

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2023
SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT
MEATFARE SUNDAY

Sunday of the Last Judgment

It is love again that constitutes the theme of "Meat-Fare Sunday." The Gospel lesson for the day is Christ's parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable answers: love-- not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous "poor," but concrete and personal love for the human person, any human person, that God makes me encounter in my life....

Christian love is the "possible impossibility" to see Christ in another man, whoever he 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. For, indeed, what is love if not that mysterious power which transcends the accidental and the external in the "other"-- his physical appearance, social rank, ethnic origin, intellectual capacity-- and reaches the soul, the unique and uniquely personal "root" of a human being, truly the part of God in him? If God loves every man it is because He alone knows the priceless and absolutely unique treasure, the "soul" or "person" He gave every man. Christian love then is the participation in that divine knowledge and the gift of that divine love. There is no "impersonal" love because love is the wonderful discovery of the "person" in "man," of the personal and unique in the common and general. It is the discovery in each man of that which is "lovable" in him, of that which is from God.

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 men 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 men 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. For "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me..."

*The preceding is an excerpt from **Great Lent**,
by Alexander Schmemmann, from **Chapter 2: Preparation for Lent***

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: Six stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 3 (spiral bound Vespers book), followed by four from the Lenten Triodion 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 3 (spiral bound
Vespers book)***

***APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 3 (spiral bound
Vespers book)***

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:

O unwedded Virgin,

who 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 3

Let the heavens rejoice!

Let the earth be glad!

For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.

He has trampled down death by death.

He has become the first born of the dead.

He has delivered us from the depths of hell,

and has granted to the world//

great mercy.

Resurrection Dismissal Theotokion, tone 3

We praise you as the mediatrix of our salvation,

O Virgin Theotokos.

For your Son, our God, Who took flesh from you,

accepted the Passion on the Cross,//

delivering us from corruption as the Lover of Man.

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