

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT (“Meatfare”)

15 February 2015

TONE 3—Apostle of the Seventy Onesimus (ca. 109); Ven. Paphnutius and his daughter Euphrosyne, of Alexandria (5th c.); Ven. Eusebius the Hermit, of Syria (5th c.).

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and became the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.✦ Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

KONTAKION FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT (Tone 1): When Thou comest, O God, to earth with glory, and all creatures tremble before Thee, and the river of fire floweth before the Altar, and the books are opened and sins revealed, deliver me then from that unquenchable fire, and make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand, O righteous Judge.

TODAY’S EPISTLE READING

The Lord has chastised me, but He has not delivered me over to death!

From the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

(1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2) But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Matthew 25:31-46) When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: '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.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?' When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?' Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You? 'And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:' for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. 'Then they also will answer Him, saying, '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. 'And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE: HUMILITY

From Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent*

The culture in which we live constantly instills in us the sense of pride, of self-glorification, and of self-righteousness. It is built on the assumption that man can achieve anything by himself and it even pictures God as the one who all the time "gives credit" for man's achievements and good deeds. Humility—be it individual or corporate, ethnic or national—is viewed as a sign of weakness, as something unbecoming a real man. Even our churches: are they not imbued with that same spirit as the Pharisee? Do we not want our every contribution, every "good deed," all that we do "for the Church" to be acknowledged, praised, publicized?

The Lenten season begins then by a quest, a prayer for humility, which is the beginning of true repentance. For repentance, above everything else, is *a return to the genuine order of things*, the restoration of the right vision. It is, therefore, rooted in humility, and humility-- the divine and beautiful humility-- is its fruit and end. "Let us avoid the high-flown speech of the Pharisee," says the *Kontakion* of this day, "and *learn the majesty* of the Publican's humble words..." We are at the gates of repentance and at the most solemn moment of the Sunday vigil; After the Resurrection and

the appearance of Christ have been announced—"having beheld the Resurrection" —we sing for the first time the *troparia* which will accompany us throughout the entire Lent:

Open to me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life, for my spirit rises early to pray towards thy holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in Thy compassion, purify me by the loving kindness of Thy mercy!

Lead me on the paths of salvation, O Mother of God, for I have profaned my soul with shameful sins, and have wasted my life in laziness. But by your intercessions, deliver me from all impurity.

When I think of the many evil things I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble at the fearful day of judgment. But trusting in Thy living kindness, like David I cry to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.

THE SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON: RETURN FROM EXILE

From Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent*

A man who has never felt that he is exiled from God and from real life, will never understand what Christianity is about. And the one who is perfectly "at home" in this world and its life, who has never been wounded by the nostalgic desire for another Reality, will not understand what is repentance.

Repentance is often simply identified as a cool and "objective" enumeration of sins and transgressions, as the act of "pleading guilty" to a legal indictment. Confession and absolution are seen as being of a juridical nature. But something very essential is overlooked, without which neither confession nor absolution have any real meaning or power. This "something" is precisely the feeling of *alienation from God*, from the joy of communion with Him, from the real life as created and given by God. It is easy indeed to confess that I have not fasted on prescribed days, or missed my prayers, or become angry. It is quite a different thing, however, to realize suddenly that I have defiled and lost my spiritual beauty, that I am far away from my real home, my real life, and that something precious and pure and beautiful has been hopelessly broken in the very texture of my existence. Yet this, and only this, is repentance, and therefore it is also a deep desire *to return*, to go back, to recover that lost home....

One liturgical peculiarity of this "*Sunday of the Prodigal Son*" must be especially mentioned here. At Sunday Matins, following the solemn and joyful Psalms of the *Polyeleon*, we sing the sad and nostalgic Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, and we wept when we remembered Zion... How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forgotten. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy...

It is the Psalm of exile. It was sung by the Jews in their Babylonian captivity as they thought of their holy city of Jerusalem. It has become forever the song of man as he realizes his exile from God, and realizing it, becomes man again: the one who can never be fully satisfied by anything in this fallen world, for by nature and vocation he is a pilgrim of the Absolute. This Psalm reveals Lent itself as pilgrimage and repentance—as return.

SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT: PREPARING FOR LENT AND ETERNITY

From a recent broadcast by Fr. Thomas Hopko

The Gospel read this Sunday speaks of the Last Judgment: when the Son of Man comes in his glory all the peoples of the earth and every individual person *will* give an account of his or her life at the end of the ages. (In fact, this final judgment is anticipated when a person dies. When we die, we believe that are somehow projected immediately into the final end of the world, the final coming of Christ.) Saint John Chrysostom said, “What a strange kind of a judgment it is. In fact, there’s no judge. There’s no defense lawyer. There’s no prosecuting attorney. There’s even no jury. There’s just Christ and us. That’s it.”

In the parable it’s *very* interesting how the Lord says that he will sit there as the King, and say to some, “Come, blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” The *reason* that they are inheriting the kingdom that is prepared for them is because, “I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty; you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in, you welcomed me. I was naked; you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison; you came to me ... Truly, I say to you: as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” And then to the others, sent away to eternal fire, he says the same words, but in a negative way: “I was hungry and you did not feed me. Thirsty, you did not give me drink. Naked, you did not clothe me. A stranger, you did not take me in. Sick and in prison, you didn’t come to me ... Truly, I say to you: inasmuch as you did *not* do this to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it not to me.”

First, note this expression “Truly, I say to you.” *Amen*, it says in Greek: “*Amen*, I say to you.” Normally when a person speaks, the person who listens or who hears is supposed to respond: “Amen, so be it,” but Jesus says, “Amen,” first, which means what he is saying, “This is not a matter of discussion. I am not interested in *your* ‘Amen’ to this one. *I* am saying ‘Amen’ first, which means that this is, in fact, the truth. This is non-negotiable.”

Second, the judgment, then, is on how we treat people. The judgment ultimately is love. Did we love our neighbor, our enemy? Did we love our fellow human beings? That’s it. That is it, because the commandment of God, the great and holy commandment is that “you will love the Lord your God with all your mind, all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength”; and, Christ adds, the second great commandment that goes with it is that we are to love our *neighbor* as being our very own self. This is the meaning: “You shall love your neighbor because your neighbor *is* your very own self. You have no self in yourself.” You only find and fulfill yourself by denying your so-called self in love for the neighbor, and then your self is affirmed. It appears. It’s realized.

In any case, it is a clear teaching of the Holy Scripture that the only way we can prove our love for God is by loving the person next to us, our neighbor. Of course, Jesus teaches that our neighbor is the worst enemy we can think of. In fact, if we wanted to evaluate how we’re doing as a human being, as a Christian, we would just ask ourselves, “How would I treat the person that I hate the most and that hates me the most? How do I treat the one that for me is the most ugly enemy I can think of?” When we see how we do it, then we’ll see if we love God or not, because it’s *exactly* that person that we have to love.

Saint John, in his first letter, also said, “Let us love not in speech or in word, but in *deed*, in *work*, and in truth,” because the only way we can show that we are lovers is by how we *act*, how we behave. All through the Scripture—in the psalms, in the proverbs, in the prophets, in the New Testament—it says on the day of judgment we will stand *according to our works*. What is written in the Book of Life, the Book of Judgment, which is sung about a lot on this day in the Church, what is written is what we have *done*, not what we have claimed, not what we have verbally or

mentally affirmed, not what we have said, but what we have *done*, this activity.

Love has to be expressed in concrete, specific acts, and that is what the judgment is based on. But here the Holy Fathers point out that according to Holy Scripture, even such external *acts* can be done without love, and when they are done without love, they profit us nothing, as the Apostle Paul said, and they *are* nothing. So we have to read Matthew 25 in the light of 1 Corinthians 13, where the Apostle Paul says also “If I give everything I have to the poor, if I even give my body to be burned, and I’m not doing it out of love, then it profits me nothing.” And this is very frightening, because it is possible to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty and clothe the naked and shelter the homeless and visit the sick and the imprisoned without really having love for them. It is possible, as Saint John of the Ladder writes, that “the righteous activity ... was irrigated by the putrid sewage of vainglory, of vanity.” If we do those righteous activities without love, we may hear on the day of judgment, “Depart from me, you evil-doer. I never knew you.”

The judgment really is: How do we relate to every single human being? Because for us, every single human being is Christ himself. Christ identified with everyone and everything, and he certainly identified, according to this parable, with the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned, and ultimately even the dead. And the judgment on humanity is how we related to that, whether or not we knew it, because in the parable, both the righteous and the unrighteous ask, “When did we see you? When did we do these things to *you*?” And the answer is: “When you did it to the least person, the least of my brethren”—because he became like his brethren in every respect except sin, it says in the letter to the Hebrews—“then you did it to me.”

At the end of our earthly life and at the end of the age, every single human being will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. As Chrysostom said, “No judge, no jury, no prosecuting attorney, no defense lawyer—just Christ and *me*.” Christ and us. And the question that will be asked: “Were you a lover? Did you love in concrete acts of righteousness?” *And*: “Were your acts of righteousness, your good deeds, filled with love? Were they done out of love?”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today (Sunday of the Last Judgment— "Meatfare"): Pan-Orthodox services and Pre-Lenten Luncheon at Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Church.

- **Wednesday, February 18, 6:15-8 pm: Fellowship and Study Group in Cranberry.** We will be reading and discussing a few pages from Elder Porphyrios, a contemporary saint. The pages will be posted on the parish website early next week.
- **House blessings.** Fr. Bogdan will be available on Saturdays and Sundays afternoons and evenings. Please email or call to schedule a visit!
- **Ladies' Retreat (into the wilderness):** this year's retreat is being planned for the weekend of August 21st or 28th at Kooser State Park in the Laurel Highlands. If interested, please talk to Ileana to reserve your spot
- **"A Day with Sula."** Sula has graciously invited us to her home to share with us her faith journey. If interested, please talk to Cristina or Georgia.

SCHEDULE OF LENTEN SERVICES DURING THE WEEK

FIRST WEEK OF LENT (St. Andrew's Orthodox Church)

- **Monday-Thursday, 2/23-26, 6PM:** Compline and Great Canon of Saint Andrew
- **Friday, 3/27, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts

LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS: *The Orthodox practice is to fast before these evening Liturgies from about noon (have a light lunch, then abstain from food and drink). Following the services, we will break the fast with a Lenten potluck meal.*

- **Wednesday, 3/4, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (Sts Peter & Paul)
- **Wednesday, 3/11, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (St. Anthony's)
- **Wednesday, 3/18, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (St. Andrew's)
- **Wednesday, 3/25, 6 PM:** Feast of the Annunciation (Sts Peter & Paul)
- **Wednesday, 4/1, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (St. Anthony's)

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Bill and Ann, George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, Victoria (Frank's mother), Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet, Craig, Christy (relatives of Jean); Yvonne (Ben's mother). Ron, catechumen; Shea & Katie, Timothy & Caroline – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and sister), Angeliki, Metropolitan Philip, Joe and David Sipos; Bill (Georgia's father-in-law), Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother).