

# *Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church*

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Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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## *The Sunday of the Last Judgment (02.27.2022)*

### *-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 Church prescribes the present Gospel each year as Great Lent draws near. Believers are reminded of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in each suffering prison.

This Sunday of the Last Judgment is a good time to call to mind the men, women and children in various residential facilities that are in need of God's mercy. Each believer is to be an active agent of God's mercy.

Facilities exist in communities for homeless families. Men, women and children having no place to live are housed because they are poor, perhaps have been abandoned or abused.

Christians from parish churches showing love and mercy can improve lives for the homeless, the abused in shelters and in rehab centers. Believers giving attention to the hospitalized facilitate healing.

Residential facilities for the mentally ill and mentally challenged benefit from creative parish church outreach efforts. Institutions for delinquent youths are more humane when parish churches take an interest in them.

Hospitals, jails and prisons are places where ministry can take place by priests, deacons and interested parishioners. Parish outreach to nearby institutions is consistent with the present Gospel.

Too often church members are blind or not knowledgeable about confined and institutionalized needy very near to the parish church. The present Gospel is a challenge to awaken to needs and to reach out in behalf of Jesus Christ.

Addressing human suffering requires strong faith. Crime victims suffer. Stress experienced by hospital workers and others working in human caring facilities can be lessened when the local parish church shows genuine support.

The present Gospel is proclaimed in parish churches and monasteries throughout the world. Each attentive listener is to respond according to the current Gospel reading. Jesus Christ is identified with each suffering person.

Caring for a family member, a neighbor or loved one can be a way to live according to today's Gospel. Learning from members in the parish that work in caring facilities is a way to increase personal involvement to meet area needs.

Every person will stand before Christ for the final judgment. Actions taken during the course of daily life will serve as the record for judgment. Christians are to show love and compassion according the Gospel.

Hardheartedness or neglecting the needy nearby puts the soul in peril. Being an active Christian in manifesting love goes a long way in helping persons in need. Jesus Christ is identified with each person including all in need.

God's Holy Church reminds believers to be loving and caring. Personal interests having nothing to do with the Gospel can blind a person to needy nearby. Today's Gospel is a lesson in sensitizing each believer to the needy in this world.

Is there a jail, a prison, a hospital, or a rehab facility near the parish church which would welcome interest from the parish? Are there hungry people in the area or those in need of clothing? Is the parish helping?

Are personal steps being taken by each parishioner to support parish outreach programs for the needy? Is there a residential place for individuals with disabilities nearby that can benefit from parish volunteers?

The Gospel is filled with love. Love is to be the basis for all relationships. Communities improve when Christ's love extends well beyond the walls of the parish church into each place of need.

Showing love to the needy is showing love to the Lord Jesus Christ. Earthly life is limited in time. Making the wisest use of the time of life includes showing love for the needy identified in today's Gospel.

Today is the time to commit to living in accord with the present Gospel. Today is the day to direct daily life towards the Last Judgment, God's kingdom and eternal life.

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***The Sunday of the Last Judgment. Meatfare Sunday. Venerable Auxentius. St. Cyril, Teacher of the Slavs. February 14/27, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic***

## RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON



Preparing her faithful children for the grace-filled time of Great Lent, a time of particular spiritual ascetic labors and repentance, the Church offers for our attention the parable of the prodigal son (cf. Lk. 15:11–12).

In the Gospel reading we hear one of the most famous narratives, which has found its reflection in all manifestations of human creativity. The Lord offered this parable of the prodigal son to all the people with the disciples gathered around Him. This is the story of how one rich man had two sons. One of these sons told his father to give him his share of inheritance. The father out of love did not contradict his son and did what he asked, giving him everything that would belong to him. This was a large property, because the man was wealthy. After this, the son took everything and left his father's house, but very quickly wasted and spent all this wealth on a depraved lifestyle. He wasted it with depraved people, squandered it, and to make matters worse, a terrible famine came to the country where he was living. So, this man, who grew up in a good household, was forced to go to one of the people of that country and herd his swine—that is how far he fell. He endured such deprivation and hunger that he was happy just to eat what they gave him for the swine—but even that was not always available to him.

Then this prodigal son came to his senses and thought, "In my father's house the hired servants live better than I do now." He decided to return home, to repent before his father, and ask him to receive him, no longer as a son but as a hired hand, as a worker and servant.

