

Sunday of the Dread Judgement

(Meatfare Sunday)

6 / 19 February 2012



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3: Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3: On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Kondak to Meat-fare Sunday, Tone 1: When Thou, O God, shalt come to earth with glory, and all things tremble, and the river of fire floweth before the Judgement Seat and the books are opened, and the hidden things made public, then deliver me from the unquenchable fire and deem me worthy to stand at Thy right hand.

Matins Gospel III

Epistle: I Corinthians 8: 8 — 9: 2

8 But 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. 9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 10 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? 11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Chapter 9: 1 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? 2 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.

SHALL THE WEAK BROTHER PERISH, FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED?

If one of you sees something unedifying and so much as goes on to pass it on and put it into the heart of another brother, in doing so you not only harm yourself but you harm your brother by putting one more little bit of knavery into his heart. Even if that brother has his mind set on prayer or some other noble activity, and the first arrives and furnishes him with something to prate about, he not only impedes what he ought to be doing, but brings a temptation to him.

St. Dorotheos of Gaza. Discourses: On the Fear of God. B#45, pp. 114, 115.

Gospel: St. Matthew 25: 31-46

The Lord said: 31 When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory. 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was ahungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, 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. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was ahungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD

And in return for what do they receive such things? For the covering of a roof, for a garment, for bread, for cold water, for visiting, for going to prison. For indeed in every case it is what is needed, and sometimes not even that. For surely, the sick and one who is in bonds do not seek only for this, but the one to be freed, the other to be delivered from his infirmity. But He, being gracious, requires only what is within our power ...leaving to us to exert our generosity in doing more...For even if they had done ten thousand things, the munificence would be of grace, since in return for services so small and cheap, such a heaven, and a kingdom and such great honour should be given them.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXIX on Matthew XXV, 2. B#54, p. 476.

The two past Sundays spoke to us of God's patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our judge. 'Behold the goodness and severity of God' (Rom. 11:22). Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the end comes. In the words of the Great Canon: The end draws near, my soul, the end draws near; Yet thou dost not care or make ready. The times grows short, rise up: the judge is at the door. The days of our life pass swiftly, as a dream, as a flower. (Canticle Four, Tropar 2). This Sunday sets before us the 'eschatological' dimension of Lent: the Great fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Saviour, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come. (This is a theme that will be taken up in the first three days of Holy Week.) Nor is the judgement merely in the future. Here and now, each day and each hour, in hardening our hearts towards others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgement upon ourselves.

Lenten Triodion

Saints of the Week

Cheesefare Week during which all foods **except meat** may be eaten.

6 / 19 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna - He was a disciple of St John the Theologian, who consecrated him bishop of the city of Smyrna. There were few baptised Christians in Smyrna, and St Bucolus shone like a lamp in the pagan darkness. He was adorned with all the virtues, especially gentleness and meekness. Before his death, Bucolus named the famous Polycarp as his successor in the episcopate, then he peacefully departed this life and went to the Lord.

Tropar of St. Bucolus, Tone 4: Thou didst shine with the rays of virtue/ received from him who leaned on the Master's breast./ Resplendent, God-inspired Hierarch,/ thou didst lead thy flock to the pastures of Truth./ O Father Bucolus, entreat Christ our God for those who honour thee.

Kondak of St. Bucolus, Tone 2: He who was beloved of Christ/ saw the purity of thy life and made thee a shepherd of the Church/ and a radiant lamp of godliness;/ holy Father Bucolus,/ thou didst emulate his virtues. The Holy Martyr Fausta; The Holy Martyr Dorothea; St Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople; Our Holy Fathers Barsanuphius and John ; The Holy Martyrs Martha and Mary and their brother Lycarion;

