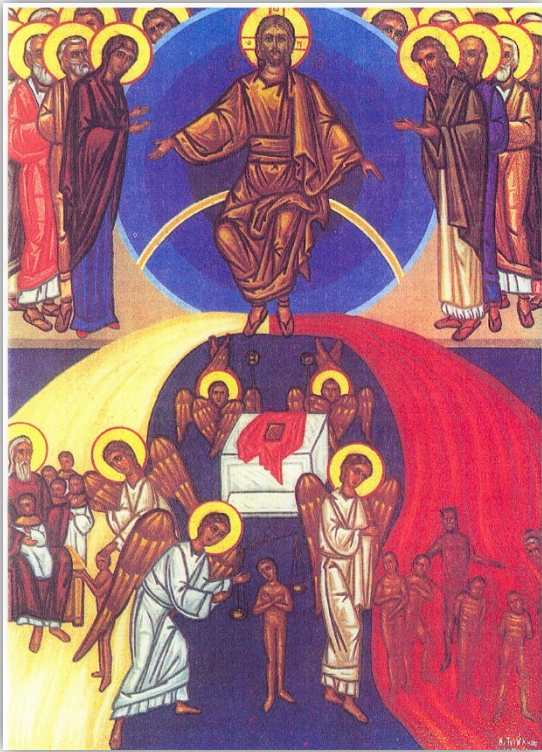




Catechist Connection



The Sunday of the Last Judgment is also known as Meat-Fare Sunday, since it was the last day in the Early Church on which one could eat meat until the Pascha was celebrated. The full name for this Sunday was 'Farewell to Meat' and was shortened to Meat Fare. Here, we begin gradually to prepare ourselves for the great fasting efforts of Lent.

The Lord said: "When the Son of God comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, he will sit upon his royal throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. Then he will separate them into two groups, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep he will place on his right hand, the goats on his left. The king will say to those on his right: 'Come. You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me.

Then the just will ask him: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we welcome you away from home or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we visit you when you were ill or in prison?' The king will answer them: 'I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers or sisters, you did it for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left: 'Out of my sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! I was hungry and you gave no food. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was away from home and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing. I was ill and in prison and you did not come to comfort me.' Then they in turn will ask: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or away from home or naked or ill or in prison and did not attend you in your needs?' He will answer them: 'I assure you, as often as you neglected to do it to these least ones, you neglected to do it to me.' These will go off to eternal punishment and the just to eternal life.

Another theme of this Sunday is that of love. When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable of the Last Judgment answers: love—not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous “poor,” but concrete and personal love for the human person—the specific persons that we encounter each day in our lives.

Christian love is the “possible impossibility” to see Christ in another person, whoever he or she is, and whom God, in His eternal and mysterious plan, has decided to introduce into my life, be it only for a few moments, not as an occasion for a “good deed” or an exercise in philanthropy, but as the beginning of an eternal companionship in God Himself.

The parable of the Last Judgment is about Christian love. Not all of us are called to work for “humanity,” yet each one of us has received the gift and the grace of Christ’s love. We know that all persons ultimately need this personal love—the recognition in them of their unique soul in which the beauty of the whole creation is reflected in a unique way. We also know that people are in prison and are sick and thirsty and hungry because that personal love has been denied them. And, finally, we know that however narrow and limited the framework of our personal existence, each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ’s love. Thus, on whether or not we have accepted this responsibility, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged.

Many saints have had the experience of meeting Jesus in the least likely of places. St. Francis of Assisi was terrified of lepers. After his conversion, he forced himself to go to the leper Colony and wash their wounds. As he

did so, the leper became Christ and St. Francis realized that Jesus resides in the least likely of human beings.

All men and women are created in the image and likeness of God, and Christ, the perfect image of God, dwells in all of us. We find Christ in our neighbour, and not least in our neighbour who is in any kind of need. If Lent is a time when the thought of judgment should spur us to repentance, then authentic repentance leads us to put love into practice in our daily living and in all our relationships.

Orthodox Lent, Holy Week and Easter
Hugh Wybrew, p. 34

Since we know the Lord's commandments, let us live accordingly: Let us give the hungry food, the thirsty drink; let us clothe the naked, welcome strangers to our homes, visit those in prison and the sick; so that he who will judge the whole earth will say even to us: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you."

Vespers Stichera

Where is Jesus hiding in my family, school, neighbourhood, Church? What does Jesus need from me? What prevents me from recognizing Jesus in people who are naked, hungry, thirsty, ill, imprisoned or lonely?

KONDAK (Tone 3)

O God, when You come to earth in all Your glory, * when all things will tremble, when the river of fire will flow before Your judgment seat, * when the books will be opened and when what is secret will be revealed; * then save me from the unquenchable fire, * and grant that I may stand at Your right hand, most just Judge.

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY CLASSROOM OR HOME?

- Go through your closets and give clothes to the poor.
- Have a bottle drive and give the money to the local food bank.
- Put a sign on your mirror that says:
Jesus lives in me!
- Put a sign on your door that says:
Jesus lives in others!
- Pray for people who are lonely and sick, remember them as a family, class or individually.
- Put chocolate in the food hampers at Church, not just food you dislike.
- Try to spend a whole day thinking about others first.
- At the end of each evening, class, week ask yourself if you helped anyone who was in need.
- Where did you meet Jesus today?

There is one more Pre-Great Fast Sunday and then the Great Fast begins.
Set as time during the Great Fast to pray, give alms and Fast.