

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Sunday of the Last Judgment
(02.23.2025.)

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (KJV)

For many years the present Gospel was my favorite. The imprisoned did not always receive much attention. Other than the Gospel being read, parishes for years did not give much attention to prisoners,

For nearly three decades I was dealing with incarcerated individuals. It was and always is comforting to know the Lord Jesus Christ is identified with the imprisoned.

Orthodox Churches in America are now giving greater attention to the imprisoned. More parishes are reaching out to the jails and prisoners located near them. Prison ministry programs are getting attention in seminaries.

The way the imprisoned are treated affects how they behave while incarcerated and when and if released. Each human being including the imprisoned is created in the image and likeness of God. (Gen.1:27, Gen.5:1)

The imprisoned have families. Prisoners' families are affected by their incarceration. Families of the imprisoned are affected by how they are treated in parishes.

Crime victims benefit from the healing that is possible in parish churches. The present Gospel is about basic Christian love for each person.

The way each person is treated is a treatment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all experience poverty in the way we lead our Christian lives. We are all prisoners of sin more often than we realize. Our souls seriously hunger for the nourishment found in Jesus Christ.

We are exposed to the corrosive elements of the world and benefit from the protective garments available in the Church. We all thirst for the Living Water coming from the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns at the Great and Glorious Second Coming, we all will stand before Him. We will answer for our relationships with each person in each day of our lives.

Our thoughts and our actions are known to the Lord God. Our thoughts and our actions manifest themselves in our daily relationships. Jesus Christ will weigh how we have related with Him in each person we meet.

Today's Gospel requires serious attention. Being a Christian carries it with the great responsibility of living in ways pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believers are to be fully attentive and considerate in their personal daily relationship. Personal attitudes, thoughts and actions factor into the Great and Last Judgment. Jesus Christ will weigh and evaluate them.

Repentance is possible and beneficial throughout life. God is good and merciful when the believer seeks to repent and repudiate ill thoughts or errors in relationships. The time to repent is before the Last Judgment.

God's forgiveness is a model for personal forgiveness. The heart, mind and soul filled with Jesus Christ manifests Christ's love and love for Christ in each person.

Great Lent is on the horizon. The time is a hand to ready the self for the life-renewing journey. Prepare to enter Great Lent with joy. Seek God's Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life each day.

May the personal relationships of earthly life be consistent with the Christ's teachings in the Gospel. May the standards embraced in our hearts, minds and souls be those of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Meat-fare Sunday, The Sunday of the Last Judgment. Holy Hieromartyr Harlambos.
February 10/23, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The blessing of a home is one of the most beautiful and profound traditions of our Orthodox faith, deeply connected to the Feast of Theophany. On this day, we commemorate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, where He sanctified the waters for the salvation of mankind. The Church blesses the waters on this holy day, as a powerful symbol of spiritual cleansing and renewal. Just as the holy water blessed on Theophany represents the sanctification of all creation, the blessing of our homes with this same holy water brings God's blessing, peace, and divine presence into our lives.

Saint Luke of Crimea, a great archbishop and surgeon, taught us that "Where there is prayer, there is peace, and where there is peace, there is God." Just as Christ's baptism sanctified the waters, the blessing of our homes with this same holy water grants us the grace of the Holy Spirit, bringing peace, protection, and God's presence into our homes. By receiving this blessing, our homes become places where God's grace dwells, reminding us to live in harmony with His will.

We invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to open the doors of your home to God's blessing this Theophany season. Schedule the blessing of your home and allow the prayers of the Church, the sanctified water, and the presence of the Holy Spirit to fill your home with light and peace. Father Dragan Vukovic is available for this sacred act and can be reached at 814-244-4063.

May the blessing of the Holy Spirit be with you and your families, granting you health, love, and spiritual joy.

With love in Christ,

Yours in the Lord,

Fr. Dragan Vukovic

TEACHING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES TO CHRIST- LOVING CHRISTIANS

Brethren, I want to remind you of what is useful and salvific for the soul, inasmuch as, my children, I must guide and teach you, the flock entrusted to me, as the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy, the bishop of Ephesus: “My child Timothy! Teach, pray, rebuke in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God* (Jas. 1:19-20). First of all, my children, I offer you a parable from the truthful lips of the Savior, which He spoke in the Gospel: *A sower went out to sow his seed. Some fell by the wayside, some fell upon a rock, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good ground* (Lk. 8:5-8). The seed is the true word of God, and the ground is the human heart. Thus, my children, let the ground of your heart not be like thorny soil, unable to bear spiritual fruit due to laziness and careless; or like rocky ground, which doesn’t fear God; or like the ground by the wayside—that is, let not your heart cling to temporal blessings and become the property of the devil, trampled under his feet. May the Lord deliver us from this. But may the ground of your heart be good for receiving the word of God, the Gospel, bearing spiritual fruit—some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold (cf. Mt. 13:8).

And another parable the Lord offers in His Gospel: *There was a certain owner of a house. He planted a vineyard, set a hedge around it, built a tower, dug a winepress in it, and entrusted it to vinedressers to give the fruits in due season.* The man is Christ our God; He lived with men for our salvation, and was like us in all ways save sin, as our illustrious teacher the Apostle Paul writes (Heb. 4:15). Whoever does not confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God—God and man Who came in the flesh—is not of God, but of the antichrist (cf. 1 Jn. 4:3). And “he planted a vineyard”—this is mankind. “He set a hedge around it”—with the divine law. “He built a tower”—the divine Church. And “he dug a winepress,” that is, He shed His precious Blood for our salvation, for the salvation of believers and for receiving the Kingdom of Heaven. “And he entrusted it to vinedressers,” that is, to the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers, patriarchs, metropolitans, and bishops, and the entire priestly order, so that they, leading men properly and teaching them God’s law, might be able say at the time of the [Second Coming of Christ](#) our God: *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me* (Is. 8:18).

Therefore, I, a sinner, who was vouchsafed the episcopal dignity, which I received not through my own merit, but through God’s bounty and His great mercy abundantly poured out upon us, was deemed worthy to be a guide and teacher for you, my children, to guide and teach the flock of rational sheep entrusted to me. Therefore, I remind you, my children, of the word of the Savior that He said to His Disciples and Apostles: *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another... By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another* (Jn. 13:34–35). And you, my children, must also have peace and love among yourselves.

The Apostle Paul writes about this; he says: *For all the law is fulfilled in one word... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Gal. 5:14). Also, my children, have the fear of God in your hearts, for by it a man can acquire every virtue. *The fear of the LORD*, says the most wise one, *is the beginning of wisdom* (Prov. 1:7).

St. Gregory the Theologian writes the same: Where there is the fear of the Lord, there is the purification of the flesh and the fulfillment of God's commandments; where there is the fulfillment of God's commandments, there is the exaltation of the soul to Jerusalem on high. The commandments of God are fulfilled by such deeds: through sincere repentance of your sins, through almsgiving and abstaining from evil deeds; besides those which God forbids, from the following: fornication, drunkenness, robbery, violence and sorcery, witchcraft, and all kinds of magic, and from the passion for wealth, from every unjust acquisition that harms the soul. And keep in mind death, resurrection, and judgment, and retribution to everyone according to his merits, as the Savior said: *those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation* (Jn. 5:29). And you, princes and nobles, execute justice justly *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment* (Jas. 2:13). Don't accept bribes against the innocent and don't judge by appearances, for judgment belongs to God (Deut. 1:17); judge men righteously, and don't offend widows, orphans, or strangers, lest thy cry out to God against you.

And you, simple citizens, fear God, honor princes, respect and obey the clergy without any contradictions, because they care day and night for your souls, and will have to give account to God for their flock (c.f. Heb. 13:17). Will anyone want to negligently lose his salvation and eternal life, not listening to the words of the Savior, Who said in His Gospel: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Mt. 11:28)? Christ is calling us to His Heavenly Kingdom and commands us to replace the burden of sinful cares with sincere repentance. Go to the priest, your spiritual father, with repentance and tears; reveal your evil deeds and don't commit them a second time, for true repentance is only when you come to despise your former sins. And when the priest sees such an intention from you, then he can purify and bring you closer to God and make you partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ, because hierarchs and priests are intercessors between God and men. Since they're also weak, they offer sacrifices for themselves and for human sins. Therefore, my children, try to be merciful and indulging, as the great Apostle James, the brother of the Lord, teaches us: *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy* (Jas. 2:13).

And now, my children, what power of yours can fulfill the law of God, not in word, but in deed, as the Savior said: *Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say* (Lk. 6:46)? *I never knew you: depart from Me* (Mt. 7:23). But you, my children, take into your souls and write on your hearts the speeches of the Gospel, the preaching of the Apostles, and the institutions of the Holy Fathers. Make haste to Church services, my children, outpacing each other, just as St. John the Theologian outran St. Peter when they both hurried to the tomb of Christ. Princes, merchants, and all right-believing Christians! Lay aside all your affairs, make haste to prayer in church without laziness; don't say, "We'll pray at home," for such prayer means nothing without church prayer.

As a house can't be warmed by smoke without fire, so it is with home prayer without church prayer. Churches are called the earthly Heaven, for there the Lamb, the Son, the Word of God is slain for the cleansing of the sins of the whole world, for the faithful and those who fear the words of God. There the Gospel of the Heavenly Kingdom is preached, along with the Acts of the Holy Apostles, the Catholic Epistles, the fourteen epistles of our illustrious teacher the Apostle Paul; the Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils are glorified, and the throne of the God of glory is invisibly overshadowed by cherubim; by priestly hands, the Divine Body and Blood are received and given to the faithful for the cleansing and salvation of soul and body. And such a fearsome, and terrible, and most glorious miracle of God Church governance is, and you want to replace it with your home prayer and think you'll gain some kind of benefit?