Rest of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava (1940) - In the world Basil Dimitryevich Bystrov, Archbishop Theophan was born on 1 January 1872 in Podmosh, St Petersburg province. He was the son of a village priest. A outstanding student, Basil Dimitryevich was tonsured in 1898, and ordained a hieromonk soon after. He was raised to the rank of Archimandrite in 1901 and became the Inspector of the St Petersburg Theological Academy. In 1909 he became the Director of the same institution and then, on February 22, he was consecrated Bishop of Yamburg, fourth vicar-bishop of St Petersburg & Ladoga. During his tenure at the Academy, he was responsible for a great revival in the religious & moral atmosphere. This was all the more remarkable as liberal & revolutionary ideas were widespread at the time. Throughout his service and life as an archpastor, right up to his (regrettably) relatively early repose, Vladika Theophan was a decisive & uncompromising opponent of every kind of modernism, liberalism, and free-thinking, the things which undermine genuine Orthodox teachings about faith and piety and which shake the foundations of the Christian philosophy. An archpastor and an ascetic - that is what Vladika Theophan was in his life! His labours in prayer were astounding. Not only did he unfailingly perform his daily monastic rule and often spend the night in prayer, but he always attended all the services which were held in the nearby church and, if he were unable to do so, he read all of the services for the entire day in his cell, standing at the lectern in front of the icons using the service books in his possession. He did this even when he was travelling. He always had his priest's prayer book with him, from which in such circumstances he always read all the services of the day. This devotion to prayer shone brightly in his face, one glance at which inspired reverence in the faithful, and it raised him to great spiritual heights, endowing him with amazing spiritual foreknowledge. While Vladika Theophan was still a young Archimandrite, all Petersburg knew of his lofty intellectual and spiritual abilities, and all considered him a true man of prayer and an ascetic, one who had completely renounced worldly life and who lived only in God and for God. The Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna herself took notice of him, for she constantly sought men of God, both for herself and for her family, and for the spiritual guidance of the Russian nation. Bishop Theophan soon became her secret confessor and consultant in matters of religion, morality, & philosophy. One would expect, in view of

his outstanding abilities, and given his position at the Imperial Palace, that Vladika Theophan would soon become one of the leading figures in the Russian Church. When he was abroad later on, Vladika Theophan often recalled with great compunction how he as archimandrite used to perform the Divine Liturgy in the Palace church on weekdays and how the Empress and her four daughters, the Grand Princesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, & Anastasia always stood in the kliros and sang the entire Liturgy. "They always confessed with tears", he said with compunction. Later, these memories caused Vladika Theophan to suffer all the more due to the events which befell the Royal Family and Russia as a whole. In 1912, Vladika was transferred to Astrakhan and then, in 1913, to Poltava. It was here that he was raised to the rank of Archbishop. Following the revolution, he left Russia for Constantinople in 1920, participating in the first council of Russian Bishops Outside Russia in Sremski-Karlovtsi in 1921. He was later to sit on the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, substituting on occasions for Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), the chief hierarch at that time. We have every reason to consider Vladika Theophan as one of the most important, consistent, and strongly principled ideologues the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. His ideology was based on strict & uncompromising preservation of the Holy Orthodox Faith; unconditional rejection not only of obvious heresies, but also of every type of modernism, free-thinking and liberalism which undermine our Holy Faith and which strive to make of it "salt which has lost its savour"; and refusal to accept the God-hating regime which enslaved the Russian land and which endeavoured to uproot Christian Faith and morality from Orthodox Russians. Vladika Theophan made a deep impression as a man of genuinely saintly life on all foreigners who came into contact with him. The enemy, however, takes up arms against such saintly people and makes a special effort to pour out on them all his diabolical malice with the help of malevolent and depraved individuals who are devoted to his service. Thus, due to various unfortunate events in the local Russian Church, Vladika Theophan had to suffer much grief simply because he was such a strict ascetic and an uncompromising Archpastor. Consequently, he withdrew more and more from the world and its raging passions and began to retire into himself, leading what was already virtually the life of a recluse. Soon, though, it became clear that he could not remain "in the world" and that he would have to follow the example of the great ascetic and pastor whose name he had received in tonsure, His Grace Theophan the Recluse of Vishenki. In 1931 Vladika moved to France. He began to live as a complete recluse, having utterly severed all ties with the outside world. He served the Liturgy each day in a house church built for him by his spiritual children. Those who cared for him died before him and so little is known of the last years of his life. He reposed on February 6/19 1940 and was buried in a cemetery close by. He had lived in chalk caves high amongst the hills overlooking the Loire river. In one cave was his cell & church; others had been used as storerooms. His cell contained a Bible with dried flowers gathered at the ditch surrounding Diveyevo and other sacred things between the pages; a box with relics in little gold vessels; and many other holy things. His memory is eternal in the hearts of all true Orthodox Russian believers who knew & honoured him; in Ireland, Saints Mel of Armagh Melchus & Munis of Lough Ree, Bishops & Rioch, abbot nephews of St. Patrick; and St. Finian, abbot; St. Ina, king of West Saxons.

