

IC XC NIKA SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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Glory to Jesus Christ!

Glory to God for all things!

February 15, 2015	Sunday of the Last Judgment – Meat Fare Sunday	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
February 21	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
February 22	Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam– Cheese Fare Sunday	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

Saints of the Day: Great Martyr Theodore Tyro (306). Apostle Onesimus of the Seventy (109). New Hieromartyrs Priests Michael Piataev and John Kumin (1930). New Hieromartyrs Priests Nicholas, Alexis, Alexis, Deacon Simeon, New Hieromartyr Paul and Virgin-martyr Sophia (1938). Venerable Paphnutius, Recluse of the Kiev Caves (13 c). Venerable Monk Paphnutius and his daughter Saint Euphrosyne, Nun, of Alexandria (5 c.). Venerable Eusebius, hermit of Syria (440). "Vilensk" (transferred to Vilnius in 1495) and "Dalmatian" (1646) Icons of the Mother of God. Venerable Dalmatus, Abbot and Founder of the Dormition Monastery in Siberia (1697). Martyr Major of Gaza (304). Saint Oswy, King of Northumbria (670). Venerable Anthimus of Chios (1960). Synaxis of Saint John the Theologian at Diaconissa. Saint Theognius, Bishop of Bethelia near Gaza (523). Saint Berach (Barry) of Cluain, Abbot (6 c). Saint Dochow of Wales. Saint Farannan of Iona, Abbot (c. 590). Saint Sigfrid of Wexlow (c. 1045). Monk Martyrs Winaman, Unaman and Sunaman

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of Valentina, Paula Zambo Redmon, Stanley Brittain, Faith Kushner and Protodeacon Keith Russin were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John **Memory Eternal.** First Year Prayers for the repose of the soul of mother Jennie Marino Risucci were offered at Liturgy and Panichida today at the request of Lauren Jedlan.

Memory Eternal. Fortieth Day Prayers for the repose of the soul of John Saltourides were offered at Liturgy and Panichida today at the request of his family.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of the souls of John and Ann Garbera were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Dan Garbera family.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of the souls of De Georges Augustin Barrois and Protopresbyter John Meyendorff were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of the souls of Julia Bruska, Owen Dulak, Anna Kuzenech, Mary Mezick and John Hubiak offered at Liturgy and Litiya today by the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

OFFICIAL. At the General Parish Meeting, February 8, 2015, since no increase in the parish dues was made in the last six years, it was decided to raise the dues by \$25.00 per year.

Homily for the Sunday of the Last Judgment

Reflections on the Christian Fear of God

When Thou shalt come, O righteous Judge, to execute just judgment, seated on Thy throne of glory, a river of fire will draw all men amazed before Thy judgment-seat; the powers of heaven will stand beside Thee, and in fear mankind will be judged according to the deeds that each has done. Then spare us, Christ, in Thy compassion, with faith we entreat Thee, and count us worthy of Thy blessings with those that are saved. (Vespers Sticheron from the Triodion)

O dread is that terrible day in which the just judgment of the Lord shall come. Quick shall be its coming, at a time unknown, and quick shall be its might. No ear shall be spared the trumpets' resounding call to the divine Tribunal, nor shall any earthly strength be fit to withstand it.

Behold there comes a day of the Lord almighty, and who shall endure the fear of His presence? For it is a day of wrath; the furnace shall burn, and the Judge shall sit and give to each the due return for his works. (Exapostilarion from Matins)

Fear is an emotion oft mentioned in the services for this preparatory Sunday before the onset of the Great Fast: fear of the Last Judgment, fear of the divine justice of God, fear of the just punishment awaiting sinful man. One encounters here an emotion that many in the modern world are loathe to address or discuss, much less ponder, still less cherish. Yet it is this very emotion that pours forth in abundance from the hymns and prayers of the divine services celebrated on this great day, and one therefore that deserves our fair and full attention. In the seventh Canticle of the Matins Canon, we hear:

The Lord comes to judge: who can endure the sight of Him? Tremble thou, my wretched soul, tremble and prepare for thy departure.

Earlier, at the previous night's Vespers, we heard:

When the thrones are set up and the books are opened, and God sits in judgment, oh what fear there will be then! When the angels stand trembling in Thy presence and the river of fire flows before Thee, what shall we do then, who are guilty of many sins? When we hear Him call the blessed of His Father into the Kingdom, but send the sinners to their punishment, who shall endure His fearful condemnation? (From the Vespers Troparion)

Why this dwelling in, even exalting of an emotion that seems so foreign, so strange and bitter to the contemporary religious mind? In a world where the love and mercy of God are righteously and properly emphasized, but in which fear and dread are seen as negative psychological or social motivators, their emphasis in the holy rites of the Church can strike the contemporary hearer as strange, out of place, dated.

Yet it is perhaps this very distancing of the modern mind from a true and healthy understanding of fear that makes its emphasis in the Church of such importance. In the Sundays that precede the arrival of the Great Fast on the Sunday of Forgiveness, we are gradually--yet firmly--reminded of the human attitudes necessary for a proper relationship to God in Trinity. In the story of Zacchaeus, shared in the Church on the last Sunday before the Triodion, we are exhorted to that same sense of longing and desire for union with Christ that drove small Zacchaeus to his tree-top: reminded that lest a soul actively search after God, it will devise ways ever to grow further from Him.

On the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, first in the Triodion, we are exhorted to humility: both toward God to our fellow men, for as we do, as we behave to the least of these, so we do to Him (Mt 23.31-46). For our relationship with God to be pure and one that leads to real theosis, we must above all be humble.

We must also recognize our sinful state, and long for it to be other than it is. This is the message of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, in which the familiar parable of the foolish son and loving Father (Lk 15.11-32) is set before us as a divine type and example of all humanity. Only when we, as the prodigal, recognize that we have squandered all our gifts and gone to dwell with 'swine' (that is, all our sinful passions and impulses), can that deep sense of exile come to fruition in our hearts--a sense that, combined with humility and longing, is necessary for us to grow closer to Christ. Fr Alexander Schmemmann would theme this Sunday the 'return from Exile' (Great Lent, p. 21): this is the state of human life coming to true Life in Christ. We do not exist in perfection, but in exile of body and spirit, just as the Israelites in Babylon. And, like them, we too must come to that state of being in which our innermost essence cries out: 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion ... how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' (Ps 136 LXX).

And so the preparatory Sundays of the Triodion teach us of the human attitudes necessary in our life before Christ God: longing, humility, awareness of exile, hope in our Saviour. And then we arrive at the present day, the Sunday of the Last Judgment, when the attitude brought clearly to mind is fear. From the Triodion, speaking of the Judgment Seat:

Fear and trembling beyond all description are there: for the Lord will come and try the work of every man. And who will not mourn for himself? (From the fifth Cantic of the Matins Canon)

Time and again in the hymnography for the day, we are called to be fearful before the Lord; to remember with fear the appointed judgment; to acknowledge in fear the sinful state of our lives. Words and terms that bring discomfort abound in the texts: terror, judgment, fire, torment, pain, suffering, hell.

I lament and weep when I think of the eternal fire, the outer darkness and the nether world, the dread worm and the gnashing of teeth, and the unceasing anguish that shall befall those who have sinned without measure, by their wickedness arousing Thee to anger, O Supreme in Love. And among them in misery I am first... (From the Vespertine Stichera)

Why this seemingly morbid emphasis on fear, with its connected imagery of death and suffering? Perhaps the answer is best intimated in a passage from the seventh Cantic of the Matins Canon:

Terror seizes me when I think of the unquenchable fire, of the bitter worm, the gnashing of teeth, and soul-destroying hell; yet I do not turn in true compunction. O Lord, Lord, before the end, strengthen Thy fear within me.

Here we begin to see a framework within which these exhortations to fear take their proper appearance and place. Through the wisdom of the Church in her texts and hymns, we are called to embrace fear as a healthy and life-giving source of compunction and spur to true repentance. With our fallen and sin-stained perceptions, we often fall into the deadly trap of focusing upon God's love and compassion to the exclusion of His justice. Seeing first-hand the outstretched arms and inviting embrace of the Father, we blindly forget to work towards the amendment of our sinful ways, to passionately beg for forgiveness and mercy--to truly heed divine Paul's command that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2.12). Even the prodigal feared his father, having prepared a great lament of sorrow and signs of his true repentance; and it was in this context, in this mindset that he approached the Father, and the Father gave him life.

Thus the fear to which we are so poignantly called on this holy day is a fear that leads to compunction, and compunction to humility, and humility to repentance, and repentance to eternal life. We are not called to fear simply to be 'scared,' but to be prompted into action. As we sing at Vespers:

When we hear Him call the blessed of His Father into the Kingdom, but send the sinners to their punishment, who shall endure His fearful condemnation? But Saviour who alone lovest mankind, before the end comes, turn me back through repentance and have mercy on me.

Before the end comes--and the end will indeed come--let us be turned to true repentance. Let us call upon the great wisdom of God's holy Church, who through her hymns and prayers reminds us of the cosmic and ultimate realities associated with our spiritual state. And standing before these realities, let us with fear and trembling turn to God with repentant hearts, filled with His love, and actively engage in the battle for our salvation.

How shall it be in that hour and fearful day, when the Judge shall sit on His dread throne! The books shall be opened and men's actions shall be examined, and the secrets of darkness shall be made public. Angels shall hasten to and fro, gathering all the nations. Come ye and hearken, kings and princes, slaves and free, sinners and righteous, rich and poor: for the Judge comes to pass sentence on the whole inhabited earth. And who shall bear to stand before His face in the presence of the angels, as they call us to account for our actions and our thoughts, whether by night or by day? How shall it be then in that hour!

But before the end is here, make haste, make haste, my soul, and cry: 'O God who only art compassionate, turn me back and save me!'