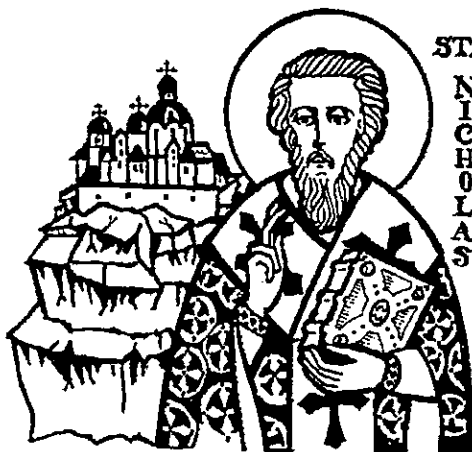


MEATFARE SUNDAY



Acknowledge the Presence
of CHRIST in your world

Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church Bulletin
And Holy Transfiguration Chapel
A Parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
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We would like to welcome all of our visitors and friends to Saint Nicholas Orthodox Parish. We would like to ask all of our new visitors to please sign our register so that we might be able to keep in contact with you about Parish celebrations and events. Through the intercession of Saint Nicholas we hope and pray that our community might continue to grow in numbers and in service to the Lord. Through your prayers and dedication of time, talents and donations, this can become a reality in all faith and in love.

In case of an emergency, please call Father Stephen day or night at the above telephone number.

March 10, 2024
Volume 17: Number 10
Celebrating our 17th Year of Serving the Lord
Schedule of Services and Activities

Sunday, March 10 – Meatfare Sunday – Tone 7
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus

Sunday, March 17 – Cheesefare Sunday – Tone 8
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus
Forgiveness Service

Thursday, March 21
6:00 PM – Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

Sunday, March 24 – First Sunday of the Fast - Tone 1
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Stephen

Thursday, March 28
6:00 PM – Presanctified Liturgy

SCRIPTURAL READINGS

Meatfare Sunday – Matins: Mark 16:9-20; Liturgy: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2; Matthew 25:31-46

Monday – 3 John 1:1-14; Luke 19:29-40; 22:7-39

Tuesday – Jude 1:1-10; Luke 22:39-42, 45-23:1

Wednesday – Joel 2:12-26; Joel 3:12-21

Thursday – Jude 1:11-25; Luke 23:1-34, 44-56

Friday – Zechariah 8:7-17; Zechariah 8:19-23

Saturday – Romans 14:19-23, 16:25-27; Matthew 6:1-13

Cheesefare Sunday – Forgiveness Sunday – Matins: Luke 24:1-12; Liturgy: Romans 13:11-14:4; Matthew 6:14-21

THE LAST JUDGMENT

(Meatfare Sunday)

Today is called "Meatfare" because during the week following it a limited fasting - abstention from meat - is prescribed by the Church. This prescription is to be understood in the light of what has been said (in previous bulletins) about the meaning of preparation. The Church begins now to "adjust" us to the great effort which she will expect from us

seven days later. She gradually takes us into that effort - knowing our frailty, foreseeing our spiritual weakness.

On the eve of that day (Meatfare Saturday), the Church invites us to a universal commemoration of all those who have "fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection and eternal life." This is indeed the Church's great day of prayer for her departed members. To understand the meaning of this connection between Lent and the prayer for the dead, one must remember that Christianity is the religion of **LOVE**. Christ left with His disciples not a doctrine of individual salvation but a new commandment "that they love one another," and He added: "By this will all know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." Love is thus the foundation, the very life of the Church, which is, in the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the "unity of faith and love." Sin is always absence of love, and therefore separation, isolation, war of all against all. The new life given by Christ and conveyed to us by the Church is, first of all, a life of reconciliation, of "gathering into oneness of those who were dispersed," the restoration of love broken by sin. But how can we even begin our return to God and our reconciliation with Him if in ourselves we do not return to the unique new commandment of love? Praying for the dead is an essential expression of the Church as **LOVE**. We ask God to remember those whom we remember and we remember them because we love them. Praying for them we meet them in Christ who is Love and who, because He is Love, overcomes death which is the ultimate victory of separation and lovelessness. In Christ there is no difference between living and dead because all are alive in Him. He is the Life and that Life is the light of man. Loving Christ, we love all those who are in Him; loving those who are in Him, we love Christ: this is the law of the Church and the obvious reason for her of prayer for the dead. It is truly our love in Christ that keeps them alive because it keeps them "in Christ", and how wrong, how hopelessly wrong are those Western Christians who either reduce prayer for the dead to a juridical doctrine of "merits" and compensations" or simply reject it as useless. The great Vigil for the Dead of Meatfare Saturday serves as a pattern for all other commemorations of the departed and it is repeated on the second, third and fourth Saturdays of Lent.

