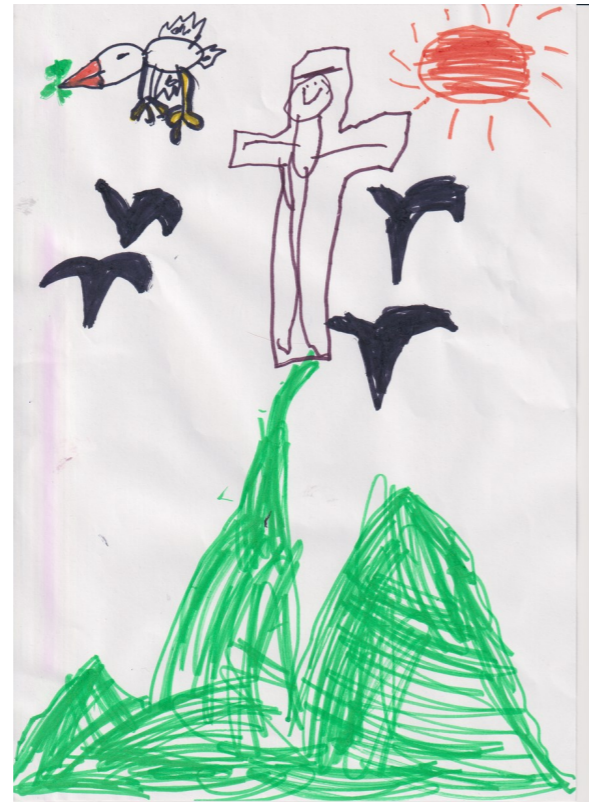
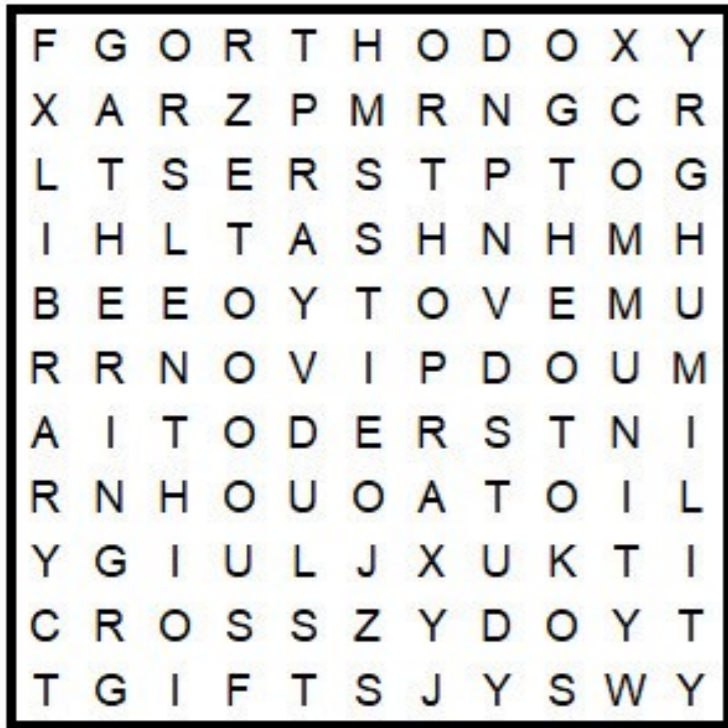


Children's Corner Wordsearch

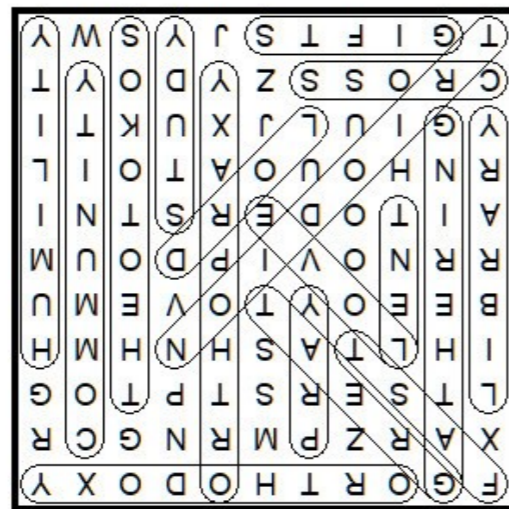
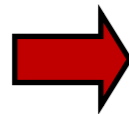


A Talented Family!

After the icon of St Andrew drawn by Basil in February we now have a depiction of the Cross of our Lord drawn by his sister, Olive. Mum and Dad aren't too bad either ... but maybe at other things!

Olive Scrymgeour

Wordsearch solution ... found in Australia! (Get it?!)



The Apostle

St Aidan's Orthodox Church, Henderson Street, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 2JX

Issue 9: March 2024

<https://www.aidanorthodox.com/>



Dear friends

We know that the Christian way of life is sometimes (or even often) a struggle. We have ourselves to contend with most of the time - sins, weaknesses, sorrows, sufferings; all these take their toll. From time to time a dark heaviness hangs over our souls and bodies. In Great Lent we actively take up spiritual arms and do battle with this heaviness, this darkness. Fasting, almsgiving, study, prayer and practical love are disciplines fit for a spiritual athlete or warrior. If we feel weak and flabby then contending in the struggle itself will make us feel stronger and better able to fight and gain victory over everything that opposes God

in ourselves. In this godly fight we need to reckon with the fact that we are in an army, the Church, the militant army of God's love. We do not fight alone. Our victory in Christ depends on our common endeavour with our comrades, our sisters and brothers in the Church. We never pray and worship alone, we never fast alone, we never study alone, we never give alms alone, we never exercise practical love alone. Our strength is in both God and each other. "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2) The goal of our struggles is, of course, the imperishable crown of glory (1 Corinthians 9:25), that is salvation, and through us, the liberation of creation itself from its bondage to corruption and decay (Romans 8:21). So let us press on and "fight the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Fr Gregory

In this issue

- Page 1: From Fr Gregory and the Notice Board
- Pages 2-3: News round up
- Page 4: Journey to Pascha
- Page 5: Midweek services in Great Lent
- Page 6-7: The Lenten Triodion: A Book of Humility
- Pages 8-9: A Vision for our Community and Upcoming Events
- Page 10: "Spring Gathering" notice
- Page 11: Book Review
- Page 12: Children's Corner

Monthly Notice Board

Fr Gregory is the Regional Mission Coordinator (RMC) under the bishop of the North West of England and the West Midlands. He is responsible for the good health of two other parishes (Morecambe and Stoke) when either of these are in need. At the moment, St Aidan's is covering a monthly Liturgy for these communities on account of their priests, Fathers Jonathan and Samuel being ill. On 3rd March Fr Daniel will be serving the Liturgy in Stoke and then for Morecambe on 10th March. Fr Gregory will be in Morecambe on 14th April. Hopefully, by then, both parishes will be back to normal. Of course, services will be absolutely normal in Manchester over this period.



Thanksgiving Sunday—17th March

Every year at St Aidan's on Thanksgiving Sunday we all make an effort to attend the Liturgy together for a very special occasion. This is the Sunday, at the end of the Liturgy, when we commit to the Lord a proportion of our income for His work during the following year. You will shortly receive a leaflet explaining this in more detail. Briefly, we complete a card at the end of the Liturgy indicating how

much of our weekly or monthly income we have decided to give to God's work through his Church in this community. This decision is made privately at home with prayer and faith in the light of the biblical teaching in the leaflet. We teach proportionate giving but do not suggest what proportion (%) that should be. That is strictly between you and the Lord. Once we have collected the cards and updated our records we will then know what budget we are working to for the following year. When you receive the leaflet, please do read it carefully and bring this matter before the Lord in your prayers. This tried and tested method of Christian giving has stood the test of time for 29 years in this parish. This year we have a lot more people taking part, the community having grown so much recently!

Fr Gregory

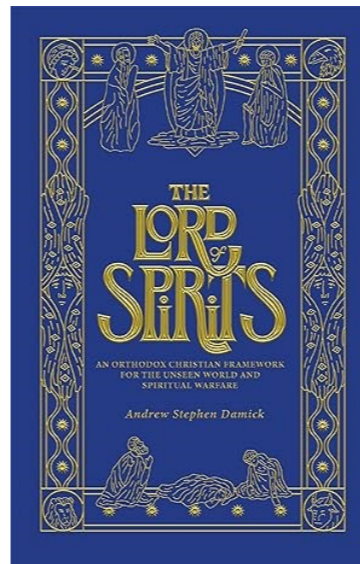
Bursting at the Seams!

Over the last year we have received 18 people into the Church by either baptism or chrismation and there are another 9 catechumens on their way. On 18th February the attendance at the Liturgy numbered 104 with 100 on the following Sunday. This now exceeds the pre-Covid level, and well above that, taking into consideration the growing numbers at Saturday evening Great Vespers. So, we are now looking for larger premises again. Edward (Bennigsen)



is keeping track, so if you see anything on the market with at least 5,000 square feet of worship space and break out rooms and/or a hall, please shout! Financing this will be a challenge but one to which we must eventually rise. We cannot keep on growing the Church by the Holy Spirit without acquiring a larger building to serve our needs. We will all be sad to see our present building sold, whenever that might be, but we must plan for growth and not merely maintenance if we are to remain faithful to our Christ's mission. We already have an offer for our present site. Who knows (with faith) what might be possible!

Book Review



"The Lord of Spirits: An Orthodox Christian Framework for the Unseen World and Spiritual Warfare" by Father Andrew Stephen Damick (Ancient Faith, 2023)

In the Foreword to this helpful book, Father Stephen De Young writes: "Really, there's no such thing as [a] 'cradle Orthodox'. A handful of saints in the history of the world have been born saints, having a fully formed relationship with God from the womb, e.g. the prophet Jeremiah, the Theotokos, and St John the Forerunner. The rest of us must all convert ... and pursue a life of repentance. The rest of us, regardless of whether we grew up surrounded by Holy Tradition or whether we discovered the [Orthodox] Christian way of life later in our lives, have to consciously embrace it and work to make it our own" [p.xi].

Father Andrew points out that "Christ Himself says in Luke 20:36 that Christians become equal to the [holy] angels," but each of us need "to understand the unseen side of the world in which Christ's rescue of humankind from demons and their influence happens in both the Old and New Testaments and in our own lives". This book, recommended to me by a newly baptised and chrismated Orthodox Christian here at St Aidan's, does indeed communicate well "how to be faithful to Christ within this context" [p.xvi]

Father Andrew concludes: "The decisive battle has been won. The demons are still with us, but they have lost... All they have is deception. Against their deceptions we have humility in repentance, and the reason that weapon is so powerful is because by humbling ourselves we join ourselves to Jesus Christ, who in His humility threw down that great dragon and banished [the devil] forever at the point of the swords of the archangels, angels, and all the saints..." [p.207].

"Every time we pray, every time we receive the Holy Mysteries, every time we love, every time we give alms, every time we clothe the naked, every time we visit the sick and imprisoned, every time we humble ourselves-with all these faithful actions, we drive out the demons and invite into us the Holy Spirit of God. We become less like the evil ones and more like the Holy One" [p.208].

Father Emmanuel



SPRING GATHERING
2024
30th March, Oxford

- 10:15 – Walk to Binsey (leaving from Oxford railway station)
Moleben to St Frideswide
- 14:20 – *Lenten lunch at St Nicholas Orthodox Church
- 15:15 – Talk at St Nicholas Orthodox Church
- 17:30 – Vigil at St Nicholas Orthodox Church
- 19:30 – *Lenten Dinner

*Some food and drinks will be provided. We welcome everyone to bring more food to share.



Use the QR code to confirm your attendance

ofsjbyouthuk@gmail.com
orthodoxyouth.org.uk



Priests' Orthopraxy Workshop

One of the many great suggestions coming out of our recent Meeting of Catechists was the provision of basic awareness training in matters of Orthodox Christian piety; from venerating icons to making the sign of the cross, from planning memorials in church for reposed loved ones to working out fasting in a mixed household ... and much more. So, on the first Sunday of each month from now on, starting 3rd March, at 12.30 pm, the clergy will be having informal "this is how you do it" sessions for any who care to join in (not just the catechumens). These sessions will last 15 minutes maximum and the first is entitled: "Arriving in Church." It will cover lighting candles, metanias, making the sign of the cross and venerating both icons and relics. Oh, and the title! A bit gimmicky I will grant but the "Orthopraxy" bit is important. It means "right action." Orthopraxy" must always follow on from Orthodoxy (true belief or worship). For those who cannot attend, post production leaflets (including in electronic media) will be available. *Fr Gregory*



The Library Project

I am thrilled to announce a significant endeavour underway at St. Aidan's Parish Library. In an effort to enhance accessibility and streamline our library management processes, we are currently in the process of cataloguing our entire library collection onto the Zotero platform.