7 / 20 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus - He was the son of a deacon from the city of Melitopolis. He knew the words of the Gospel by heart from his early youth, and strove to fulfil them. Settling beside a lake, he caught fish, sold them and shared the proceeds with the poor. By God's providence, he was chosen as bishop of Lampsacus. He cleansed the city of paganism, closed the temples dedicated to idol-worship, built many churches and strengthened the faithful. He healed all manner of sickness through prayer, and was especially powerful over spirits. At one time when he was about to drive the evil spirit out of a madman, the evil spirit begged him not to. 'I will give you another man, into whom you can enter and in whom you can dwell', Parthenius told him. 'And who is that man?' 'I am he', replied the saint, 'come and make your abode in me'. Hearing this, the evil spirit fled as though burned by fire, crying out: 'How can I enter into the house of God?' St Parthenius lived long and showed in his deeds the greatness of his love for God and man. He entered into the eternal peace of Christ in the 4th century; Our Holy Father Luke of Hellas; Our Holy Mother Mastridia; The Thousand and Three Martyrs of Nicomedia; at London, St. Augulus, bishop, martyr; at Lucca, St. Ricgard of Wessex, confessor.

8 / 21 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy and Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates - There are martyrdoms that are more than costly. The costliness of a martyrdom depends on the greatness of the good things of this world that a Christian gives up, receiving suffering in its place; and it depends also on the greatness of the suffering which he endures for the sake of Christ. St Theodore, a Roman commander in the army of the Emperor Licinius and governor of the city of Heraclea, scorned his youth, his good looks, his military status and the goodwill of the Emperor, and in place of all this received terrible tortures for the sake of Christ. Firstly Theodore was flogged, receiving 600 lashes on the back and 500 on the stomach; then he was crucified and pierced through with arrows. Finally he was slain with the sword. Why all this? Because St Theodore loved Christ more than anything else in the world. He scorned the foolish idol-worship of the superstitious Emperor, shattered the silver and gold idols, giving the pieces to the poor, brought many to the Christian faith and urged the Emperor himself to reject idolatry and believe in the one God. During the whole of his torture, Theodore repeated unceasingly: 'Glory to Thee, my God, glory to Thee!' He suffered on February 8th, 319, at three o'clock in the afternoon, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ. He is regarded as the protector of soldiers, who turn to him for help. His wonderworking relics were taken from Euchaita to Constantinople and buried in the Church at Blachernae; The Holy Prophet Zechariah; St Sava the Second, Archbishop of Serbia; in Sussex, at Steyning, St. Cuthman, hermit; in Monmouthshire, St. Kigwe, virgin; at Clonmore Monastery, St. Oncho, pilgrim; St. Elfleda, abbess of Whitby after St. Hilda.

9 / 22 February — Apodosis of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Nicephorus: The Hieromartyr Peter Damascene; in Wales, St. Teilo of Llandaff, bishop, (6th c) and St. Eingan of Llanengan, hermit; at Iona, St. Cuanan the Wise, bishop; ; in Ireland, St. Taraghta, virgin and St. Cronan the Wise, canonist.

10 / 23 February — The Hieromartyr Charalampus - This great saint was bishop in Magnesia, and suffered for Christ at the age of 113. When a violent persecution broke out under the Emperor Septimus Severus, the aged Charalampus did not hide from his persecutors, but freely and openly preached the Christian faith. He endured all tortures as though not in the body, and when they flayed the living flesh from him, the godly saint said to the Emperor's soldiers: 'Thank you, my brethren, for scraping off the old body and renewing my soul for new and eternal life.' He performed many wonders and brought many to the Faith. Even the Emperor's daughter, Gallina, repudiated the paganism of her father and became a Christian. Condemned to death and led to the place of execution, St Charalampus raised his arms to heaven and prayed for all men, that God would give them bodily health and salvation of soul, and that He would grant them the fruits of the earth in abundance: 'Lord, Thou knowest that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Thy blessing on all.' After praying thus, the saintly elder gave his soul to God before the executioner had laid his sword to his neck. He suffered in 202. Gallina took his body and buried it; Our Holy Father Prochorus the Orach-eater (1107);

Russian New Martyr Anatole, metropolitan of Odessa (1938) should be especially glorified for his spiritual courage in the grievous years of 1928-1937. He lived in the South of Russia and was respected for his spiritual deeds and his fearless professing of the true Russian Faith. Metropolitan Anatole suffered a slow martyrdom from the hands of the communists, who cruelly persecuted and humiliated him. Even before entering high school he dedicated his life to the service of God. After high school he was accepted by the Academy of Kiev, and while studying there, took the vows of monkhood. Soon after graduating from the Academy, the Rev. Anatole was ordained bishop. Bishop Anatole, young and inspired, won the hearts of his spiritual children. His ever increasing popularity was noted, of course, by the usurpers of power of the Russian government. Bishop Anatole was one of the first to be arrested by the communists. For a long time he languished in the prisons of the GPU (pre-KGB). During the hours of questioning the mild prelate was outrageously beaten by magistrates, to the point that his jaw was permanently injured, so that his speech at times was not quite distinct. Two of his ribs were also injured. Bishop Anatole spent a long time in the prison hospital. His wounds had hardly healed when he was exiled to Solovky to the harsh conditions of a labour camp for the most dangerous political "criminals", especially for the clergy. Severe frosts, lack of satisfactory nourishment, and very heavy labour broke the health of the already not too robust bishop. He suffered this oppressive life for seven years. He owed his survival there only to the most unselfish care of his younger sister, whom he had raised as a daughter. She had left everything to follow her brother into exile. Upon release from exile, Bishop Anatole was promoted to the rank of Archbishop of Saratov and Samara. Shortly after this, he was taken ill with an ulcer of the stomach—the result of hardships suffered while at the labour camp. Upon recovery, he was appointed head of the Odessa-Kherson diocese in the South. He arrived in Odessa in the darkest hour of its existence. All religious affairs were in the hands of the NKVD inspector-of-the-cults, Vishnegorodsky at first, and later Baranovich. Both of them fully enjoyed using their power to inconvenience and humiliate the head of the local churches. The Archbishop was frequently ordered to get out of bed in the middle of the night and report to the NKVD headquarters. Sometimes the inspectors would appear in church during solemn services on an important holiday, and issue the same order. In such instances, the otherwise meek and humble Archbishop Anatole would curtly tell them that under no circumstances would he stop the church ritual; that he would come only after officiating in the church. His refusals were so positive that even the NKVD messengers gave up, inwardly furious. At the end of four or five hours of Church service, the Archbishop would hurry to the NKVD, without time to rest or eat. There he was kept waiting for one or two hours more, just to repay him for the delay. When he was finally received, Baranovich would stamp his feet and shout at the Archbishop, just as if he were a disobedient slave. Such were the conditions under which this highly respected priest carried on his spiritual work. The hardest trial for him was the arrest of almost all the clergy and the best preachers of Odessa in 1931. All of them (more than 20), were exiled during the same year, when the sacrilegious closing and destroying of the churches started. The majestic Cathedral of the Transfiguration was blown up before the eyes of the Archbishop, as was the beautiful Church of the Archangel Michael in the Devichy Monastery; the military Cathedral of St. Serge, and the churches of the port and many others. The repressions and persecutions of the clergy increased, leaving clergymen without food and lodgings. They found refuge in the Archbishop's home, while he himself went about to different government organisations pleading humbly for assistance and mercy for his unfortunate colleagues. But he was met only with mockery and insults. In 1932, Archbishop Anatole was promoted to the rank of Metropolitan. He remained head of the Odessa-Kherson diocese until his arrest in August, 1936. Before his arrest, Metropolitan Anatole had to suffer the humiliation of being dismissed by Baranovich and forbidden to perform church services. Upon his arrest, Metropolitan Anatole was removed to Kiev where he was kept under severe conditions for about six months. He again suffered from ulcer of the stomach with complications which affected his legs. Metropolitan Constantine, Exarch of the Ukraine, succeeded in obtaining permission for him to see his sister before he left for exile. The poor woman later told, with sobs, how Metropolitan Anatole was led into the room of their meeting supported on both sides—having nearly lost the complete use of his legs. In spite of his condition, Metropolitan Anatole was taken into exile by "etape". He was purposely placed among the gangs of the worst criminals, who systematically robbed him on the way. The sick prelate was actually forced by gun-butts to walk from one stop to another, farther and farther to the North, with no time to rest. When he collapsed in a dead faint, he was lifted onto a truck; but as soon as he regained consciousness he was forced again to walk. Men who witnessed the tortures of the saintly man, later declared with tears, that it would have been more merciful to have shot him on the spot. On the way, Metropolitan Anatole caught croupous pneumonia, but even this did not stop his tragic march. By winter he had reached his place of exile and, in the Far North, dying he pleaded for permission to see his sister, who had managed to reach his place of exile. The sister had received only postcards from him on which he had written: "I beg you to do everything you can. Plead, pray, implore, but obtain the permission for our meeting. I yearn before my death to see your dear face and bless you." But the meeting was not to be; the permission was refused. When Metropolitan Anatole was on the point of dying, the communists came to him and demanded his Gospel and his priest's cross. The Gospel was snatched from out of his weakened hands, but he clung to his cross. Protecting it on his chest with numbed hands, he fell back and died (1938). His body was thrown into a common grave in the frozen earth of the far North.