Thus, my children, reviewing what has been said, try to fill your hearts with fear, delve into it with your mind, and join your home prayer to that of the Church. When you go to church, my children, have peace with all and love for all, as the Savior said: *When thou bring thy gift to the altar ... go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother* (Mt. 5:23–24). As you enter the church, be reverent in body and soul, for it's no simple building you're entering; for if you do this, my children, then the prayer of the Church for you will be received by God. Enter the church with fear and reverence and the fear of God, and having received forgiveness of sins, depart with joy. When you stand in church, think about your sins, leaving all your affairs outside the church, as the saints write. By the revelation of the Holy Spirit, Sts. [Basil the Great](#), [John Chrysostom](#), and [Gregory the Dialogist](#) set forth the divine services: "Let us stand with peace, let us love one another with heartfelt love, not with our lips and tongue. Let us now lay aside all earthly cares. Now the powers of Heaven with us invisibly do serve." Take care, my children, not to anger God with your conversation in church. And from this time forward, let this lack of fear, such as talking and a lack of reverence in church, be far from you; but let the ground of your heart be good to receive the word of our teaching, because, my children, having received a talent from God, I must not hide it in the ground, but distribute it to you, kind merchants. Conduct this spiritual trade with profit, so that I too with the great Apostle Paul might dare to say on the day of Judgment about those whom I have taught: "You are my praise, you are my joy, you are my crown before God" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19). That God might vouchsafe me, a sinner, worthy to say at the time of His Second Coming, together with all my children: *Lord! Behold, I and the children whom [Thou hast] given me* (Is. 8:18) And now, for God's sake, try in every way to please God with good deeds, to save your souls, and to appease God's wrath, and to bring yourself closer to God. That there might be, my children, the mark of Christ in our souls, as St. Gregory the Theologian writes: "A marked sheep is not easily stolen." The mark of the sheep of God's rational flock is that they are partakers of Christ's Body and Blood. My children, sheep of the rational flock, let not any fasting period pass without this mark, but partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. I write this to you, my children, for the sake of your salvation; by your prudence, multiply the spiritual fruit in your hearts. For the most wise one said: *For in this way thou shalt live long, and years of thy life shall be added to thee* (Prov. 9:11). Therefore, my children, if you receive and preserve in your hearts what I have written to you and fulfill it not only in word but in deed, then you will be participants in the Heavenly Kingdom—of which may God make us all worthy at His Second

Coming—to be co-participants in the Jerusalem on high with all who have pleased Him from the beginning of time; that we might glorify in Trinity the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

St. Alexei of Moscow
Translation by Jesse Dominick

Services this Week

- **Sheesefare Sunday (02.02.2025.)**
 - **Great-Martyr Theodre the Tyro**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00***

Donations February 9, 2025

Offering - \$1,096.00 Candles - \$47.00 Dues - \$100.00
Donation

IMO Mildred Tumbas from Dianna Dunnington - \$100

Donations February 16, 2025

Offering - \$570.00 Candles - \$21.00

Large Candles

- IMO Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich from Helene Gleason
- IMO John & Millie Pavich and Daughter Connie Bartis from Olga Bulich
- IMO Brother Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas
- IMO Jeffrey Smith -41 years of marriage from wife Mariam Smith
- IMO Dorothy Thomas from John & Patricia Pavich
- IMO Joseph & Amelia Kondas from Richard Kondas

Our New Library!

We will be offering a selection of books for our parishioners to borrow for your enjoyment. All reads will be recommended by Father Dragan. At this time we have two available, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: Finding the Way to Christ in a Complicated Religious Landscape" and "Memory Eternal: Living with Grief as Orthodox Christians" - These titles are available in the Candle Room. Please feel free to sign one out and return when completed. If you have any suggestions, please speak with Father Dragan.

Nut, Apricot, and Poppyseed Rolls are still available!

Today is Meatfare Sunday!

Please join us for a Luncheon

(Hot Turkey sandwiches, Stuffed porkchops, and more)

(Meatfare Sunday is also known as the Sunday of the Last Judgment. It is the last day before Lent when meat and poultry are eaten.)

Please see Suzette to sign up for your Fish Fry Slot

UPCOMING EVENTS

Cheesefare Sunday or the Sunday of Forgiveness, March 2nd

At the onset of Great Lent and a period of intense fasting, this Sunday reminds us of our need for God's forgiveness and guides our hearts, minds, and spiritual efforts on returning to Him in repentance.

Please join us for a "Cheesefare" Luncheon which will include a Q and A for whatever might be on your mind for beginning our Lenten journey

Lenten Fish Fries

Friday, March 7th to Friday April 11, 2025

Lenten Vespers

5th Sunday of Lent – St. Mary of Egypt

Sunday, April 6, 2025 – 5:00 PM

*** Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 13, 2025**

*** PASCHA! – Sunday, April 20, 2025**

*** St. Nicholas Anniversary Celebration –
Sunday, May 18, 2025**

*** Polka Fest – May 30, – June 1, 2025**

*** Band of Brothers – July 2025**

*** Taste of Serbia – Saturday, August 9, 2025**

*** Johnstown Slavic Festival –
September 19–20, 2025**