

Prayers for the Last Judgement

“As I consider the awesome Day of Judgement and Your ineffable glory, I am overcome with fear and trembling, O Lord, and cry aloud to You: O Christ our God, when You come again to earth in glory to judge all creatures, deliver me, wretched as I am. From all punishment and make me worthy to stand at Your right hand, O Master!” - *Exapostilarion*

“Daniel the Prophet, the greatly beloved, saw the power of God and cried aloud: ‘The judgment seat was set up and the books were opened!’ Be attentive, O my soul! Do you fast? Then deal not treacherously with your neighbor! Do you abstain? Then judge not your brother, lest you be cast into the fire to melt like wax. But may Christ bring you without stumbling into His Kingdom.” - *Praises*



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM



The Last Judgment

**SUNDAY OF MEATFARE
THE LAST JUDGMENT
FEBRUARY 16, 2020**

Antiphon (1st)

I: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth, and sing praise to His name.

Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ

People: O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 3, Pg. 39)

Let all in heaven rejoice, and all on earth be glad, for the Lord has exerted power with His arm: By death He has trampled upon Death and has become the firstborn from the dead. He has delivered us from the bosom of Hades and has granted to the world great mercy.

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1, Pg. 15)

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity, and in falling asleep, you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life, being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of the Prodigal Son (Tone 1)

O God, when You shall come down upon earth in Your glory, every creature shall tremble before You. A river of fire shall flow before Your judgment-seat, the books shall be opened, and all secrets revealed. On that day, O Just Judge, deliver me from eternal fire and make me worthy to stand at Your right!

Not a few groups of early gnostic Christians ended by devising their own belief systems, often denying that God was the source of the material creation, something they were too “spiritual to admit. One could rise above the material, some taught, by acquiring gnosis (superior knowledge) not obvious to the ordinary man. They found their salvation, not in their union with Christ, but in the acquisition of gnosis. Groups of Gnostics could be found in the East until the rise of Islam.

St Paul’s response to the elitism of the Gnostic Christians was to encourage them to put the welfare of the weaker brethren ahead of their own. Yes, Paul said in effect, it’s ok to eat the food at pagan festivals, but it’s not ok to scandalize brethren who don’t understand how this could be. And the reason for this is that we are all members of the one body of Christ: “*But beware that somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 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*” (vs. 9-12).

St Paul would make this principle a cornerstone of his directions to the new churches he would organize. Not only should the intellectuals look out for the ordinary believer, those able to put their faith into practice should care for those who do not. As he told the Galatians, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, he deceives himself*” (Gal 6:1-3). Not only the intellectual elite, but also the spiritually adept, need an antidote to pride: caring for those less proficient than themselves, rather than looking down upon them.

A Matter of Conscience

St Paul characterizes those who may be scandalized at pagan banquets as having “*a weak conscience*” (v. 9). In every man there is an understanding of right and wrong. Conscience has been described as “man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” (Vatican Council II). Deep within himself man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself, but which he must obey. When a person does this, he is said to be “following his conscience.”

Christians should feel obligated to form their conscience in accordance with the word of God rather than the dictates of the culture in which they live or their personal sentiments. Developing such a Christian conscience is one aspect of the believer’s interior life. A person who ignores self-reflection remains weak and susceptible to every changing fad. When faced with a moral dilemma, he is unable to make his decision based on clear principles – biblical or otherwise – and usually does just what “everyone else” is doing. Like their first-century forebears, they have a weak conscience.

Food Offered to Idols Today

A few years ago a group of Pentecostals in Australia mounted a campaign against Cadbury chocolates, claiming that the company was offering their candy to idols. Their “proof” was that the packages were imprinted with the *halal* insignia, evidence that the candy was offered to the “Muslim idol,” Allah. The insignia merely signified that there were no pork products or other prohibited substances in the candy (some cream fillings have gelatin stabilizers). As St Paul said, “... *if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.*”

We will may encounter groups in our multicultural societies today who actually offer food to idols. Hindus and *hare Krishna* devotees, for example, have the custom of *prasadam* (food transformed into the grace of God, as one writer expresses it). These would be vegetable offerings that are “acquired without paid or suffering on the part of any creature,” offered before an altar in a meditation rite, then mingled with other foods, once the god or goddess has had a chance to partake.

Could you accept such food in the spirit of friendship with which it was offered, without acknowledging the god or goddess to whom it was offered? What do you think St Paul would say?

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today

Health & Well-being of Suzan Ansara Abeedy. Requested by the Ansara Family

+**Charles Welsh.** Requested by Karen Solitro & Virginia Mischitelli

+**Patrick & Delia Kenny.** Requested by Tom Syseskey

February 23

+**Larry Bettley.** Requested by Joe & Lorraine Lian

+**Charles Welsh.** Requested by Joe & Lorraine Lian

◆ Last Week's Attendance/Donations: **33/\$870**

◆ **Next Sunday, February 23 is Cheesefare Sunday**, traditionally the last day we eat dairy products until Pascha. We will have a Pot Luck after the Divine Liturgy. Please bring your favorite meatless, cheesy dish to share. After the meal, we will go to the church and celebrate Forgiveness Vespers to begin Great Lent.

◆ **Next Saturday, February 22**, The Basilian Salvatorian Fathers are having an event celebrating the 90th anniversary of the death of Fr. Bechara Abou Mourad. The event begins with Divine Liturgy at **6PM** at St. Basil Seminary in Methuen followed by refreshments and a movie about Fr. Bechara's life. Please see the flyer for more details

PARISH MEETING

This morning after the Divine Liturgy and Coffee Hour, we will have a Parish Meeting. I will present some of my ideas for the future of the parish. **I also want to hear from you!** I will present the state of our finances as well as some of the major projects we need complete over the next few years. We need everyone to contribute their time, talent, and treasure in order for us to grow the community. Please make every effort to attend.

Welcome to those who are visiting today. We are happy to have you worship with us. **If this is your first time here, please come downstairs to the Hall, introduce yourself, have some refreshments, and get to know the Community. If you have any questions about the Melkite Church and its traditions, please don't hesitate to ask Fr. Bryan.**

Weddings — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis.



THE BISHOP'S APPEAL: The annual Bishop's Appeal is a vital means of support for our Melkite Church in the U.S. Your gifts to the Bishop's Appeal provide funding for many important works of our Eparchy, such as: the formation of our seminarians for the Priesthood and Diaconate; providing for our elderly priests; producing **SOPHIA** magazine; teaching the Faith to our children and young adults; establishing/supporting new missions and outreaches. Our Father and Shepherd, Bishop Nicholas asks every Melkite household in the U.S. to give **at least \$100-\$200 each year** to support our Eparchy in America.

Those who give a gift of \$1000 or more will be automatically enrolled in the Order of Saint Nicholas, the charitable society of our Eparchy.

Our goal is 100% participation for our parish. Please send your gift today. May God bless your generosity.

Meatfare Sunday - The Last Judgment

IN THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS, meat consumption in the U.S. has risen dramatically. We now consume over 270 pounds per person per year. In contrast, a person in the countries of the former Roman Empire eats an average of from 167 pounds (Greece) to 49 (Syria) annually. What is a luxury in many parts of the world has become a necessity for many in our country.

In the Roman period, many ordinary people ate most of the meat they consumed at religious banquets. In both Judaism and the pagan religions, animals would be sacrificed to God (or a god) and the blood would be poured out as an offering to the divinity. Certain parts of the animal would be given to the priests and the rest returned to the person offering the sacrifice to be served in banquets to friends and neighbors.

This created the dilemma for the first Christians which St Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians. Should a Christian eat the meat that his neighbor had offered to Jupiter or any pagan divinity? Would doing so be an acknowledgement that there were many gods and goddesses, as the pagans claimed? Would they be “taking communion” with these gods?

St Paul presents two important principles in his response. First, he affirms that the idols which the pagans worshipped were nothing, and that the food offered to them was nothing special either. Christians would not sin by eating their fill. But there was a more important consideration: what would less-informed believers think if they saw their leaders eating at these festivals? They may be led to think that the pagan gods are real and that their faith in one God may be weakened. “Therefore,” Paul affirms, “if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat again, lest I make my brother stumble” (v. 13).

Ordinary Christians vs. Gnostics

This controversy exposed a divide in the early Church between those educated in classical philosophy and ordinary believers. Some educated considered themselves to be “Gnostics,” these in the know, and sometimes looked down on the rest. St Paul had little sympathy for their attitudes and spoke with some derision, “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?” (v. 10)

St John Chrysostom spoke even more harshly: “Don’t tell me that such a man is only a shoemaker, another a dyer, another a brazier; but bear in mind that he is a believer and a brother. Whose disciples are we? – of fishermen, publicans and tentmakers! Are we not followers of Him who was brought up in the house of a carpenter; and who deigned to have the carpenter’s betrothed wife for a mother, and who was laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and who had nowhere to lay His head – of Him whose journeys were so long that His very journeying was enough to tire Him down; of Him who was supported by others?” (20th Homily on 1 Corinthians) Followers of an itinerant carpenter-preacher have no cause to look down on fellow believers because they do not know philosophy. By God’s grace, they know Christ.

Prokimenon

Reader: How great are Your works O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

People: How great are Your works O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: Bless the Lord, O my soul! You are very great indeed, O Lord my God!

People: How great are Your works O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: How great are Your works O Lord!

People: In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Epistle: Sunday of Meat Fare, 1 Cor. 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Alleluia Verses

The lord shall hear you on the day of distress; the name of the God of Jacob shall defend you.

Verse: O Lord, save Your people and bless your inheritance.

Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46, Sunday of Meat Fare -Gospel of the Last Judgement



HOUSE BLESSINGS

I am still available to do house blessings. It has been a joy for me to get to know some of you better as I blessed your home and broke bread with you. Please call the Rectory or email me (Brymc56@comcast.net) to schedule a time for me to bless your home .

- Fr. Bryan

LENTEN SERVICE SCHEDULE FOR 1ST WEEK OF LENT

Wed. 2/26 - Presanctified Liturgy

Fri. 2/28—Compline & Akathist

All services at 7PM