11 / 24 February — The Hieromartyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste - born in Cappadocia, Blaise was meek and God-fearing from early childhood. He was chosen for his virtues as bishop of Sebaste, and was a great spiritual and moral light in that pagan town. During a period of violent persecution of Christians, Blaise encouraged his flock and visited the martyrs in prison, among whom was the famous Eustratius. When the city of Sebaste was left entirely denuded of Christians—some killed and others fled—Blaise, by then an old man, retired to the mountain of Argeos and lived there in a cave. Ferocious wild beasts, recognising a holy man, came to him and he gently tamed them. But the persecutors found the saint in that hidden spot and took him for trial. On the way there, Blaise healed a boy who had a bone stuck in his throat and, at the petition of a poor widow, made the wolf that had taken her pig return it to her. The benighted judges tortured him, flogging him terribly. By his steadfastness in the Christian faith, Blaise brought many unbelievers to the Faith. Seven women and two children were thrown into prison with him; the women were slain first, then Blaise and the two children. He suffered and was glorified in 316. Blaise's prayers are sought for the health and well-being of domestic animals and for protection from wild beasts. In the West, he is also invoked against sore throats. The Holy Martyr George of Kratov; St Theodora; St. Gobnait, abbess of Ballyrouney, Cork, Ireland (5th c); St. Caedmon of Whitby, monk (c.680)

12 / 25 February — St Meletius, Archbishop of Antioch - this great and holy man was an outstanding interpreter and defender of Orthodoxy. The whole of his life was devoted to the fight against the Arian heresy, which did not recognise the Son of God and blasphemed against the Holy Trinity. He was three times removed from his archiepiscopal throne by the heretics, and driven off into Armenia. The struggle between the Orthodox and the heretics became so bitter that once, while St Meletius was preaching to the people in church on the divine Trinity in unity, his own deacon, a heretic, ran up to the bishop and shut his mouth with his hand. Being unable to preach with words, Meletius preached by signs. Thus, he raised his arms on high, opened three fingers to their fullest extent and showed them to the people, then closed his hand and raised the one fist. He took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, where the Emperor Theodosius showed him specially great honour. At that Council, God showed a mystery through His archbishop. When Meletius was propounding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to the Arians, he first raised three fingers, separated one by one, then brought them together; and at that moment lightning flashed from his hand before the gaze of all present. At that Council, Meletius established Gregory the Theologian in the seat of Constantinople. While the Council was still in session, St Meletius finished his earthly course in Constantinople. His relics were taken to Antioch.

St Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow - a great hierarch of the Russian Church in a difficult period of Tartar oppression of the Russian people. Once in childhood he went bird-hunting, then went to sleep and in a dream heard a voice that said: 'Alexis, why rush around so fruitlessly? I will teach you to catch men!' He became a monk at the age of twenty, and in time became Metropolitan of Moscow. He twice went among the 'Golden Horde' of the Tartars, once to sooth the wrath of Verdevir Khan against the Russian people, and the second time at the invitation of Amurat Khan, to cure his wife's blindness. This woman had been blind for three years, but was healed and her vision restored when Alexis prayed and anointed her with holy water. After a life of great endeavour and fruitfulness, Alexis entered into rest in 1378 at the age of 85, and went to the court of the Lord.

