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was granted some time to pray, and for two hours stood commemorating everyone that he had known and praying for the Church throughout the world. His captors sorrowed that they had come to take such a venerable man, and reluctantly took him to the Proconsul. When urged to deny Christ and save his life, the aged Saint replied, *'For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has wronged me in nothing; how can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?'* Told that he would die by fire if he did not apostatize, St Polycarp replied *'You threaten me with a fire that burns for a short time and then goes out, while you know nothing of the fire of the judgement to come and of the everlasting torment awaiting the wicked. Why wait any longer? Do what you will!'*

Placed on the pyre, St Polycarp lifted his eyes heavenward and gave thanks to God for finding him worthy to share with the holy Martyrs of the cup of Christ. When he had said his *Amen*, the executioners lit the fire. The eyewitnesses write that the fire sprang up around him like a curtain, and that he stood in its midst glowing like gold and sending forth a delightful scent of incense. Seeing that the fire was not harming him, the executioners stabbed him with a sword. His blood flowed so copiously that it put out the fire, and he gave back his soul to God. His relics were burned by the persecutors, but Christians rescued a few fragments of bone, which were venerated for many generations on the anniversary of his repose.

**Sunday 23 February 2014 is the
Sunday of the Last Judgement
(Meatfare Sunday)**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Seasonal Kontakion:

O God, when You come upon the earth in glory, the whole world will tremble. A river of fire will bring all before Your Judgment Seat and the books will be opened, and everything in secret will become public. At that time, deliver me from the fire which never dies, and enable me to stand by Your right hand, O Judge most just.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Luke 7:17-30; 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Matthew 11:2-15
1st & 2nd Finding of the Head of the Forerunner; Romanos, Prince of Uglich

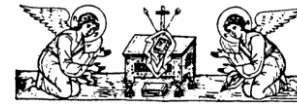
Tuesday: Jude 1:1-10; Luke 22:39-42, 45-71; 23:1
Tarasius, Pat. Of Constantinople; Martyrs Reginus and Lebedeus

Wednesday: Joel 3:12-21; Joel 2:12-26
Porphyrius, Bp. of Gaza; Photine, the Samaritan Women

Thursday: Jude 1:11-25; Luke 23:1-31, 33, 44-56
Procopius the Confessor; Gelasius

Friday: Zechariah 8:7-17; Zechariah 8:19-23
Righteous John Cassian the Confessor; Basil the Confessor

Saturday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 6:1-13
Martyr Eudocia; Andonina the New Martyr



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

23 February 2014

Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

How we shall be judged

Today, as we continue our preparation for Great Lent, we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words about the last judgement. We are told how, on the final day, He will separate the sheep from the goats, the sheep being those who will go to their eternal reward, and the goats being those who will go to their eternal punishment.

The Church takes the idea of a final judgement seriously precisely because it takes life seriously, and in the coming period of Lent we are called to look seriously at our lives and see where they are leading us. Even without the expectation of God's judgement, we are still inclined to judge ourselves, for we have an innate fear of getting to the end of life and discovering that we have wasted our opportunities.

However, in this Gospel we see Jesus Christ introducing a new dimension into our ideas of judgement. We will be judged not simply on whether or not we kept certain laws, or even whether or not we are "good" people, but rather on whether or not we have loved.

Christianity is not a religion based on keeping laws, or even doing good things, admirable though these may be. Rather, it is based on relationship – our relationship with God and our relationship with those around us. And in this Gospel we see how these two elements are intimately connected. God reveals Himself to us in those around us and it is in our response to them that we see our response to Him. For it is only by acknowledging the personhood of others, and in learning to see Christ in them, that we find the key to our own salvation.



Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, let us clothe the naked, let us welcome strangers, let us visit those in prison and the sick. Then the Judge of all the earth will say even to us: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.'

Doxasticon of the Lity, Sunday of the Last Judgement

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

Having confessed our faith in the Creed, the Liturgy shifts to the Holy Anaphora, or offering, and we move into the most sacred part of the Divine Liturgy. The Anaphora originated with the Passover meal which Jesus Christ shared with His disciples before His Passion. He took bread, broke it, and gave it to His followers proclaiming that this bread and wine that they were sharing was in reality His own Body and Blood.

