

Sunday of Meatfare - Sunday of the Last Judgment:

Today's Gospel reading is Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the Last Judgment. It reminds us that while trusting in Christ's love and mercy, we must not forget His righteous judgment when He comes again in glory. If our hearts remain hardened and unrepentant, we should not expect the Lord to overlook our transgressions simply because He is a good and loving God. Although He does not desire the death of a sinner, He also expects us to turn from our wickedness and live (Ezek. 33:11). This same idea is expressed in the prayer read by the priest after the penitent has confessed his or her sins (Slavic practice)

The time for repentance and forgiveness is now, in the present life. At the Second Coming, Christ will appear as the righteous Judge, Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6). Then the time for entreating God's mercy and forgiveness will have passed.

As Father Alexander Schmemmann reminds us in his book GREAT LENT (Ch. 1:4), sin is the absence of love, it is separation and isolation. When Christ comes to judge the world, His criterion for judgment will be love. Christian love entails seeing Christ in other people, our family, our friends, and everyone else we may encounter in our lives. We shall be judged on whether we have loved, or not loved, our neighbor. We show Christian love when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit those who are sick or in prison. If we did such things for the least of Christ's brethren, then we also did them for Christ (Mt.25:40). If we did not do such things for the least of the brethren, neither did we do them for Christ (Mt.25:45)

Today is the last day for eating meat and meat products until Pascha, though eggs and dairy products are permitted every day during the coming week. This limited fasting prepares us gradually for the more intense fasting of Great Lent.

Lenten Fasting:

A special word must be said about fasting during lent. Generally speaking, fasting is an essential element of the Christian Life. Christ fasted and taught men to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, without ostentation or accusation of others (Mt 6:16; Rom 14). It has as its goal the purification of our lives, the liberation of our souls and bodies from sin, the strengthening of our human powers of love for God and man, the enlightening of our entire being for communion with the Blessed Trinity. The Orthodox rules for Lenten fasting are the monastic rules. No meat is allowed after Meatfare Sunday, and any eggs or dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic "burden too hard to bear" (Lk 11:46), but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to spiritual perfection crowned in love. The Lenten services themselves continually remind us of this.

Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This is the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lusts, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable. (Monday Vespers of the First Week)

The Lenten services also make the undeniable point that we should not pride ourselves with external fasting since the devil also never eats! (from the Rainbow Series)

See us on the web at:
ChurchMotherOfGod.org/bulletin
E-Mail us at:
Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org

Sunday Bulletin

Church of the Mother of God

"The Joy of All the Sorrowful"

115 Hudson St.
Mays Landing, New Jersey 08330

Rev. Boris Slootsky, Rector

2B Pembroke Lane
Manchester, New Jersey 08759
(732) 350-9588



Glory to
Jesus Christ

Glory Forever

*When You, O God, shall come to earth with glory,
all things shall tremble
and the river of fire shall flow before Your judgment seat;
the books shall be opened and the hidden things disclosed!
Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire,
and make me worthy to stand at Your right hand, righteous Judge!*
Troparion - Sunday of the Last Judgment

On this day the Church remembers:

- Sunday of Meatfare • Sunday of the Last Judgment**
- Apostles of the Seventy Archippus (Arkhipp) and Philemon, and Martyr Apphias (1st c.)
 - Martyrs Maximus, Theodotus, Hesychius and Asclepiodota, of Adrianopolis (305-311)
 - Ss. Eugene and Macarius, Presbyters and Confessors, at Antioch (363)
 - Ven. Dositheus of Palestine, disciple of Ven. Abba Dorotheus (7th c.)
 - St. Rabulas of Samosata (ca. 530)
 - Ven. Theodore of Sanaskáry (1791)

February 19, 2012

Tone 3 of the Octoechos.
Triodion week 3

36th Sunday after Pentecost