It is **LOVE** again that constitutes the theme of "Meatfare Sunday". The Gospel lesson for the day is Christ's parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. 25: 31-46). When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable answers: **LOVE** - not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous "poor", but concrete and personal love for the human person, any human person, that God helps me encounter in my life. This distinction is important because today more and more Christians tend to identify Christian love with political, economic and social concerns; in other words, they shift from the unique **PERSON** and its unique personal destiny, to anonymous entities such as "class", "race", etc. Not that these concerns are wrong. It is obvious that in their

respective walks of life, in their responsibilities as citizens, professional men and women, etc. Christians are called to care, to the best of their possibilities and understanding, for a just, equal and in general more humane society. All this, to be sure, stems from Christianity and may be inspired by Christian love. But Christian love as such is something different, and this difference is to be understood and maintained if the church is to preserve her unique mission and not become a mere "social agency", which definitely she is not.

Christian love is the "possible impossibility" to see Christ as another man, whoever he 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. For indeed, what is love if not that mysterious power that transcends the accidental and the external in the "other" - his physical appearance, social rank, ethnic origin, intellectual capacity - and reaches the **SOUL**, the unique and uniquely personal "root" of a human being, truly the part of God in him? If God loves every man it is because He alone knows the priceless and absolutely unique treasure, the "soul" or "person" He gave every man. Christian love then is the participation in that divine knowledge and the gift of that divine love. There is no "impersonal" love because love IS the wonderful discovery of the "person" in "man", of the personal and unique in common and general. It is the discovery in each man of that which is "lovable" in him, of that which is from God.

In this respect, Christian love is sometimes the opposite of "social activism" with which one so often identifies Christianity today. To a "social activist" the object of love is not "person" but "man", an abstract unit of a not less abstract "humanity". But for Christianity, man is "lovable" because he is Person. There person is reduced to man; here man is seen only as person. The "social activist" has not interest for the personal and easily sacrifices it to the "common interest". Christianity may seem to be, and in some ways, actually is, rather skeptical about the abstract "humanity", but it commits a mortal sin against itself each time it gives up its concern and love for the person. Social activism is always "futuristic" in its approach; it always acts in the name of justice, order, happiness to come, to be achieved. Christianity cares little about that problematic future but puts the whole emphasis on the NOW - the only decisive time for love. The two attitudes are not mutually exclusive, but they must not be confused. Christians, to be sure, have responsibilities toward "this world" and they must fulfill them. This is the area of "social activism" which belongs entirely to "this world". It is itself a ray, a manifestation of the Kingdom of God; it transcends and overcomes all limitations, all "conditions" of this world because its motivation as well as its goals and consummation is in God. And we know that even in this world, which, "lies in evil", the only lasting and transforming victories are those of

love. To remind man of this personal love and vocation, to fill the sinful world with this love - this is the true mission of the Church.

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 men 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 men are in prison and are sick and are 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 have loved, shall we be judged. For "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it for Me."

Meatfare Sunday:

THE VESPER service for the Sunday of Meat-Fare introduces us to the Gospel message of the Sunday, the Last Judgment: "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 You. But I know your love for mankind and Your compassion!'"

Last Sunday, the Gospel spoke of God as a merciful Father in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. After a sinful life in which he squandered his fortune, he returned repentant to a loving and merciful father. Today, the Church presents the Gospel of the Last Judgment for our prayerful meditation because it realizes there are those who still hesitate to repent and return to the arms of their heavenly Father. For this reason, the Church reminds us: "The time is near at hand, make haste before it is too late."

Many people feel they have plenty of time in which to change their way of living. But the Gospel tells us no one knows either the day or the hour when God will claim our soul. What is required is true repentance-now!

Repentance means avoiding evil. People normally do not plan to commit sin. More often they just don't look far enough ahead to see where their actions lead them. There is no shortcut to avoid sin. It takes a firm resolution, prayer, sacrifice and perseverance. ,

Repentance means doing good. Avoiding evil is not enough. Sinful habits have to be replaced with virtuous one. Begin at home! Only in concrete, positive ways can we bear fruit and produce a harvest of good deeds.

Repentance means a change of heart. Any real change in our lives requires more than good intentions. It means a change of attitude. It means making Christ the center of our lives.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES – are expressed to Subdeacon Kevin and his family on the falling asleep in the Lord of his Father-in-law, +Dennis Brad. Let us pray for the soul of the servant of God, +Dennis, asking God to place his soul in the abode of the Saints where there is no pain, sorrow nor mourning but only life everlasting. Let us also pray for the family, that God may give them His strength in this, their hour of need.

REDNER FULL SALE SLIPS – are still being collected. Please save the whole slip.

READER MINISTRY:

March 10 – Subdeacon Kevin Minnich

March 17 – Christina Mentis

March 24 - Margaret Perkins

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL – Metropolitan Antony, Father Geroge Bazylevsky, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Constantine Christo, Father Vasyl Dovhan, Father Oleh Hucul, Father Mark Leisure, Father John Nakonachny, Father James Norton, Father Paul Pappas, Father John Perich, Father Volodymyr Wronskyj, Pani Matka Lilly Lemar, Matushka Laura Odell, Matushka Lisa Weremedic, Jamison, Wakako Alexander, Theresa Barnes, Paul Calistor, Rita Cook, Dmitra Cookson, Davis William Doty; Steve Forte, Thomas Holt, Norma Husnick, Walter Katolic, Judith Kocinski, Denise Kolosky, Kristina Koutsoudes, Olympia Koutsoudes, Frederick McCarthy, Bruce McGloan, Patricia McGloan, Stephen McNulty, Chritina Mentis, Connie Mentis, Olga Moniodes, Margaret Perkins, Barbara Perrigina, Michael Previte, Sandra Ramondi,Carolynn Ritter; Jim Saturno, Clay Seman, Gail Sherman, Lorraine Sherman, Gerald Sovinski, Diane Staples, Nicholas Taylor, Kathy Theodorakos, Meryll Trader, Ralph Vurgich, Cheryl Zabowski, Edward Zabowski, Markos Zerefos.

JUDGING BOTH THE LIVING & THE DEAD

When our Lord came down from heaven initially, He entered the world as a helpless Babe. He promised, however, that His "second coming" would be entirely different. When He returns to us, Christ will come to pass judgment on all mankind. In the words of St. Paul: "We must all appear before the dread judgment seat of Christ."

Judgment Day has been portrayed as a terrifying event. Scriptures tell us of the sudden swiftness with which Christ will return, and the stern manner in which He will deal with sinners, condemning them to a place of everlasting fire and eternal punishment. Listen, for example, to the words of the Kondakion for Meatfare Sunday: "When You will come to earth in glory, O God, all things will tremble before You. The river of fire will flow before Your judgment seat, and the books will be opened and all hidden things will be revealed."

Faithful followers of Christ, however, need not fear His return! On the contrary, we should all eagerly await this blessed day, for it will afford us the opportunity to achieve our ultimate spiritual goal: to be with the Lord in His heavenly kingdom.

What will determine whether our Lord will invite us to "come, inherit the kingdom" or "depart, you accursed ones?" Ultimately, WE will decide our own fate with our actions during our lifetime. Have we cared for the needy? Have we helped the poor and oppressed? Have we answered the cries for assistance from those less fortunate? After all, how can we claim to love the Lord if we have not been charitable to even the least of His brethren?

May we all prepare for the final day every day of our life! If we live in accordance with Christ's commandments in this world, we will certainly be with Him in the world to come.