cleansing and renewal. I encourage you to pray this Psalm today and throughout Lent.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundance mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleans me from my sin! For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified in Your sentence and blameless in Your judgment. For behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear the sounds of joy and feasting, the bones that were afflicted shall rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, o God and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I shall teach transgressors Your ways and sinners will return to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Your deliverance. O Lord, You shall open my lips and my mouths shall show forth Your praise. For You have no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a

burnt offering, You would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and humbled heart, o God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion, and let the walls of Jerusalem be rebuilt. Then You will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then they shall offer up bulls on Your altar [and have mercy on me o God].

Psalm 50 (51)

Start your journey “home” to the Father today! Kali Sarakosti! Have a blessed Lent!

+Fr. Stavros

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