Upon completion of this project, each book within our library will be assigned a unique library number. This numbering system will allow greater ease of access to books and facilitate the tracking of borrowed books. To further aid accessibility, we plan to generate printed lists containing all the books, arranged alphabetically alongside their respective library numbers. This will enable everyone to easily locate books within our library. If you have any enquiries about the parish library, you can now send emails to the parish library account or to Fr. Gregory regarding loan extensions: *Aaron Malloy*

father.gregory@gmail.com

aidanslib@gmail.com

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2024

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

| SUNDAYS | THEMES / GOSPEL READING | HOW TO PARTICIPATE: |
|--|---|--|
| Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 25th |  Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14 | Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week. |
| Normal Fast Week MARCH 3rd |  The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32 | Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week. |
| Meatfare MARCH 10th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY |  The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46 | Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week. |
| Cheesefare MARCH 17th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY |  Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21 | Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed. |
| 1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 24th |  SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51 | Bring an icon to church for a procession. |
| 2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 31st |  ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12 | Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week. |
| 3rd Sunday of Lent APRIL 7th |  VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1 | Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow! |
| 4th Sunday of Lent APRIL 14th |  ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31 | Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross! |
| 5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 21st |  ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45 | Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week. |
| FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 28th GREAT WEEK BEGINS |  ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18 | Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car! |
| GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY MAY 3rd |  GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE | Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death. |
| FEAST OF FEASTS! MAY 5th NO FASTING! |  HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17 | Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight! |

Focus on the good, the true, and the beautiful

This can mean the lives of the saints, great art, or simply excellent social time. Avoid controversy, politics, and too much theological debate. Of course, controversies will come, and we can't ignore them. But we aren't fed by them. Something as simple as having people round the same table for a hearty meal encapsulates much of the Gospel.

Prioritise mixed groups, but recognise at the same time that single-sex groups can be very powerful

St Paul is clear that the Christian faith offers radical reconciliation of the sexes. And yet, differences are not ignored or expunged. Rather the complementarity of the sexes is fully realised. This means that we can be fully ourselves when we are together in a mixed group, but also that same-sex groups can be appropriate and even necessary.

The goal here is not to run a programme of events that will magically solve people's problems. Rather, it's to help spur each other on to ordinary obedience and simple joy. I look back on my own life over the past year as an Orthodox Christian, and I'm amazed at how much God has been able to do through such simple means. I pray that we will all continue to experience the transformative power of Christ through the work of his Church.

Upcoming events and activities

In light of the previous article, here are some events coming up to try and put some of those high-flying principles into practice.

Cheese & Tunes—16th March

Bring-and-share cheese night at Ed's flat (Reddish) after Vespers, followed by a great motown band at the pub after. All welcome, chat to Ed for details.

Fast Club - Men's Lent Group

Aaron and Ed are organising a Lent group for men. This will involve reading a book together, with discussions after the Liturgy, along with meeting to pray the Great Canon of Repentance at least once. There will also be a WhatsApp group for mutual support and to share encouragement from the saints. Chat to Aaron or Ed for details, all ages welcome.

Every blessing, Edward

A Vision for our Community



Our culture is in crisis. The goalposts of social norms change every few years. Trust in institutions is breaking down, and uncountable alternative narratives compete for our attention. Our lives are digitally mediated, and it's increasingly easy to check out of reality and live in a virtual world. This is perhaps an oversimplification, true, but it's an experience shared by many across our culture, and within our parish.

The good news is: the Orthodox Church has the answer to this crisis. The Church doesn't offer pat answers, or political solutions, or weapons to win the culture war. Rather, she provides a very ordinary, yet deeply supernatural, pathway to spiritual wholeness. We can have trust in the Holy Tradition passed down by the Church, and we can live a spiritual life grounded in the material world. God, in His wisdom, seems to be using this crisis to bring many to the Church. It's definitely a pattern we are seeing within our own parish, as well as across the wider Orthodox Church.

With that in mind, myself and a few others are looking at ways we can help each other live the Orthodox life through events and groups in the parish. The conversation started out focused on the 20s-ish age group, as we are perhaps more affected by this crisis, but Fr Gregory has pointed out that it is applicable more broadly.

Here are some principles I proposed to shape the programme, that Fr Gregory has asked me to share with you all.

Prioritise parish life at St Aidan's

Parish life forms the backbone of the spiritual life for the everyday Christian. All ages and people can participate together in the life of the Church through the services, as well as simply seeking friendship together. We all have a lot to learn from each other.

Prioritise in-person over virtual

Orthodoxy is a thoroughly grounded, physical faith. We have enough virtual in the rest of our lives. Of course, this doesn't mean we chuck everything digital in the bin - rather we subordinate them to the highest form of presence.

The Two Main Midweek Services of Great Lent

The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Holy Gifts

Wednesdays in Great Lent at 8pm



The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts is a service that allows the faithful to receive Holy Communion on the weekdays of Great Lent, when the full Divine Liturgy is not celebrated. The service consists of Vespers with additional prayers and readings, and the distribution of the Holy Gifts that were consecrated on the previous Sunday. The service is celebrated in

this parish on the Wednesdays of Great Lent at 8pm and lasts approximately 90 minutes. The purpose of the service is to provide us with spiritual nourishment and strength during the season of repentance, fasting, and prayer. The service also has a penitential and sombre character, reflecting the mood of Great Lent. The service is preceded by a fast of at least six hours after a light lunch. The service is also an opportunity to meditate on the Scriptures, especially the books of Genesis, Exodus, Proverbs, and Job, which are read during the services.