Let us stand with awe

The Holy Anaphora begins with the deacon calling to the people:

*Let us stand with awe, let us stand with fear;
let us attend to the holy oblation, that in peace we may offer,*

And the people respond:

Mercy, peace: a sacrifice of praise.



Time and again during the course of the Liturgy, we have been reminded of our need for preparation and purification if we are to truly approach God. Now, on the threshold of its most sacred part, where we are about to offer the Holy Gifts to God and receive them as Christ's very Body and Blood, we are reminded again of how we are to approach God. In Saint John Chrysostom's time this exclamation was: "Stand up; let us stand aright."

The attitude with which we stand before God is of ultimate importance. This applies during the whole of our lives, but especially when we are about to offer the Holy Gifts at the altar. Saint Anastasius of Sinai tells us to:

... stand with reverence and fear at the terrible moment of the Holy Anaphora, for with whatever disposition of soul and whatever thoughts each person has at that time as he stands before God, he is raised before God with that same disposition.

The precious Gifts that the priest is about to offer to God on our behalf are not only offered on an earthly altar, but are raised to the altar above the heavens. When they are offered, all the powers of heaven stand in fear and trembling, covering their faces in reverence and singing their thrice holy hymn. Small wonder that the Liturgy calls us to stand with awe.



Think in whose presence you are, and with whom you will call upon God – with the Cherubim... So no one should take part in these sacred and mystical hymns indolently... On the contrary, one should expel all things earthly from one's mind and transport oneself totally to heaven, and then offer the all-holy hymn to the God of glory and majesty as if standing before the very throne of glory and flying with the Seraphim. That is why the deacon exhorts us to stand aright at this moment... In other words, to stand with fear and trembling, with a sober and watchful heart.

Saint John Chrysostom

Meatfare Sunday

As we enter the last week before Great Lent, we become increasingly aware of the coming fast. Today is called Meatfare Sunday because it is the last day on which meat is eaten until Pascha. The coming week is known as Cheasefare Week (and next Sunday is also known as Cheasefare Sunday) because it is the last week in which dairy products can be eaten (even on Wednesday and Friday, when we normally abstain from them) as the Church gradually prepares us for the fast.



However, it is important to understand the purpose of our fasting. Fasting is not simply a legal requirement, or a list of rules about what we may or may not eat. By joining Meatfare Sunday with the Sunday of the Last Judgement, the Church reminds us that the purpose of the fast is to help us to love both God and our fellow human beings. As the Church sings at Vespers on Cheasefare Monday:

Let us hurry to be cleansed through fasting from the stain of our faults and through mercy and compassion for the poor to enter the bridal chamber of Christ the Bridegroom, who grants us his great mercy.

Fasting is not about some great act of will power, or an achievement that we should boast in. Different people will be able to participate to different degrees (and if you are in doubt about how you should fast, you should speak to your priest) and the purpose of fasting is not to produce great ascetical acts, but rather to lead us to humility and purity of heart. As we fast, we realise our own weakness and our true dependence on God and the texts of the Church repeatedly warn us against all forms of pride. The true test of our fasting is whether it is making us more humble and more loving.



Today the Church commemorates **Saint Polycarp**, Hieromartyr and Bishop of Smyrna. He was born at Ephesus around the year 70 and was a disciple of the Apostles. His parents died as martyrs, and he was brought up by a devout lady named Callista. As a child, the Saint was so eager to follow the commandments of Christ that he repeatedly emptied his foster mother's pantry to feed the poor. Since her supplies were always miraculously renewed, Callista changed his name from Pancratius to *Polykarpos*, meaning 'Much fruit.'

When grown, Polycarp became a disciple of St John the Theologian, and in time became Bishop of Smyrna. He knew St Ignatius of Antioch personally, and some of their correspondence is preserved. He led his Church in holiness for more than fifty years, and became known throughout the Christian world as a true shepherd and standard-bearer of the Faith. However, when a fierce persecution broke out, St Polycarp was arrested, and the account of his martyrdom that follows is based on eyewitness accounts gathered immediately after his death.

On the evening of Holy Friday, soldiers burst into the farmhouse where he was staying. The Bishop welcomed them cheerfully, and ordered that a meal be prepared for them. He

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