No sooner had his loving father learned that his son was approaching than he was filled with delight, ran out to meet him, embraced him, and ordered that he be given the best clothing, a ring on his finger, and shoes, and he ordered a feast to be served to rejoice over his lost son's unexpected return.

The gifts that the son demanded and received from his father are those gifts that we receive from God at birth: beauty, intellect, abilities, and talents. Who is the cause of our beauty and abilities, who is the source of our strength? Of course, they say that a person gets his appearance from his father and mother. But first of all it is from the Creator of Heaven and Earth; He is the Artist, and He creates such beautiful creations and bestows them with colossal abilities both intellectual and spiritual. Christians are even more abundantly bestowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which they receive at Baptism in the Church.

But often man ascribes these gifts and talents to himself; he departs from God, does not wish to live any longer under the roof of His house, hear His commandments, or fulfill His requests. He wants pleasure without limits in his life. And often such a man

quickly squanders all his talents and comes to a terrible state. And whether he understands it or not, he also begins to herd swine—he becomes a swineherd.

The holy fathers understand the Gospel swine to be human passions—that is, man no longer wants to work for God and abide in divine grace, and so he inevitably ends up in the company of these swine: the thoughts and passions that he serves, and the food he is ready to take—it’s all swinish.

In order to understand what a clear picture the Lord offered his listeners, we have to remember that His words were directed at the Jews, for whom pigs are an unclean animal. He said this in order to show the depth of this unfortunate son’s fall. From the member of a family and heir of a rich man he became a swineherd, eating together with the pigs. Pigs are by nature unclean animals. Nowadays we who live in cities are torn away from the earth, from labor, and these gospel words simply don’t reach us to their full extent. In this sense it is useful whenever the opportunity arises to go to a pig sty and take a whiff... to find out how repulsive it smells there. But that is precisely the smell of sin and the image of sin. It’s just that most people do not sense it as such in their everyday lives; for us, the stench of sin has become the smell of expensive perfume. We see sin all around us, but we usually can’t distinguish its true face, or smell its stench.

Now what many call beauty, glamour, or success—a competition, an agency, a festival, an award, a store of some kind and various things—all of this is clothed in beauty and fragrance, and only God’s children can feel the true stench and abomination of the swinishness that this world calls beauty, success, and something good. And people who dedicate their lives to serving all this suffer, their souls are hungry, just as the gospel prodigal son was hungry. But the Lord is ready to receive them too; we can see that the son’s repentance alone was enough to evoke such love and even gifts from the father—that is, from God.

There is another son in the parable. When he saw that his brother had returned, and when he saw the joy of his family, servants, and father—how did he react? He started complaining with envy and resentment to his father. And he doesn’t call his brother “brother”, but says, “This son of your squandered your possessions with harlots, and you are so happy at his return. But I who have always been with you have never been vouchsafed such love.” Unfortunately, this often happens with us. This sin, this habit of envying and judging our neighbor very often takes the upper hand in us over Christian love. As soon as someone in the Church does something good, or even

simply some person near us, envy, criticism, and judgment immediately arise in our hearts. It seems to us that it would be better if that person had not done anything good, because we didn't do it. This is a very terrible energy, a terrible force, and it enslaves us. It is the same when we don't believe that a person has corrected himself, changed his life, become different. We like to remember and talk only about the bad things he's done.

What is repentance? Repentance is a source of joy not only for the repentant person, but also for the angels. In that same chapter from St. Luke, before the Lord started relating that parable He says, "The angels rejoice over one sinner who has returned and repented" (cf. Lk. 15:10). We do not want to be angels, we want to be prosecutors, judges, and very often we are unable to share that joy with the angels.

Repentance is the path to salvation, deification, return to the house of our Heavenly Father; and that prodigal son is not only our neighbor or relative who is far from the Church—it's all of us. Many of us have walked that path, many have found themselves in the Church, then begun to relax, fall away, return to that pig's trough and forget divine grace.

The apostle says that our bodies are divine vessels; in them we must glorify God. He says literally that they are not created for fornication either spiritual or physical, but for glorifying God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:13).

The time of repentance is at hand; special spiritual joy, sorrow over sin, and the joy of uniting with God. And each of us must share this joy with the angels and strive with all our strength to bring someone to this Table through our example, our love. Let's not be like that elder brother who judged his brother the sinner, but like the father, like the servants bring them in, so that as the apostle said today, together we might glorify God also in these bodies of ours, which are in fact God's.

