

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

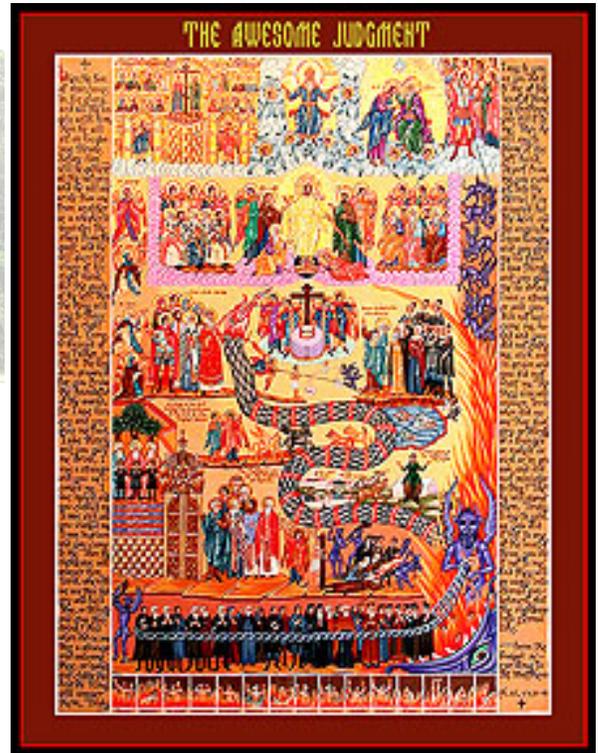
Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM,

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.



February 23, 2020 – Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare)

What we know as the Triodion today with its fixed four Sundays prior to Great Lent began to be formed in the sixth century. Dorotheos of Gaza (c. 505-c. 565) informs us of the eighth week, now known as Cheesefare Week beginning with Meatfare Sunday, that was added to the original seven week period of fasting before Easter, as follows:

"The holy Apostles elected to consecrate out of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, seven weeks of fasting, and so they ordained; but our Fathers, in their time, thought it advisable to add another week, both to train and better prepare themselves to enter on the labor of fasting and to honor with their fasting the holy number of forty days which our Lord fasted. The eight weeks, subtracting Saturdays and Sundays, makes forty days, but we honor Holy Saturday with a fast because it is a very holy day and the only Saturday fast of the year."

The first time we encounter the term "meatfare" (Gr. "apokreas"; Lat. "carnival") to describe the Sunday before Great Lent is during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565). It is specifically in the Chronicle of Theophanes, where he describes a curious incident in the 19th year of the reign of Justinian, on 4 February 545/6.

During this year there was a dispute as to when the fast of Great Lent should begin by the various Churches of Alexandria, Constantinople and throughout the East. Some began the fast two weeks early, others a week later. The emperor therefore ordered an additional week during which meat might be sold. The butchers offered meat for sale, but no one would eat it except those considered gluttons. Easter was observed according to the emperor's decree that year, though with some confusion, and thus the eight week period of fasting was instituted instead of the seven week fasting period.

It is difficult to trace when the apocalyptic tone of Meatfare Sunday began to be emphasized. Romanos the Meodist (490- 556) wrote hymns relating to the Great Judgement that are lenten in character, and were for sure later assigned to this day, but it is unknown if it was done for this day in his day, though he surely must have been aware of the additional Sunday added to the fasting period during the reign of Justinian. We do know that meditation on the Second Coming for this Sunday was assigned in the tenth century lectionary of Constantinople, which assigns the reading of Matthew 25:31-46. Prior to this, in the ninth century text of the Triodion, there is a hymn attributed to Theodore the Studite (759-826) on the subject of the Great Judgement for this day.

As far as the carnival nature of Meatfare Week, Theodore the Studite makes the following remarks in his Catechetical Lecture for Meatfare Sunday: "Brethren and fathers, it is a universal law on this day for those who live in the world to stop eating meat and one may see among them great competition in meat-eating and wine-bibbing, and even spectacles of outrageous pastimes which it is shameful to speak about. It is necessary to participate with moderation and to give thanks to the Lord for what we have and to make worthy preparation for the banquet before us; while they possessed by the wiles of the devil do the opposite, demonstrating that they have accepted one rather than the other. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Brethren, food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an

apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy 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 them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of 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 drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch 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 everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: Mercy to you, and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, be multiplied. I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because you have followed the example of true love as displayed by God, and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in days long gone by, endures even until now, and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, but "whom God raised froth the dead, having

loosed the bands of the grave." "In whom, though now you see Him not, you believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; " into which joy many desire to enter, knowing that "by grace you are saved, not of works," but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore, girding up your loins," "serve the Lord in fear" and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and "believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory," and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things" in heaven and on earth are subject. Him every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead. His blood will God require of those who do not believe in Him. But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing," or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: "Judge not, that you be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again; and once more, "Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God."

