

Arise, my soul, and review your deeds which have proceeded from you. Scrutinize them closely, and shed the rain of your tears, declaring openly to Christ your thoughts and deeds, so you may be justified. There has never been a sin in the world, O Saviour, no deed of iniquity that I have not committed, sinning in thought, word, and intention; in plan, determination, and action, as no one else has done ... I have erred, O Saviour; have mercy upon me, as I cry to You. Against you only have I sinned and done evil. Have mercy on me and save me.

Saint Andrew of Crete



**6 March 2016 is  
Judgement Sunday**

**Matins Gospel:** John 20:1-10

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

**Gospel:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

**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.

### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday, 7 March:** 3 John 1:1-15; Luke 19:29-40; 22:7-39  
Cheesefare Monday; 7 Hieromartyrs of Cherson; Lavrentios of Megara

**Tuesday, 8 March:** Jude 1:1-10; Luke 22:39-42, 45-71; 23:1  
Cheesefare Tuesday; Theophylact, Bp. of Nicomedeia; Hermas the Apostle of the 70

**Wednesday, 9 March:** Luke 21:12-19; Hebrews 12:1-10; Matthew 20:1-16  
The Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebastia; 40 Martyrs of Sebastia; Caesarios the Righteous

**Thursday, 10 March:** Jude 1:11-25; Luke 23:1-31, 33, 44-56  
Cheesefare Thursday; Martyr Quadratus of Corinth & the 5; Anastasia of Alexandria

**Friday, 11 March:** Zechariah 8:7-17; Zechariah 8:19-23  
Cheesefare Friday; Sophronius, Pat. of Jerusalem; Theodora the Righteous

**Saturday, 12 March:** Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 6:1-13  
Cheesefare Saturday; Theophanes the Confessor; Symeon the New Theologian



# ***Evangelion***

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

6 March 2016

## **The Last Judgment**

Today as we continue our preparation for Great Lent we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words about the last judgment. 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 judgment 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 learning to see Christ in them, that we find the key to our own salvation.



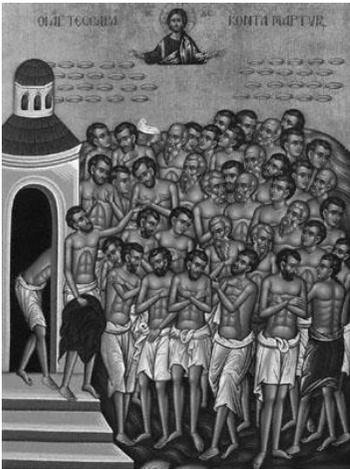
O my soul, the time is near at hand; make haste before it is too late, and cry aloud in faith: 'I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against Thee; but I know Thy love for man and Thy compassion, O Good Shepherd...

From Vespers for the Sunday of the Last Judgment

## Saint Gregory of Nyssa on Blessed Mourning:

One can take that mourning to be blessed which follows the transgressions of sinners. ... The work of worldly sorrow is death, whereas the other works in those afflicted with it salvation through holy repentance... Human beings somehow abound in sin, the remedy of which is shown to be the sorrow of repentance... But it seems to me that the Word intends us to understand something else by the steady, invigorating influence of sorrow... Man, who once lived in the delights of Paradise, has been transplanted into this unhealthy and wearisome place, where his life, once accustomed to impassibility, became instead subject to passions and corruption... It occupies the castle of the soul like a tyrant, and afflicts the obedient lord through his own subjects... For the whole array of passions, wrath and fear, cowardice and impudence, depression as well as pleasure, hatred, strife and merciless cruelty, envy as well as flattery, brutality together with brooding over injuries, they are all so many despotic masters...

So when He calls mourning blessed, the underlying sense seems to be that the soul should turn to the true good and not immerse itself in the deceits of this present life... But if a man does not seek, he will not find what comes only to those who seek... Moses prescribed unleavened bread during the days of the feast, but for the seasoning of the food he appointed bitter herbs (Exodus 12: 8)... We should not think it a loss to be deprived of some of the pleasant things of this life, but rather to lose the better things for the sake of enjoying others.



## The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste

On Wednesday we commemorate the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. They were soldiers in the Roman army when to be a Christian was a crime punishable by death. When their faith was discovered they openly confessed Christ and as a result were tied up naked on a frozen lake in order to freeze to death. Their torturers built fires on the shores of the lake in order to tempt them to renounce Christ. One of them did apostasise, but one of the soldiers who was guarding them was so moved by their faith and by a vision a supernatural light over the martyrs that he proclaimed himself a Christian and went to join them. At daybreak, when the martyrs were not yet dead, their tormentors burned them and cast their ashes into the river. However, the Christians collected their ashes which were distributed as relics, devotion to them grew and

many churches were built in their honour. Much of what we know about them comes from a homily of St Basil the Great, delivered less than sixty years after their martyrdom.

## Fasting from Sin...

Today, as Great Lent draws near, we keep what is known as Meatfare Sunday: today is the last day on which we eat meat products and in the coming week we begin a period of limited fasting as we prepare for Lent. This coming week is given to us to ease us into the fast and to prepare us for it.

Fasting is a serious business, and we called to fast as we are able and depending on our circumstances and the advice of our spiritual advisors. However, the texts of the Church remind us that fasting from food is not the only or even the most crucial aspect of the fast. The purpose of fasting to open us to spiritual transformation:

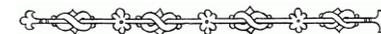
*In vain do you rejoice in not eating, O soul! For you abstain from food, but from passions you are not purified. If you have no desire for improvement, you will be despised as a lie in the eyes of God, you will be likened to evil demons who never eat! If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast; therefore, remain in constant striving so as to stand before the Crucified Saviour, or rather, to be crucified with the One who was crucified for your sake. (Matins of Cheesefare Wednesday)*



The liturgical texts of the Church are well aware of the dangers of fasting, and they warn us against the dangers of pride, of judging others, and of self-sufficiency. Fasting is not simply fasting from food, but is also refraining from criticising others, slandering others, gossiping, and pride.

*Let us observe a fast acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. True fasting is to put away all evil, to control the tongue, to forbear from anger, to abstain from lust, slander, falsehood, and perjury. If we renounce these things, then is our fasting true and acceptable to God. (Vespers of Clean Monday)*

Physical fasting is there to help us to enter more deeply into our own hearts – to recognise who we truly are when our comfort zones are threatened, to recognise our own need for God, and to allow God gradually break open our hardened hearts so that we may be able to turn to Him in genuine repentance.



Fear of torment is the way of a slave, desire of reward in a heavenly kingdom is that of a hireling, but God's way is the way of the son, through love.