



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program 10—16 March 2024

SUNDAY 10 MARCH	JUDGEMENT (MEATFARE) SUNDAY Matthew 25: 31-46 • 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
MONDAY 11 MARCH	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction
WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH	• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
THURSDAY 14 MARCH	• 8.00—9.00pm ➡ <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2024</b> <b>ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</b> Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. * In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church
SATURDAY 16 MARCH	• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 17 MARCH	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6: 14-21 EPISTLE READING: Romans 13: 1 1-14; 14: 1-4

#### Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr Athanasios and  
Fr Ephraim are available  
at the Church every  
Monday to Friday  
between 4.00 and 6.00pm  
for Holy Confession and  
any spiritual need.

Those who have truly decided to serve the Lord God should practice the remembrance  
of God and uninterrupted prayer to Jesus Christ, mentally saying:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

St. Seraphim of Sarov

### JUDGEMENT (MEATFARE) SUNDAY Matthew 25:31-46 - The Last Judgment

*THE Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will put the sheep at His right hand and the goats at the left.*

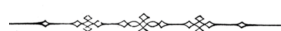
*"Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you gave Me clothing, I was sick and you took care of Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'*

*"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw You hungry and gave You food, or thirsty and gave You something to drink? And when was it that we saw You a stranger and welcomed You, or naked and gave You clothing? And when was it that we saw You sick or in prison and visited You?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers and sisters, you did it to Me.'*

*"Then He will say to those at His left hand, 'You who are cursed, depart from Me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his servants; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not give Me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*

*"Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'*

*"And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous - into eternal life."*



This Sunday the Church offers for us to contemplate on the Last Judgment, which is to come. In the Creed we say, "...He [Christ] shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead..." We are still awaiting the Second Coming, and Jesus promised that He will return (see *Mark 13*).

In the reading for this Sunday the Lord gives us, a rather brief, description of what will happen when He comes again, and calls all (living and the dead) to the judgement, the Final Judgement.

If you read through the Gospel above and find yourself a bit scared, then good! Christ's words should instill some fear in us. And fear is good. In both the Psalms and Proverbs we find this verse, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*Psalms 111:10 & Proverbs 9:10*). Yes, the Lord is both compassionate and loving, but He is also the Judge, and His judgment is just. Meaning, if we choose to follow Him today, right now, then He will judge according to that. If we choose to abandon Him, however, His judgment will also reflect that. God desires nothing less than our salvation, but He will not change Who He is and His judgment based on our desires.

I would like for us to focus on three aspects from the reading:

1. Why sheep vs goats? 2. Grace & works 3. Who are the least of Christ's brothers and sisters?

### **Why sheep vs goats?**

What did goats ever do to be compared to the condemned sinners? What is so special about sheep that they are the symbol of the righteous?

Keep in mind that Christ calls Himself the Good Shepherd and we are His herd, His sheep.

Both sheep and goats were considered clean according to the Jewish Law, but there are some differences between them. Sheep were considered more valuable than goats, and were usually raised in greater numbers, and were much more obedient. The last part is very important here - the sheep are obedient.

The shepherd walks in front of his sheep because they follow him. While the goats tend to go on their own and do their own thing. That's why sheep illustrate the righteous people - they follow the Shepherd's voice and are gently and productive. The goats, on the other hand, indicate the unrighteous people (the cursed ones) because they go on their own way, without paying attention to the Shepherd.

### **Grace and works**

For centuries now there have been debates among Christians about the grace of God and our works. Are we saved by the grace of God alone? Or is our salvation dependent on our good works? Is it both or neither?

The Orthodox Church has always taught, based on the words of Christ, that we are saved by the grace of God. But this does not mean that our behaviour is irrelevant, as this Sunday's reading clearly illustrates.

The righteous people will be saved, inherit the Kingdom of God prepared for them, because they **do** something right. They feed the hungry, welcome the strangers, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned. But that's not really the point. The point is that they do it without even thinking about it twice.

That's what separates the sheep from goats, the righteous from the cursed, those who are saved from those who are condemned. Right now, right at this moment, all of us are saved. Christ has died on the Cross, and resurrected, trampling down death by death, and bringing salvation to the humanity. Our behaviour is the reflection of this fact. If we truly believe that we are saved, then we will act accordingly, that is feed the hungry, welcome the strangers, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned, etc.

In other words, we are not saved because of our supposed good works, rather we do good works because we are saved, because God has bestowed His grace on us. Our behaviour is the reflection of our salvation.

Does your behaviour reflect your salvation? If not, and you are still breathing, then you still have time to change that!

### **Who are the least of Christ's brothers and sisters?**

The least among Christ's brothers and sisters can be anyone from the poor to His followers, but most importantly someone who is in need. Some of the Holy Fathers say that the poor are saved because they let others exercise their Christian love.

Why are they called *the least*? Because Christ's followers are humble, they do not seek self-exultation, they are the poor in spirit (for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven) (*Matthew 5:3*). They are also *the least* because they are literally poor. And all the poor are Christ's brothers and sisters.

Be an obedient sheep, rather than a free-spirited goat - because you are saved.

Yours in Christ,  
Father Aleksey  
<https://www.singac.com>

### **Reflection on Giving Alms to the Poor**

by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

The Lord said: Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me (*Matthew 25:40*). Similar things happen in almsgiving and in Holy Communion. In Holy Communion we receive the Living Lord Christ Himself, in the form of bread and wine; in almsgiving we give to the Living Lord Christ Himself, in the form of the poor and needy. A certain man in Constantinople was unusually merciful. Walking along the streets of the city, he would press his gift into the hands of the poor and hurry onward, so he would not hear their gratitude or be recognized. When a friend of his asked how he had become so merciful, he replied: "Once in church I heard a priest say that whoever gives to the poor, gives into the hands of Christ Himself. I didn't believe it, for I thought, 'How can this be, when Christ is in heaven?' However, I was on my way home one day and I saw a poor man begging, and the face of Christ shone above his head! Just then a passer-by gave the beggar a piece of bread, and I saw the Lord extend His hand, take the bread, and bless the donor. From then on, I have always seen Christ's face shining above the beggars. Therefore, with great fear I perform as much charity as I can."