

There is the case of a man minding his own business, sitting at peace and quiet; and when a brother comes up and says an annoying word to him, he is put out by it. And from the circumstances he thinks that he is justifiably angered, and he speaks against the one who troubled him, saying, "If he had not come and spoken to me and annoyed me I should not have been at fault." This is a delusion: this is false reasoning! It was not the one who spoke that put him in a bad mood. He only showed that it already existed in him; so that he could, if he chose, make reparation for his fault. But the man referred to above is like clean-looking winter wheat, externally good and ready to use; but when someone crushes it, its corruption is revealed. He was sitting at peace but he had this anger inside him and he did not know it. One word to him from the other and the corruption hidden inside him leapt out.

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza



Sunday 15 February 2015 is the Sunday of the Last Judgement (Meatfare Sunday)

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

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

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Resurrectional Apolytikion

Let everything in heave rejoice, let everything on earth be glad, for the Lord has shown strength with His arm; by death He has trampled on death; He has become the first-born from the dead; from the belly of Hades He has delivered us, and granted the world His great mercy.

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: 3 John 1:1-15; Luke 19:29-40; 22:7-39
Martyr Pamphilus and Companions; Flavian, Pat. Of Constantinople

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 2:1-10; Luke 20:46-47; 21:1-4
Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro; Mariam Isapostola

Wednesday: Joel 3:12-21; Joel 2:12-26
Leo the Great; Agapetus the Confessor

Thursday: Jude 1:11-25; Luke 23:1-31, 33, 44-56
Philemon & Archippus, of the 70; Philothei of Athens

Friday: Zechariah 8:7-17; Zechariah 8:19-23
Leo, Bp. Of Catania; Agathus of Rome

Saturday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 6:1-13
Timothy the Righteous; John, Pat. Of Constantinople



Evangelion

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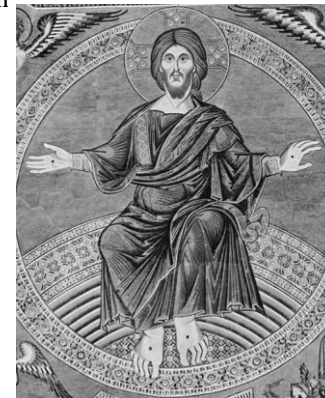
He Will Separate the Sheep from the Goats

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

I Confess One Baptism

A series on the meaning of Christian Baptism

Last week we saw that, after various preparatory actions, the priest baptizes the candidate by immersing them in the baptismal font in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is the heart of the baptismal service and signifies that we are united with Christ in His death so that we may also be united to Him in His resurrection from the dead. The candidate emerges from the baptismal font as a new person, cleansed from sin, and able to live for Christ. In the words of Saint Paul: says:



He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them.

This new birth in baptism is signified by the "garments of salvation," namely the white baptismal robe in which the candidate is clothed. This signifies the new humanity of Jesus Christ Himself, who is the new and heavenly Adam who restores our own humanity.

This new birth is also expressed in the three-fold chanting of the words of the Apostle Paul as the newly-baptized person is led in procession around the baptismal font:

For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia. (Galatians 3:27)

In the early Church, this hymn was chanted as the candidate processed from the baptismal font to the Church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. It reminds us that baptism finds its fulfillment in the life of the Church and especially in the participation in the Holy Eucharist and in the reception of Holy Communion. But before this

can happen, the candidate must receive the seal of the Holy Spirit in the Mystery of Chrismation, which we shall discuss next week.

To be continued...



Baptism does not take away our free will or freedom of choice, but gives us the freedom no longer to be tyrannized by the devil unless we choose to be. After baptism it is in our power either to persist willingly in the practice of the commandments of Christ, into whom we were baptized, and to advance in the path of His ordinances, or to deviate from this straight way and to fall again into the hands of our enemy, the devil.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian

Meatfare Sunday: What is True Fasting?

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 are called to fast as we are able and depending on our circumstances, and according to the advice of our spiritual fathers. However, the texts of the Church remind us that, while fasting from food is important, it is not 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. (First hymn of the Aposticha of the Praises, 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. (First hymn of the Aposticha, 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.**

Saint Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain