

Then forasmuch as it comes to pass that we sin even after the washing of regeneration, He, showing His love to man to be great even in this case, commands us, for the remission of our sins, to come unto God who loves man, and thus to say,

Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

Seest thou surpassing mercy? After taking away so great evils, and after the unspeakable greatness of His gift, if men sin again, He counts them such as may be forgiven. For that this prayer belongs to believers, is taught us both by the laws of the church, and by the beginning of the prayer. For the uninitiated [i.e., unbaptized] could not call God Father. If then the prayer belongs to believers, and they pray, entreating that sins may be forgiven them, it is clear that not even after the laver [of baptism] is the profit of repentance taken away. Since, had He not meant to signify this, He would not have made a law that we should so pray.

Now He who both brings sins to remembrance, and bids us ask forgiveness, and teaches how we may obtain remission and so makes the way easy – it is perfectly clear that He introduced this rule of supplication, as knowing, and signifying, that it is possible even after the font to wash ourselves from our offenses; by reminding us of our sins, He persuades us to be modest; by the command to forgive others, He sets us free from all revengeful passion; while by promising in return for this to pardon us also, He holds out good hopes, and instructs us to have high views concerning the unspeakable mercy of God toward man.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, pp. 135–6

A CERTAIN BROTHER was estranged from a fellow monk, and he came to Abba Sisoës the Theban, and said unto him, “I am estranged from a fellow monk, and I wish to take vengeance for myself”; and the old man said, “Let us pray.” And whilst he was praying, he said in his prayer, “O God, henceforward we have no need of Thee to take care of us, for we will take vengeance for ourselves”; and when the brother heard these words he fell down at the feet of the old man straightway, and said unto him, “Henceforward I will not enter into judgement with that brother. Forgive me, O Father.” And thus Abba Sisoës healed that brother.

Paradise of the Holy Fathers,
Volume II, # 198, p. 44

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

Week of March 16–22, 2009