Amen.

*Hieromonk Ignaty (Shestakov)*  
*Translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees)*

## *The Prologue from Ochrid* *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

### **1. THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR THEODORE THE TYRO**

The word Tyro means recruit. As soon as Theodore entered the army in the Marmarite regiment in the town of Amasea, the persecution of Christians began under the Emperors Maximian and Maximus. As Theodore did not try to conceal the fact that he also was a Christian, he was dragged to court and thrown into prison, which was then locked and sealed because the wicked judge wanted him to die of starvation. The Lord Christ Himself appeared to Theodore in prison and encouraged His martyr, saying to him: "Fear not Theodore, I am with you. Do not partake of earthly food and drink anymore, for you will be with Me in the other world in the heavens--eternal and everlasting." At that moment there appeared a multitude of angels in the prison, and the entire prison shone brightly. The guards, seeing angels dressed in white raiment, became terrified. After that, St. Theodore was taken out, tortured and condemned to death. Theodore was thrown into a fire and gave up his holy soul to the Most-high God. He suffered in the year 306 A.D.

### **2. THE VENERABLE THEODOSIUS THE BULGARIAN AND HIS DISCIPLE ROMAN**

As a monk, St. Theodosius settled not far from the city of Trnovo [Bulgaria]. There he established a monastic community, which became known as "Theodosius's" after him. He notably distinguished himself at a council in Bulgaria against the Bogomils in the year 1360 A.D. Defending the Orthodox Faith at this council, he shamed the Bogomils by his reasoning. He finished his earthy course in Constantinople in the year 1362 A.D. His disciple, Roman, continued to live as an ascetic in Theodosius's community until his death.

### **3. SAINT MARIAMNA (MARIA)**

Mariamna was the sister of the Holy Apostle Philip. She traveled with her brother, preaching the Gospel with him in Hierapolis and in other places. Following Philip's martyric death, Mariamna continued her missionary work in Lycaonia, where she died.

## **HYMN OF PRAISE** **SAINT THEODORE THE TYRO**

"Do not be afraid of the world, for I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

These are holy words both then and now.  
They are a true balm for all who suffer,  
Most of all for the glorious martyrs of God.  
Why should you be afraid of those who are more fearful?  
The world is afraid of its own shadow!  
Why fear the powerful and the rulers,  
And dying things, constantly dying?  
He who is with the Householder is not afraid of the house.  
The Householder sees everything that is in the house,  
And there is nothing that He would not know.  
And His servant, what should he be afraid of?  
When he hears the Lord say,  
"Do not be afraid of the world!" what more does he desire?  
"Do not be afraid of the world, for I have overcome the world!"  
Our Lord reigns and rules over the world.  
Before the flames and death, Theodore smiled,  
And thus he received wreathes that never fade.

### REFLECTION

An artist is one who carves and shapes forms of living creatures from crude and shapeless stone. An artist is one who weaves a multicolored blanket from the wool of sheep. An artist is one who builds a magnificent palace out of earthly bricks. But what artist on earth can be compared to Christ the Artist, Who makes illiterate men into wise men, fishermen into apostles, cowards into heroes, and the profligate into saints? But all must be given over to the hand of the artist, in order to be fashioned into that which the artist knows and is capable of doing. All things, in truth, must be given over to the hand of the artist. Even men must give themselves over to the hand of Christ, in order for Him to carve, to weave or to build that which only He knows and is capable of. The last nineteen centuries witness to us, that all who did



not oppose Him but rather gave themselves over to Christ the Artist, went from being boorish and ignorant to being angel-like children of God.

## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the Lord Jesus as an Artist above all artists:

1. Who, from the body of man, which has become wild from the passions, creates a noble organ of every virtue;
2. Who, from the chaos in the soul of man, creates the cosmos--a pure and shining mirror of the glory of God;
3. Who, from ignoble men creates an undefiled kingdom, a country of the holy--an artistic work without precedence and without comparison.

## HOMILY

### on death as sleeping

"And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead" (Luke 8:52-53).

The reference here is to the dead daughter of Jarius. Jarius himself said that his daughter had died, and his servants confirmed this. But the Lord, the Giver of life, said: *Weep not; she is not dead*, and they ridiculed Him, *knowing that she was dead*. The ignorant pretend that they know better than the Knower. The blind pretend that they see better than the All-seeing One. But when the young girl arose and showed herself alive, the ignorant *were astonished with a great astonishment* (Mark 5:42).

Even today, the ignorant scoff when they hear the divine truth. Divine truth speaks: There is a Living God! And the ignorant ridicule this as though they know that there is no God. Divine truth speaks: There is a Heavenly Kingdom! And the ignorant ridicule even this as though they know that there is no Heavenly Kingdom. Divine truth asserts: The dead will resurrect! And the ignorant even deny this as though they know that this will not be. And when God appears and the angels of God appear, and the Kingdom of Heaven is made known, and the dead resurrect, then the ignorant ones will be *astonished with a great astonishment*.

Who can save the world from the ignorant? No one can save the world except Christ the Omniscient, the Omnipotent. By what can the ignorant be saved? By nothing except faith in Christ and the Christian Faith. Who are the most ignorant ones in the world? They are those who deny whatever Christ affirmed and affirm whatever He denied. In a word: there are those who think that they know

something contrary to the knowledge of Christ. They are the worst and the most dangerous ignoramuses, both to themselves and to others.

My brethren, know that everything and everyone can deceive us except Christ, our Lord and Friend. He always knows and we do not, except when we look and listen to Him.

O Lord, merciful and all-merciful, help all the ignorant, that before death and judgment they may be *astonished with great astonishment*, and that they too may be saved in the Kingdom of Thy holy ones.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

## **Services this Week**

- ❖ **Wednesday – March 2<sup>th</sup> -Great-martyr Theodore The Tyro - Divine Liturgy 09:00 AM**
- ❖ **Friday – *March 11<sup>th</sup>* – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM**
- ❖ ***CHEESEFARE SUNDAY* (Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup>) – 10:00 AM *Divine Liturgy***

### ***Donations February 20, 2022***

Offering - \$727.00 Candles - \$139.00 Dues - \$50.00

Large Candles

In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Kumovi Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Parents, Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Robert & Milica  
Knepp

In Memory of Ranka Marinkovich from Richard Kondas

In Memory of Ed Gartrell from Steve Purich

In Memory of Linda (Locher) Leckrone from Dorothy Podolak

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**HOME BLESSINGS**

*Please contact Father Dragan to schedule a time to have your Home Blessed!*

*(814) 244-4063*

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**CONFESSION**

*Father Dragan will have Confession following the Canon to St Nectarios*

*which is held every Saturday at 5:00 PM*

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**SALE!!!!**

*The kolo is selling Nut, Poppyseed, Apricot and Lekvar - \$10/each  
And Pumpkin Rolls - \$8/each – while supplies last*

*Please see Pat Niel*

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**IMPORTANT DATES**

**TODAY**

**Sunday, February 27th – Meatfare Sunday**

**Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

(Today is the last day for eating meat and meat products until Pascha, though eggs and dairy products are permitted every day during the coming week. This limited fasting prepares us gradually for the more intense fasting of Great Lent)

**Sunday, March 6th – Cheesefare Sunday**

**Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

The meaning of this Sunday is the condescension of God to the human weakness, "for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (v.14-15). This is emphasized

in the Lord's Prayer. The week (six days) preceding Sunday Of Cheese and after Meat Sunday, is the addition to the period of the Great Lent which Completes the forty days of fasting (excluding Saturdays and Sundays). The name of this Sunday, "Cheese", implies that the fast of this week is the gradual transition from eating meat to the strict fast of Lent, which starts the next day, Monday, with the first Sunday of Lent at the end of the preliminary seven days (Sunday of Orthodoxy).

***Sunday, March 13th – Sunday of Orthodoxy***

***Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM***

***Bring your Icon to Church!!!***

***Orthodoxy Sunday Vespers will be held at Christ the Saviour Cathedral  
At 3:00 PM (March 13th) – Choir rehearsals will be announced soon.***

***LENTEN FISH FRIES***

***BEGIN THIS FRIDAY, MARCH 4th***

***3:00 to 6:30 PM***

***Eat in or Take out (Limited Seating)***

***Fridays, March 4th thru April 15th***

***Please notify Suzette Gardenhour of the Friday's you can work!!***

***SAVE THESE DATES!!!!***

***Saturday, May 14th – Taste of Serbia***

***Sunday, May 20th – St. Nicholas Anniversary Celebration***

***Polka Fest – June 3-5, 2022***