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because you have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom" of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbor, "is the mother of us all." For if anyone be inwardly possessed of these graces, he has fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he who has love is far from all sin.

"But the love of money is the root of all evils." Knowing, therefore, that "as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out," let us arm ourselves with the armor of righteousness; and let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord. Next, teach your wives to walk in the faith given to them, and in love and purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving all others equally in all chastity; and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God....

Let us then continually persevere in our hope, and the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ, "who bore our sins in His own body on the tree," "who did

no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," but endured all things for us, that we might live in Him. Let us then be imitators of His patience; and if we suffer for His name's sake, let us glorify Him. For He has set us this example s in Himself, and we have believed that such is the case.

I exhort you all, therefore, to yield obedience to the word of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, such as you have seen set before your eyes, not only in the case of the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles. This do in the assurance that all these have not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are now in their due place in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they loved not this present world, but Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised again by God from the dead.

Stand fast, therefore, in these things, and follow the example of the Lord, being firm and unchangeable in the faith, loving the brotherhood, and being attached to one another, joined together in the truth, exhibiting the meekness of the Lord in your intercourse with one another, and despising no one. When you can do good, defer it not, because "alms delivers from death." Be all of you subject one to another, having your conduct blameless among the Gentiles," that you may both receive praise for your good works, and the Lord may not be blasphemed through you. But woe to him by whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed! Teach, therefore, sobriety to all, and manifest it also in your own conduct.

– St. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians* Ch. 1-4, 8-1

ALSO COMMEMORATED TODAY: MARTYR POLYCARP, BISHOP OF SMYRNA

Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was “fruitful in every good work” (Col. 1:10), was born in the first century, and lived in Smyrna in Asia Minor. He was orphaned at an early age, but at the direction of an angel, he was raised by the pious widow Kallista. After the death of his adoptive mother, Polycarp gave away his possessions and began to lead a chaste life, caring for the sick and the infirm. He was very fond of and close to Saint Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna (February 6). He ordained Polycarp as deacon, entrusting to him to preach the Word of God in church. He also ordained him to the holy priesthood.

The holy Apostle John the Theologian was still alive at this time. Saint Polycarp was especially close to Saint John, and sometimes accompanied him on his apostolic journeys. Shortly before his death, Saint Bucolus expressed his wish that Polycarp be made Bishop of Smyrna. When Saint Polycarp was consecrated as a bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him. Saint Polycarp guided his flock with apostolic zeal, and he was also greatly loved by the clergy. Saint Ignatius the God-Bearer of Antioch (December 20) also had a high regard for him. Setting out

for Rome where execution awaited him, he wrote to Saint Polycarp, “This age is in need of you if it is to reach God, just as pilots need winds, and as a storm-tossed sailor needs a port.”

The emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180) came to the Roman throne and started up a most fierce persecution against Christians. The pagans demanded that the judge search for Saint Polycarp, “the father of all the Christians” and “the seducer of all Asia.” During this time Saint Polycarp, at the persistent urging of his flock, stayed in a small village not far from Smyrna. When the soldiers came for him, he went out to them and invited them in to eat. He asked for time to pray, in order to prepare himself for martyrdom. His suffering and death are recorded in the “Epistle of the Christians of the Church of Smyrna to the Other Churches,” one of the most ancient memorials of Christian literature.

Having been brought to trial, Saint Polycarp firmly confessed his faith in Christ, and was condemned to be burned alive. The executioners wanted to nail him to a post, but he declared that God would give him the strength to endure the flames, so they could merely tie him with ropes. The flames encircled the saint but did not touch him, coming together over his head in the shape of a vault. Seeing that the fire did him no harm, the pagans stabbed him with a dagger. So much blood flowed from this wound that it extinguished the flames. The body of the hieromartyr Polycarp was then cremated. The Christians of Smyrna reverently gathered up what remained of his holy relics, and each year they celebrated the day of his martyrdom.

A story has been preserved about Saint Polycarp by his disciple, Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, which Eusebius cites in his ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY (V, 20):

“I was still very young when I saw you in Asia Minor at Polycarp’s,” writes Saint Irenaeus to his friend Florinus, “but I would still be able to point out the place where Blessed Polycarp sat and conversed, and be able to depict his walk, his mannerisms in life, his outward appearance, his speaking to people, his companionable wandering with John, and how he himself related, together with other eyewitnesses of the Lord, those things that he remembered from the words of others. He also told what he heard from them about the Lord, His teachings and miracles....

“Through the mercy of God to me, I then already listened attentively to Polycarp and wrote down his words, not on tablets, but in the depths of my heart. Therefore, I am able to bear witness before God, that if this blessed and apostolic Elder heard something similar to your fallacy, he would immediately stop up his ears and express his indignation with his usual phrase: ‘Good God! That You have permitted me to be alive at such a time!’”

