



HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH

THROUGH THE CROSS JOY HAS COME INTO ALL THE WORLD

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OCTOBER, 2017

Volume 12, Number 2

FORGIVENESS REQUIRES COURAGE

Fr. Alexis Trader



Anyone who has experienced forgiving another human being recognizes that the act of loosening our grip and extending our hand that has recently been bitten requires courage, courage to act like Christ when our impulses drive us to act like wounded

beasts. We know this on an experiential, intuitive level. Psychologists, however, have confirmed that fact in their study of forgiveness.

In his dissertation, John W. Beiter writes, “Thoresen (2001) highlighted that forgiveness was difficult, demanding and requiring courage.” Courage can be defined as a willingness and ability to face fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, hardship, death, or public disapproval. Courage is also required in order to let go of anger and the desire for revenge when one has been wronged or offended by another, to leave behind the dog-eat-dog world where we usually live, and to step into the unfamiliar terrain of the Gospel of Christ.

That forgiveness requires courage means that forgiveness is not a moral calculation or a balance on the scales of justice. Courage means we leave those calculations and balances on the side. Courage is required to forgive our brother without reflecting upon whether he deserves it. Forgiveness is, moreover, a courageous act of love that requires patience. Saint Ephraim the Syrian once said, “The life of the righteous was radiant. How did it become radiant if it wasn’t by patience? Love patience, O monk, as the mother of courage.” Patience in keeping God’s commandments provides the courage to do so in times of trial and temptation.

How is courage linked to forgiveness? In so far that it takes courage to be a Christian, in so far that it takes courage to be a person of faith, in so far that it takes courage to be obedient to the Gospel of Christ in a world that runs on the basis of other laws and criteria, it requires courage to forgive. After all, Saint Paul described the Christian as a courageous warrior of light: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:13-17). Is courage useful in forgiveness? In so far as it is linked to doing all to stand, meaning doing all to be bearers of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, benevolence, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:23), courage is undoubtedly most useful for those who long to forgive.

Consider for a moment, the absence of courage. In such a condition is forgiveness even possible? Saint Isaac the Syrian writes in Homily 40, “Faintness of heart is a sign of despondency, and negligence is the mother of both. A cowardly man shows that he suffers from two diseases: love of his flesh and lack of faith; for love of one’s flesh is a sign of unbelief. But he who despises the love of the flesh proves that he believes in God with his whole heart and awaits the age to come. . . A courageous heart and scorn of perils comes from one of two causes: either from hardness of heart or from great faith in God. Pride accompanies hardness of heart, but humility accompanies faith. A man cannot acquire hope in God unless he first does His will with exactness. For hope in God and manliness of heart are born of the testimony of the conscience, and by the truthful testimony of the mind we possess confidence towards God.”

Saint Isaac makes the important point that Christian courage is the courage of the humble and soft-hearted, not the courage of the proud and hard-hearted. To have a humble and soft-heart after being wounded requires more courage than the most lion-hearted soldier, a super-human courage that can only be attained and sustained through faith and hope in God. To stop nursing one's wounds and to start turning to God are acts of courage that are also antecedents to forgiveness, turning to our neighbors and nursing their wounds. The notions of courage, faith, hope, patience and a strengthened heart are expressed most beautifully in psalm 26: "I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be thou manful, and let thy heart be strengthened, and wait on the Lord."

Since forgiveness is central to the Christian life, courage is an indispensable virtue. It is not possible to live the Christian life without the heroic courage of the righteous. Saint John Chrysostom remarks, "Sin makes man a coward; but a life in the Truth of Christ makes Him bold" (St. John Chrysostom, On the Statues, VIII. 2).

The more we forgive, the more courage we gather within our heart which in turn makes it easier to forgive the next time, and the time after that, and seventy-times seven that follow. When we begin living according to a life in Christ, our world changes, we perceive those around us differently. We begin to see them as Christ sees them. Most importantly, we recognize the grace of Christ operative in our lives. We can then echo the words of Saint Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phillippians 4:13) and that includes forgiving everyone, even those who have wronged us grievously.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Adult Class On the Divine Liturgy. Ever wondered why we do the things we do in the Liturgy? What is a prokeimenon? Why do we make entrances and what do

they mean? Why do we fast before the Eucharist? What is significant about the prayers and movements at the Divine Liturgy? If you are interested in these questions and more then plan on coming to our fall adult study class. We will begin with Small Compline at 6:30PM and the class following. We will conclude by 8PM. Please make plans to attend.

Moleben on our property: We will continue serving a weekly short prayer service on our property in Kernersville. This is a service of supplication (Molieben) that Archbishop Dimitri of blessed memory blessed for the use of parishes in the diocese. Fr. Christopher will be serving it on Friday mornings at 10 AM except where noted in the calendar. Our property is located at 1320 Masten Drive in Kernersville.

Sisterhood of the Holy Myrrhbearers: The sisterhood will meet at 6:30 PM on Tuesday, October 17.

Men's Group: The Men's Group will be held at 7:30 PM on October 12.

Order Gift Cards Through Holy Cross! Scrip cards are available from hundreds of retailers and don't cost any more than the face value of the gift card. It's a "free" fundraiser to benefit the Holy Cross building fund! Contact Karen Brudnak-Slate.



The forgetting of wrongs is a sign of true repentance. But he who dwells on them and thinks that he is repenting is like a man who thinks he is running while he is really asleep.

St. John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Figures are for the third quarter year-to-date

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$96,121.59	\$95,677.50
Expense	\$83,453.87	\$84,001.57

Thank you for your generous support!

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9AM Church School 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	2	3	4 6:30PM Com- pline and Divine Liturgy Class	5	6 10AM Prayers at the Property	7 6 PM Great Vespers
8 9AM Church School 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	9	10	11 6:30PM Com- pline and Divine Liturgy Class	12 7:30 PM Men's Group	13 10AM Prayers at the Property	14 6 PM Great Vespers
15 9AM Church School 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy 7PM OCAT House Meeting	16	17 6:30PM Sister- hood	18 6:30PM Com- pline and Divine Liturgy Class	19 6:30 PM Parish Council	20 10AM Prayers at the Property	21 6 PM Great Vespers
22 9AM Church School 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	23	24	25 6:30PM Com- pline and Divine Liturgy Class	26	27 10AM Prayers at the Property 5PM Open Door	28 6 PM Great Vespers
29 9AM Church School 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	30	31				