New Martyr Alexis (Bui) - in 1926, he took over administration of Voronezh diocese. He was tall and thin, an inspired preacher, a great father and true monk. He did not have a theological education, and had been superior of a monastery in Kozlov. He celebrated the Divine services with heedful concentration. In mid 1927 the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius was published, and Voronezh was divided like all of Russia. All eyes were on Bishop Alexis, and he responded with a bold rejection of the Declaration and his announcement that he had chosen to be a follower of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. For his epistle Bishop Alexis was suspended, and then on February 21, 1930 he was arrested by the GPU, dying in prison. Soviet researchers have made Bishop Alexis out to be the founder of a 'sect' called the "Buevtsy" (Bui-ites). It is clear from the material, however, that this movement was simply the local part of a larger catacomb movement amongst Orthodox Christians in Russia. Thus we can see the considerable influence of Bishop Alexis on the future development of the True Orthodox or Catacomb Church in Russia. Holy New Martyr Alexis, pray for us! Our Holy Mother Mary (Marius); St Antony, Patriarch of Constantinople. St Callia; St. Ethilwald of Lindisfarne (740).

Icon Of The Feast

The icon of the Sunday of the Last Judgment incorporates all of the elements of the parable from Matthew 25:31-46. Christ sits on the throne and before him the Last Judgment takes place. He is extending his hands in blessing upon the Theotokos on his right, and John the Baptist on his left. Seated on smaller thrones are the Apostles, represented by Peter and Paul, a depiction of the words of Christ in Matthew 19:28. (1.)



1. Christ is seated on the throne between the Theotokos (left) and Saint John the Baptist (right). Seated on smaller thrones are the Apostles, represented here by Saint Peter (left) and Saint Paul (right).

Proceeding from the throne are the scrolls pronouncing the judgment upon the sheep and the goats. (2.) The faithful are received with the words that are written on the scroll to the right of Christ the Judge, "Come, you blessed of My Father, and inherit the kingdom" (v. 34). The scroll on the left condemns the unfaithful with the words, "Depart from me you cursed, into the everlasting fire" (v. 41).



2. The scrolls pronouncing the judgement can be seen at Christ's feet and below them, Adam and Eve bow before Christ.

3. Below Adam and Eve is the Archangel Michael surrounded by the books which contain the works of each person.

Before the throne, the progenitors of the human race, Adam and Eve, bow before Christ. (2.) In the center of the icon is the Archangel Michael. He is holding the scales of judgment and is surrounded by the books that contain the works of each person (Revelation 20:11-13). (3.) Also shown are the angels with trumpets announcing the return of Christ and signaling the resurrection of the dead and the commencement of the Last Judgment (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). (4.)



4. To the left and right of the Archangel Michael are angels with trumpets announcing to the world the return of Jesus Christ, the start of the Last Judgements, and signaling the resurrection of the dead.

To the left of the Archangel are both the living and the dead who are approaching the throne and Christ the judge. Whereas Adam and Eve are representative of all of humanity, this part of the icon shows that both the living and the dead will stand before Christ. (5.)



5. Pictured to the bottom-left of the Archangel Michael are the living and dead coming before the throne of Christ the judge.

6. To the bottom-right of the Archangel Michael is the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil, his demons, and those who are not worthy of inheriting the Kingdom of God.

At the bottom right of the icon is the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and the demons, and also for those who are not found worthy to inherit the Kingdom of God. (6.)

The icon offers a clear image of the theme of judgment with Christ on His throne, the Archangel with the scales and books, and the anticipation of the sentence of everlasting punishment for the unrighteous and the reward of eternal life for the righteous.

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REFLECTION

Great are those Christians who have a great love for Christ. O, in truth, how great were those Christians; those God-bearing fathers and martyrs! For so many in our time, this is impossible even to imagine. This is what one of them, St. Simeon, the New Theologian, confessed before all the monks in his monastery: Speaking from his own personal experience about how the words of the Lord, "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (St. Matthew 11:29), were realized in him. Simeon said, "Believe me, when I fled to God, my Savior, I did not encounter anything sorrowful, difficult or unbearable. The only great and unbearable sorrow I had was that I could not find enough satisfactory reasons to die for the sake of the love for Christ." Are not such souls as a burning flame enclosed in earthen vessels? Burning flames are always upright, directed toward heaven. Only remove the covering and the flame will shoot upward.

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