The Akathist to the Theotokos

The first 5 Fridays of Great Lent at 8pm

The Akathist to the Theotokos is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Mother of God, who is the champion leader, the unwedded bride, the star of the womb, the dawn of the light, and the joy of all who sorrow.

The hymn consists of 24 stanzas, each beginning with a letter of the Greek alphabet, and each containing a kontakion and an oikos. A kontakion is a short verse that summarizes the main theme of the stanza, and an oikos is a longer verse that elaborates on the theme and addresses the Theotokos with various titles and attributes.

The hymn is sung on the first 5 Fridays of Great Lent at 8pm and lasts for approximately 45 minutes. This beautiful hymn expresses the faith and devotion of the Orthodox Church to the Theotokos, who is the model of holiness, the intercessor for the faithful, and the bearer of Christ, the incarnate Word of God.



The Lenten Triodion - a Book of Humility

The book of Triodion opens on the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, and the heart "gathers". The book of Triodion closes on Holy Saturday, and the forgiveness from Jesus' Tomb "spreads" outwards.

Every year and for ten weeks our Church invites us to a spiritual journey according to a book, the Triodion, which, in fact, names this whole period - not just the three weeks before Great Lent. The Triodion includes all services from the Sunday of the Pharisee and Tax Collector to Holy Saturday.

When someone is present at a service

(akolouthia in Greek, that is, procession in English), they are not merely watching the rituals; they are not spectators. They follow them; they are part of a procession that starts from earth and ends in Heaven. Thus, when "the Triodion opens", that is, when we begin to use this book in our daily worship, our main concern should not merely be the observance of some formalities, but the pursuit and fulfilment of the purpose of this ten week spiritual journey through churchgoing and participation in the services.

What is the purpose? This is none other than to worship and celebrate Christ's Resurrection ten weeks later, combined with the perspective of our co-resurrection with Him on Judgement Day. And this will be achieved if we follow what our Church calls us to revive and experience through Triodion. Given that many of us do not know what our Church focuses on week after week, let us briefly look at the Triodion contents, starting with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

THE SUNDAY OF THE TAX COLLECTOR AND THE PHARISEE , HUMILITY against VANITY and VAINGLORY

"The beginning is the half of the whole", the ancient Greeks contended. This is why the writers of the Triodion place humility as the Triodion's starting line. The virtue that all of us must acquire (better, be granted with) is to commune with the Extreme Humility, the slain Lamb of God. At the same time, on this Sunday, arrogance and vainglory are denounced.

The publican is a sinner, like us all. He is checking himself and concludes he has only himself to blame. Therefore, hiding in a corner of the Temple, beating his chest, and looking down, he repeats, not mechanically, but meaning it: "God, have mercy upon me a sinner." He's not looking for excuses. He humbles body and soul and opens the window of his heart (that's what beating of chest symbolises), so that the poisonous fumes of sin come out and the oxygen of the grace of the Holy Spirit, who cleanses, forgives, illuminates, and sanctifies, enters. He is only a "sinner," and he is not ashamed to confess it; his spiritual reconstruction is left to God and He only needs the publican's consent to start doing it.

On the other hand, the Pharisee is sure of his holiness, trumpets "his" good works, and, because of it, condemns his sinful brothers and sisters, starting with the publican praying behind him. He falls into the trap of the evil one, who robs him of the wealth of his good works with vainglory: "vainglory empties of the wealth of righteousness", reads a hymn of this Sunday.

The meaning? - vainglory empties all the spiritual goods we have collected, poisons our minds like the "snake's" venom did on Adam's and Eve's minds in Paradise, drives God's grace away. This is why the Pharisee returns home empty of God, who and in whose communion he had never sought to be, as being empty of his brothers and sisters, whom he condemned; that is, deeming them unworthy of communion (fellowship) with Him. He returns home with inflated mind, with an air of pride and with a heart unredeemed. Self-righteous, self-centred, self-isolated, self-condemned: he pre-tastes Hell on Earth!

To avoid Hell on Earth and forever, the Church exhorts us with her central hymn of this day:

"Let us avoid Pharisee's exalted parlance; let us learn from tax collector's sighs and humility; crying out to our Saviour, have mercy upon us; You, the only one who easily changes His heart when we repent".

Fr Stavros

The Lenten Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian

"O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. Give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen."