

WITH REGRET: USTAV NOT AVAILABLE THIS SUNDAY

February 19 Meatfare Sunday, Sunday of the Last Judgement/ М'ЯСОПУСНА НЕДІЛЯ



The Sunday of the Last Judgment is the third Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. 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.

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.”

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.

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).

THE EPISTLE / ΑΠΟΚΤΟΛΙ 1 Corinthians 8: 8-9:2

⁸ 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.

⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. ¹⁰ 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? ¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

⁹ 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? ² 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.

GOSPEL: Matthew 25: 31-46

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy^[a] angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² 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. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ 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: ³⁵ 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; ³⁶ I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ 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.'

⁴¹ "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: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ 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.'

⁴⁴ "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?' ⁴⁵ 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.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

It is important for us as we draw so close to Lent, the time of drawing near to the Father, Who awaits us, to also hear about the Day of Judgement, as well as about the grounds for that judgement which is coming. We shall note that the basis for the judgement that is coming is the way in which we act towards others who are in need. The goats were those who lived heedlessly, caring little that the Lord Himself was standing before them, beseeching them to have mercy upon Him.

What? How strange to hear that God is asking us to be merciful towards Him. Was it really the Lord dying of hunger in Ukraine in the 1930's? Is it Him perishing in the famines and epidemics in Africa and other trouble spots on our planet? Is He the traveller who is looking for shelter? Is that Him walking about in rags or lying sick in the hospital bed or alone in His apartment? Is that really Him waiting for visitors to His prison cell?

Amazing though it may be, the Lord stands before each one of us in the person of those in need around us and asks us to add to our endeavours in fasting and praying during Lent works of mercy and kindness to others. Upon this shall be based the judgement that we shall be facing one day. Let us not be afraid. Rather, let us love Him enough to be merciful, for the merciful shall obtain mercy. Amen. *Fr Ihor Kutash UOCC*



To the left and right of the Archangel Michael are angels with trumpets announcing to the world the return of Jesus Christ, the start of the Last Judgements, and signaling the resurrection of the dead.

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. 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. 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. 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. *lent.goarch.org/judgement*

Serving Christ in the Poor: Homily for the Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meat Fare Sunday) in the Orthodox Church March 9, 2013 by Fr. Philip LeMasters

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/easternchristianinsights/2013/03/09/serving-christ-in-the-poor-homily-for-the-sunday-of-the-last-judgment-meat-fare-sunday-in-the-orthodox-church/>

St. Paul was right that "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." He was responding to the question of whether Christians in his day should eat meat from animals that had been sacrificed to pagan gods. St. Paul thought that the relevant consideration was how eating or not eating that meat affected other people. If recent converts from paganism were scandalized by the sight of a Christian eating meat from a pagan temple, that's a sin against one's weaker brother or sister and against Christ. "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

Let's remember that we fast and undertake other spiritual disciplines in Lent so that we won't cause others to stumble, so that our passions will be healed by our Lord's mercy and we will then be in a position to become channels of His love to our neighbors. Let's face it, we're not there yet. Our anger tempts other people to anger. Pride, envy, lust, self-righteousness, gluttony and other passions distort our relationships with other people, even those we love most. We tempt them to sin because of our infirmities and corruptions. That's unfortunately inevitable, because none of us is fully healed; none of us is beyond the distortion and weakening that our sins have worked on us.

As we prepare for our Lenten journey, we should keep in mind that fasting is not first of all about food, but a tool that can help us fight deep seated passions that keep us from seeing and serving Christ in our neighbors. A bit of almsgiving won't change the world, but it will change us by giving us practice in attending to the needs of others in how we use our resources. Prayer isn't magic, but in order to grow in union with Christ we must get in the habit of at least giving Him our attention.

If we want to become like the righteous in today's gospel passage, if we want to be so filled with the love of Christ that we share His mercy with everyone we encounter, we need to take our medicine, we need therapy for the healing of our souls. That's what Great Lent will soon provide us: a time to turn away from everything that keeps us from recognizing Christ in our neighbors and to learn to love Him in them. As our Savior said, "In that you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Let's use Lent to become the kind of people who already know the joy of the Kingdom of God.