

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Sunday of the Last Judgment
(03.10.2024.)

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)**

The present Gospel is a firm reminder to be fully conscious of daily life experiences with persons in need. Today's Gospel makes perfectly clear that Jesus Christ is present in the stranger, the sick, the suffering and the imprisoned.

Jesus Christ is present in the beggar on the street or the person in need of clothing or a place to stay. Jesus is present in the stranger showing up at the parish church in need of being warmly welcomed.

Jesus is present in the man or woman at the intersection with a sign seeking donations because of being homeless or hungry. Jesus is in the boy or girl coming to school with tattered clothing and not having food to eat at home.

Jesus is present in the neighbor, family member or friend with a life-threatening illness. Jesus is in the son or daughter arrested for drug, alcohol or other criminal offenses.

Jesus is in the man or woman in the cell at the local jail or prison or on a locked ward of the mental hospital. Jesus is in the elderly woman or man living alone with no surviving relatives and without any friends.

Jesus is in the person that shows up at church in poor clothing because he or she is without income. Jesus is in the person who stays home suffering silently because he or she has no means of transportation.

Jesus is in the wife or husband suffering from mental or physical abuse and afraid to ask for help. Jesus is in the co-worker coming to work with minimal food to eat.

Today the Church wants believers to look with eyes to see the suffering in our midst and to help. The Church wants believers to realize the way we treat the person hurting, hungry or a stranger is our actual treatment of Jesus.

Today's Gospel asks believers to honestly examine the self. Believers are asked to think carefully about the people they meet and know in daily life that are in need. Taking action to help the needy is step toward God's Heavenly Kingdom.

The present Gospel makes clear that Jesus Christ is fully aware of believers' personal experiences with persons in need. Each person will face Jesus Christ at the Great and Final Judgment.

Jesus Christ knows the believers that reach out to help the sick, the suffering and the imprisoned. Jesus Christ knows the believers that welcome the stranger, that clothe the needy and feed the hungry.

Today is an opportunity to commit to be more welcoming of strangers at work, in the community or in the parish church. Today is an opportunity to comfort someone you know is suffering.

Today ask God for open eyes to see suffering. Ask God for the vision to see Jesus Christ in each person in need. Ask God for help in beginning anew in the journey to God's Heavenly Kingdom.

Persons in need and suffering appreciate the active love of believers. Families with a son and daughter in prison are strengthened by support and prayers from their parish church.

Families with a member having mental illness are grateful when believers show compassion. Individuals recovering from an accident, surgery or undergoing cancer treatment draw strength from prayers in their parish.

The present Gospel inspires action. The present Gospel defines a pathway to the Heavenly Kingdom. Jesus Christ will return. The Great and Final Judgement will take place.

God is merciful and loving. God is patient. Repentance is possible for believers desiring to live in ways pleasing to Jesus Christ. The present Gospel is a firm reminder to see Jesus Christ in each person in need and to act with compassion.

The Sunday of the Last Judgment. Meatfare Sunday. February 26/March 10, 2024.

**St. Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic**

The Great Blessing of Water and the Home

The Great Blessing of Water in our homes takes place after the Feast of Theophany, the Baptism of Christ, bringing the holy water & prayer in which Christ was baptized to our homes, as a blessing upon our families.

Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 19).

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life.

"There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day."

Weaving Christ into Our Lives

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings.

When the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home. This is a perfect time to introduce your small children to having their bedrooms blessed as a 'shield of armor' to protect them when they sleep and all the fears they may have as children do so often.

In Summary

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing.

*What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!
Schedule your Visit with Fr. Dragan Vukovic directly
by calling your parish priest 814-244-4063
God bless you all!*

Sunday of the Last Judgement (Meatfare Sunday)

The Sunday of the Last Judgment is the third Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During this time, the services of the Church have begun to include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), through Great and Holy Saturday. On this day, focus is placed on the future judgment of all persons who will stand before the throne of God when Christ returns in His glory.

Biblical Story



The commemoration for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning his Second Coming and the Last Judgment of all, both the living and the dead. In Matthew 25:31-46, Christ speaks about what will happen at this specific point in time when He will “come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (v. 31).

At His coming, “He will sit on the throne of His glory,” and all of the nations will be gathered before Him. He will separate them “as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (v. 32). The sheep will be placed on His right hand, and the goats on the left.

To the sheep, He will say “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (vv. 33-34)

This kingdom is offered to the sheep because of their compassion and service to those in need. Jesus says, “...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”

The sheep, who are the righteous chosen for the kingdom, will ask how this could be so. They will ask Jesus when was He hungry or thirsty, a stranger, naked, and in prison. He will answer them by saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to the least of these My brethren, you did it to me” (vv. 35-40).



Christ the King, seated on His throne of judgment, will then turn to the goats on His left and say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41). He will condemn them because they did not feed Him when He was hungry, give Him drink when He was thirsty, take Him in when He was a stranger, clothe Him when He was naked, visit Him when He was sick or in prison.

The goats will ask the Lord, “When did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?” Then He will answer them saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (vv. 42-45).

Jesus concludes His words on the Last Judgment by stating that those on the left “will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (v. 46).

On the past two Sundays of this pre-Lenten period, the focus was placed on God’s patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our Judge. Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes.

This Sunday sets before us the eschatological dimension of Lent: the Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come, a theme that is also the focus of the first three days of Holy Week. But the judgment is not only in the future. Here and now, each day and each hour, in hardening our hearts toward others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgment on ourselves.



Another theme of this Sunday is that of love. When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable of the Last Judgment answers: love—not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous “poor,” but concrete and personal love for the human person—the specific persons that we encounter each day in our lives.

Christian love is the “possible impossibility” to see Christ in another person, whoever he or she is, and whom God, in His eternal and mysterious plan, has decided to introduce into my life, be it only for a few moments, not as an occasion for a “good deed” or an exercise in philanthropy, but as the beginning of an eternal companionship in God Himself.

The parable of the Last Judgment is about Christian love. Not all of us are called to work for “humanity,” yet each one of us has received the gift and the grace of Christ’s love. We know that all persons ultimately need this personal love—the recognition in them of their unique soul in which the beauty of the whole creation is reflected in a unique way. We also know that people are in prison and are sick and thirsty and hungry because that personal love has been denied them. And, finally, we know that however narrow and limited the framework of our personal existence, each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ’s love. Thus, on whether or not we have accepted this responsibility, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged.

Icon of the Feast

The icon of the Sunday of the Last Judgment incorporates all of the elements of the parable from Matthew 25:31-46. Christ sits on the throne and before him the Last Judgment takes place. He is extending his hands in blessing upon the Theotokos on his right, and John the Baptist on his left. Seated on smaller thrones are the Apostles, represented by Peter and Paul, a depiction of the words of Christ in Matthew 19:28.

Proceeding from the throne are the scrolls pronouncing the judgment upon the sheep and the goats. The faithful are received with the words that are written on the scroll to the right of Christ the Judge, “Come, you blessed of My Father, and inherit the kingdom” (v. 34). The scroll on the left condemns the unfaithful with the words, “Depart from me you cursed, into the everlasting fire” (v. 41).



Before the throne, the progenitors of the human race, Adam and Eve, bow before Christ. In the center of the icon is the Archangel Michael. He is holding the scales of judgment and is surrounded by the books that contain the works of each person (Revelation 20:11-13). Also shown are the angels with trumpets announcing the return of Christ and signaling the resurrection of the dead and the commencement of the Last Judgment (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

To the left of the Archangel are both the living and the dead who are approaching the throne and Christ the judge. Whereas Adam and Eve are representative of all of humanity, this part of the icon shows that both the living and the dead will stand before Christ.

At the bottom right of the icon is the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and the demons, and also for those who are not found worthy to inherit the Kingdom of God.

The icon offers a clear image of the theme of judgment with Christ on His throne, the Archangel with the scales and books, and the anticipation of the sentence of everlasting punishment for the unrighteous and the reward of eternal life for the righteous.

Orthodox Christian Celebration of the Feast of the Last Judgement

The Sunday of the Last Judgment is commemorated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on Saturday evening. The hymns of the Triodion for this day are added to the usual prayers and hymns of the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ. The naming of the Sunday is related to the reading of the story from the Gospel at the Divine Liturgy.

Scripture readings for the Sunday of the Last Judgment are: At the Orthros (Matins): The prescribed weekly Gospel reading. At the Divine Liturgy: I Corinthians 8:8-9:2; Matthew 25:31-46.

The Sunday of the Last Judgment is also known as Meatfare Sunday. This is the last day that meat can be eaten before the Lenten fast. Dairy products are allowed on each day of this week, even Wednesday and Friday. The next Sunday is the Sunday of Cheesefare, It is the last day that dairy products can be eaten prior to the commencement of Great Lent.

On the Saturday before this Sunday, the first of three Saturdays of the Souls are held. This is a special commemoration on this and the next two Saturdays, when the Church offers a Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service for the departed faithful. This is considered a universal commemoration of the dead. It is closely related to the theme of the Sunday of the Last Judgment since the services focus on the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Through the memorial services, the Church is commending to God all who have departed and who are now awaiting the Last Judgment.

Hymns and Prayers of the Feast of the Prodigal Son

Doxastikon of Matins (First Mode)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Let us go before, O brethren, and cleanse ourselves for the Queen of virtues; for behold she hath come bringing to us fortune of good deeds, quenching the uprisings of passion and reconciling the wicked to the Master. Let us welcome her, therefore, shouting to Christ God, O thou who arose from the dead, keep us uncondemned, who glorify Thee, O Thou who alone art sinless.

Kontakion (First Mode)

When Thou comest, O God, upon the earth with glory, the whole world will tremble. The river of fire will bring men before Thy judgment seat, the books will be opened and the secrets disclosed. Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire, and count me worthy to stand on Thy right hand, Judge most righteous.

Services this Week

- **Cheese-fare Sunday**
(03.17.2024.)
 - Venerable Gerasimus of Jordan (Cheese-fare) *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*

Donations March 3, 2024

Offering - \$ 1,035.00 Candles - \$89.00 Dues - \$50.00
Donations - \$200.00 From Alan Hurt

Large Candles

IMO Mary Ellen Locher-Byrd from Helene Gleason
IMO Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
IMO Grandparents Amelia & Pete Mastovich from Rick Kondas
IMO brother Joseph Kondas from Rick Kondas

**Father Dragan and Popadija would like to extend their
gratitude to all who participated in the Baby Shower!!
God Bless You All!!!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

FISH FRIES

Friday, February 16th thru Friday, March 29th.

**TODAY!!! Sunday, March 10th - Meatfare Sunday
Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

**Sunday, March 17th - Cheesefare Sunday
Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

**Sunday, March 24th - Sunday of Orthodoxy 4:00 PM
St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
427 1st St. Conemaugh - 15909**

Choir rehearsal Tuesday, March 19th
Following the Great Canon of Saint Andrew beginning at 6 PM,
rehearsal to follow

**Sunday, April 21st - 5th Sunday of Lent
Lenten Vespers at Our St. Nicholas
Speaker Fr. Stefan Djoric - 5 PM**

Sunday, April 28th - Palm Sunday

Sunday May 5th, PASCHA