During his life the holy bishop wrote several Epistles to the flock and letters to various individuals. The only one that has survived to the present day is his Epistle to the Philippians which, Saint Jerome testifies, was read in the churches of Asia Minor at divine services. It was written by the saint in response to the request of the Philippians to send them some letters of the hieromartyr Ignatius (Dec. 20) which Saint Polycarp had in his possession. *(from oca.org)*

Social Team for February 16

Team 6 is up next week – Tucker, Blaydoe M., Wright RC. Thank you!

Diocese to Begin New Family Ministry - SPF50

Praying together and reading Scripture together are pillars of a Christ-centered Orthodox Christian family. While families may desire to have these activities in their home, they may not be sure how to start. SPF50 intends to help our families bridge that gap.



SPF stands for “Scripture, Prayer, Family” and is designed to equip families to read the Scriptures and pray together at home.

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory, the SPF50 team has produced the first installment of this ministry program which will be available beginning Sunday, February 23, 2020. Each issue will be available both in hard-copy and digital form. A section of the Diocesan website dedicated to SPF50 will also contain supplemental resources to help families get started and maintain participation.

Quality time with our Lord is hard to come by. Quality time with your family is hard to come by. SPF50 intends to help families have both. Be on the lookout for more information in the next 2 weeks!

Lenten Reading

As in years past, we will be reading a book during Lent for discussion after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesdays. This year, we will be reading *Way of the Ascetics* by Tito Colliander. See Anna Connour if you’d like a copy.

The True Nature of Fasting

[This material is taken from the introduction to The Lenten Triodion published by St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press – ed.]

The inner significance of fasting is best summed up in the triad: prayer, fasting, almsgiving. Divorced from prayer and from the reception of the holy sacraments,

unaccompanied by acts of compassion, our fasting becomes pharisaical or even demonic. It leads, not to contrition and joyfulness, but to pride, inward tension and irritability. The link between prayer and fasting is rightly indicated by Father Alexander Elchaninov. A critic of fasting says to him, ‘Our work suffers and we become irritable. . . . I have never seen servants [in pre-revolutionary Russia] so bad tempered as during the last days of Holy Week. Clearly, fasting has a very bad effect on the nerves.’ To this Father Alexander replies, ‘You are quite right. . . . if it is not accompanied by prayer and an increased spiritual life, it merely leads to a heightened state of irritability. It is natural that servants who took their fasting seriously and who were forced to work hard during Lent, while not being allowed to go to church, were angry and irritable.’ (from *The Diary of a Russian Priest*)

Fasting, then, is valueless or even harmful when not combined with prayer. In the Gospels the devil is cast out, not by fasting alone, but by ‘prayer and fasting’ (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29); and of the early Christians it is said, not simply that they fasted, but that they ‘fasted and prayed’ (Acts 13:3; compare Acts 14:23). In both the Old and the New Testament fasting is seen, not as an end in itself, but as an aid to more intense and living prayer, as a preparation for decisive action or for direct encounter with god. Thus our Lord’s forty-day fast in the wilderness was the immediate preparation for His public ministry (Mat. 4:1-11). When Moses fasted on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah on Mount Horeb (3[1] Kings 19:8-12), the fast was in both cases linked with a theophany. The same connection between fasting and the vision of God is evident in the case of St. Peter (Acts 10:9-17). He ‘went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour, and he became very hungry and wanted to eat’; and it was in this state that he fell into a trance and heard the divine voice. Such is always the purpose of ascetic fasting – to enable us, as the Triodion puts it, to ‘draw near to the mountain of prayer’ (*Matins for Tuesday of the first week*).

Prayer and fasting should in their turn be accompanied by almsgiving – by love for others expressed in practical form, by works of compassion and forgiveness. Eight days before the opening of the Lenten fast, on the Sunday of the Last Judgment, the appointed Gospel is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46), reminding us that the criterion in the coming judgment will not be the strictness of our fasting but the amount of help that we have given to those in need. In the words of the Triodion:

Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: / Let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, / let us clothe the naked, let us welcome strangers, / let us visit those in prison and the sick. / Then the Judge of all the earth will say even to us: / ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit

the Kingdom prepared for you.’ (*Vespers for Saturday evening – Sunday of the Last Judgment*)

This stanza, it may be noted in passing, is a typical instance of the ‘evangelical’ character of the Orthodox service-books. In common with so many other texts in the Triodion, it is simply a paraphrase of the words of Holy Scripture.



March Anniversaries and Birthdays



Anniversaries:

None

Birthdays:

Ciaran Richardson 1st

Heather Wright 16th

Nancy Hall 21st

Jared Karbowsky 26th

Kristen McNeil 10th

Nicole Nicolaus 16th

Adam Roberts 25th

Lynn Hampton 27th

Wyatt Sticht 14th

Alexander Wright 19th

Tyler Vallandingham 25th

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Dn. Steve Hall, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly departed servant of God John Blaydoe, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)