

Forgiveness Sunday 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Forgiveness enables us – personally and as the Church – to properly enter the time of preparation for the Lord's three day Pascha.

The act or dynamic of seeking forgiveness and extending forgiveness helps us to remove the masks that camouflage our true identity. Seeking and extending forgiveness is a personal ascent to our own Golgotha where we stand exposed and vulnerable before the other, even the other we may have harmed or who may have deeply harmed and scarred us. Nevertheless, difficult as this therapeutic ascent may be, the dynamic of forgiveness begins the unveiling of our true identity and the true identity of the other. We are created in the image and likeness of God. Removing the disguises that hide or protect us provides the way for each of us to become a reflection of the inexhaustible beauty and the inexhaustible image of God.

Receiving and offering forgiveness is in a most fundamental way a restorative act. It prefigures a healed and integrated cosmos. As the divine fiat to create proceeds from the eternal depths of God's unbounded love, our humble act of mutual forgiveness – an act that frees us from the bonds of self-centeredness, malice and division – proceeds from a desire to extend our love to the other while simultaneously awaiting to receive the love offered from the other. Drawing near to one another, asking one another to forgive, not as a perfunctory ritual but as an existential need and yearning to be in communion with the other, is a manifestation of creation being renewed and reintegrated under the headship of the crucified and risen Christ.

Forgiving one another is a foretaste of God's kingdom. To embrace each other is already, here and now, our entering the eternal embrace of our Savior who from Golgotha desires to draw all to himself.

En agape,

Father Robert