

**SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2021**  
**SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT**  
**MEATFARE SUNDAY**

Today's Gospel reading is Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the Last Judgment. It reminds us that while trusting in Christ's love and mercy, we must not forget His righteous judgment when He comes again in glory. If our hearts remain hardened and unrepentant, we should not expect the Lord to overlook our transgressions simply because He is a good and loving God. Although He does not desire the death of a sinner, He also expects us to turn from our wickedness and live (Ezek. 33:11). This same idea is expressed in the prayer read by the priest after the penitent has confessed his or her sins (Slavic practice).

The time for repentance and forgiveness is now, in the present life. At the Second Coming, Christ will appear as the righteous Judge, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6). Then the time for entreating God's mercy and forgiveness will have passed.

As Father Alexander Schmemmann reminds us in his book GREAT LENT (Ch. 1:4), sin is the absence of love, it is separation and isolation. When Christ comes to judge the world, His criterion for judgment will be love. Christian love entails seeing Christ in other people, our family, our friends, and everyone else we may encounter in our lives. We shall be judged on whether we have loved, or not loved, our neighbor. We show Christian love when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit those who are sick or in prison. If we did such things for the least of Christ's brethren, then we also did them for Christ (Mt.25:40). If we did not do such things for the least of the brethren, neither did we do them for Christ (Mt.25:45).

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.

**GREAT VESPERS**

***LORD I CALL: Six stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 6, followed by four from the Lenten Triodion***

***Tone 6:***

Possessing victory over hell, O Christ,  
since You are free among the dead,  
You ascended the Cross  
raising with Yourself those who sat in the shades of death.//  
O Almighty Savior, Who drew life from Your own light, have mercy on us!

Today Christ tramples on death,  
for He is risen as He said!  
Let us all sing this song,  
for He has granted joy to the world:  
“O Light unapproachable, O Fountain of life!//  
Savior Almighty, have mercy on us!”

Where shall we sinners flee from You, for You are in all creation?  
In heaven You dwell!  
In hell You trampled on death!  
In the depths of the sea?  
Even there is Your hand, O Master!  
To You we flee, and falling before You, we pray://  
“As You rose from the dead, have mercy on us!”

In Your Cross, we glory, O Christ.  
We sing and glorify Your Resurrection.  
For You are our God,//  
and we know no other than You.

We will always bless the Lord  
by singing of His Resurrection!  
for He endured the Cross,//  
trampling down death by death.

Glory to Your might, O Lord,  
for You overthrew the prince of death!  
By Your Cross You have renewed us,//  
granting us life and incorruption.

***Triodion, tone 6:***

O Righteous Judge of all mankind,  
You will come, enthroned in glory and escorted by Angels,  
to judge the living and the dead.  
Every man will stand in fear before You,  
trembling at the river of fire flowing past Your throne,  
as each one waits to hear the sentence he deserves.  
On that awesome day have mercy on us as well, O Christ;  
count us worthy of salvation,  
for, worthless as we are, we turn to You in faith,//  
O compassionate and merciful Lord!

The books will be opened, and the works of all men laid bare;  
the vale of tears will echo with the gnashing of teeth;  
the sinners will mourn in vain, as they depart to eternal damnation.  
Your judgments are just, O Lord Almighty!  
We beg You, O Master, full of goodness and compassion,//

take pity on us who sing to You, O most merciful One!

The trumpet shall sound, and the graves shall be opened;  
all mankind will arise in trembling;  
the righteous will rejoice, as they receive their reward,  
but the wicked will depart to eternal fire with wailing and horror.  
O Lord of Glory, have mercy on us!  
Number us with those who love You, //  
for You alone are good, O Master!

I shudder in terror when I think of that dreadful day;  
I weep as I consider the darkness that will never see light:  
there the worm shall not cease, or the fire be quenched;  
the pain of those who reject You will never end.  
Save me, Your most worthless servant, O Righteous Judge, //  
for Your mercy and compassion are my only hope!

***GLORY... Triodion, tone 8:***

When the thrones are set in place and the books are opened,  
then God will take His place on the judgment seat.  
Oh, what a fearful sight!  
The Angels stand in awe, and the river of fire flows by.  
What shall we do, who are already condemned by our many sins,  
as we hear Christ call the righteous to His Father's Kingdom,  
and send the wicked to eternal damnation?  
Who among us can bear that terrible verdict?  
Hasten to us, O Lover of mankind and King of the universe;  
grant us the grace of repentance before the end, //  
and have mercy on us!

***NOW AND EVER... the Dogmatikon in tone 6:***

Who will not bless you, O most holy Virgin?  
Who will not sing of your most pure childbearing?  
The only-begotten Son shone timelessly from the Father,  
but from you He was ineffably incarnate.  
God by nature, He became Man for our sake,  
not divided into two persons but manifest as One in two natures.  
Entreat Him, O pure and all-blessed Lady, //  
to have mercy on our souls!

***APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 6:***

Your Resurrection, O Christ our Savior,  
the Angels in heaven sing!  
Enable us on earth //  
to glorify You in purity of heart!

Destroying the gates of hell,

breaking the chains of death,  
You resurrected the fallen human race as almighty God!//  
O Lord, Who rose from the dead, glory to You!

Desiring to return us to Paradise,  
Christ was nailed to the Cross and placed in a tomb.  
The Myrrhbearing Women sought Him with tears, crying,  
“Woe to us, O Savior!  
How do You deign to descend to death?  
What place can hold Your life bearing body?  
Come to us as You promised!  
Take away our wailing and tears!”  
Then the Angel appeared to them:  
“Stop your lamentations!  
Go, proclaim to the Apostles:  
‘The Lord is risen,//  
granting us purification and great mercy!’”

Having been crucified as You willed,  
by Your burial You captured death, O Christ,  
and rose on the third day as God in glory,//  
granting the world unending life and great mercy!

***GLORY... from the Triodion, tone 8:***

Woe, to you, O my darkened soul!  
Your life is stained by depravity and laziness;  
your folly makes you shun all thought of death.  
How complacent you remain!  
How can you flee the awesome thought of Judgment Day?  
When will you change your way of life?  
On that day your sins will rise against you.  
What will your answer be then?  
Your acts will condemn you; your deeds will expose you.  
The time is at hand, O my soul.  
Turn to the good and loving Savior!  
Beg Him to forgive your malice and weakness, as you cry in faith:  
“I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against You,  
but I know Your love for all mankind.//  
O good Shepherd, call me to enjoy Your lasting presence on Your right hand!”

***NOW AND EVER... Resurrectional Theotokion in tone 8:***

Unwedded Virgin,  
you ineffably conceived God in the flesh.  
O Mother of God most high,  
accept the cries of your servants, O blameless one!  
Grant cleansing of transgressions to all!//  
Receive our prayers and pray to save our souls!

**TROPARIA**

***Resurrection, tone 6***

The angelic powers were at Thy tomb;  
the guards became as dead men.  
Mary stood by Thy grave,  
seeking Thy most pure Body.  
Thou didst capture hell,  
not being tempted by it.  
Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.  
O Lord who didst rise from the dead: glory to Thee.

***Resurrectional Dismissal Theotokion, tone 6***

You Who called Your Mother blessed,  
came of Your own will to the Passion.  
Shining on the Cross, desiring to recall Adam, You said to the Angels:  
“Rejoice with me for the lost coin has been found.”  
You Who have ordered all things in wisdom//  
our God, glory to You!