

## What is Forgiveness Sunday?

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We enter today the period of the Great Fast in preparation for Pascha. We are called to repent, to forgive, to pray, to fast from food and passions remembering the exile of Adam from Paradise banished because of uncontrolled desire to eat from the tree. It is the Sunday of Forgiveness. Reconciliation with God and restoration from the exile of sin is given to all who seek it through repentance and confession. We make a beginning in forgiving one another and asking for forgiveness which is the purpose of the special Vespers this afternoon. Our relationship with God is not outside and distinct from our personal relationships.

God is love. He makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on both the good and the evil so that all have a chance to apprehend His love and repent. If we show God-like love in forgiving one another we shall also be forgiven. Full of gratitude to God for this promise and experience of forgiveness of our own sins we extend this forgiveness to all who trespass against us. In forgiving one another we release ourselves from the heavy chains of pride which imprison our souls. If we do not forgive one another we can have no communion with the God of forgiveness. We remain in the self exile of pride and outside of salvation. But today we are called to freedom through the cross of struggle against sin. Sorrowing for our sins we rejoice that these holy days lie before us in which we can draw closer to the great love and mercy of God. In our ascetical strivings we are warned not to let our right hand

know what our left hand is doing. We are not to count, nor advertise our fasting which is a tool and not an end in itself. The Great Fast is not essentially about food but about returning to God. There is no evil in food nor in the body which needs it to live but our return to God is not possible when the soul is subject to the body and to the uncontrolled desires and appetites of fallen man.

Fasting creates order from this disorder, humbles the flesh and enlivens the spirit, facilitates prayer and wakefulness and calms the passions. Fasting is devoid of spiritual value unless it is used as a means in the struggle for spiritual purity in which case it is an indispensable and powerful tool in the struggle for encounter with God.

Fasting is never therefore alone and always accompanied by prayer but also by almsgiving, intrinsic to repentance, the turning away from sin, because we sin against one another through love of self.

God calls us today: 'Adam where are you?' Come back to me through fasting – your eating made you fall. Come back to me through repentance – your pride shut your mouth to self reproach. Forgive one another and find forgiveness from Me. For Lent we do not give up, but take up our cross and follow Christ back to Paradise. There is no feast without the fast and no resurrection without the cross. Have a good Lent and a good Resurrection!

**Source:** <http://schcroydon.blogspot.com/>