

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

MYOCN

PEW PALS



## Forgiveness & Clean Monday

This Sunday is often called Forgiveness Sunday. It is the last Sunday before Great Lent begins. The very next day is Clean Monday, the first day of Lent! Lent is a special season in the Church when we prepare our hearts for Pascha (Easter). We pray more, practice kindness, fast in ways our families decide, and try to grow closer to Jesus.

But before we begin this holy journey, the Church teaches us something very important: WE MUST FORGIVE.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus teaches:

***"If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."***

– **Matthew 6:14** That means when we choose to forgive someone, we are acting like Christ. Forgiveness helps clean our hearts – just like cleaning your room makes space to move around, forgiveness makes space for love and peace.

On Forgiveness Sunday, many Orthodox Christians ask each other: You say "Forgive me." And the other person replies, "God forgives, and I forgive." It reminds us that we are all learning, growing, and sometimes making mistakes. But we don't carry anger into Lent. We start fresh.

### Family Homework

- **Forgiveness Moment:** Before bedtime every night stand together and ask for forgiveness.
- **Clean One Space:** On Clean Monday choose one small space in your home to clean.

### Memory Verse

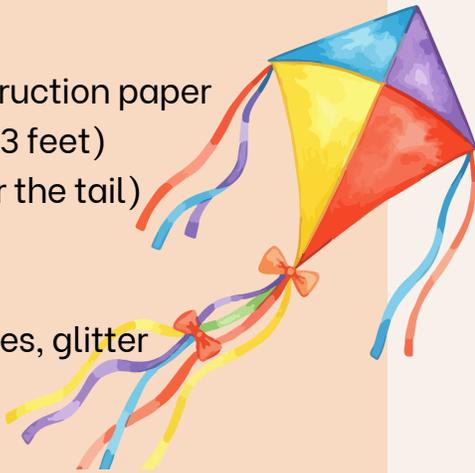
**"Create in me a clean heart, O God."  
– Psalm 51:10**



## Craft - Clean Monday Kites

### Materials:

- 1 piece of colored construction paper
- String or yarn (about 2–3 feet)
- Ribbon or streamers (for the tail)
- Tape
- Crayons or markers
- Optional: stickers, crosses, glitter



### Instructions:

1. **Make the Kite Shape:** Turn your paper so it looks like a diamond (one corner at the top). If you'd like, trim the sides slightly to make it look more like a real kite.
2. **Decorate**
3. **Draw:** A cross in the center and the words “Clean Heart”, add Your memory verse: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” or pictures of things that help you grow closer to Jesus (prayer, church, kindness).
4. **Add the Tail:** Tape 2–3 pieces of ribbon or streamers to the bottom corner. Tie bows along the tail if you'd like!
5. **Attach the String:** Tape one end of the yarn to the back of the kite. Hold the other end like you're flying it!
6. **Optional Outdoor Version If it's windy and warm where you live, you can:**
  - a. Glue two straws or craft sticks in an X shape on the back for strength.
  - b. Take it outside and see if it will lift in the breeze!

***Flying kites is a special tradition in many Orthodox countries on Clean Monday. The kite reminds us that Great Lent is a time to lift our hearts up to God!***

## Table Discussion

**Is it harder to ask for forgiveness or to give forgiveness?**

**How does it feel when someone forgives you?**

## Saint Spotlight

**ST. PHOTINI**

**THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

**Feast Day: February 26**

Saint Photini was the woman who met Jesus at Jacob's Well, as told in the Gospel of John (John 4:5–42). At first, she came to draw water, but instead she encountered Christ, who revealed that He is the Living Water and the Messiah. After speaking with Him, Photini believed and immediately shared the good news with her village. Because of her witness, many Samaritans came to believe in Jesus.

The Church later gave her the name Photini, which means “the enlightened one,” because her heart was filled with the light of Christ. Tradition tells us that she became a bold preacher of the Gospel and was eventually martyred for her faith.

Saint Photini reminds us that no one is too far from God's love – and that when we meet Jesus, we are called to share Him with others.