

Sunday of Meatfare or of the Last Judgment (35)

The first name of this Sunday is explained by the fact that from it the permission to eat meat is ended (*miasopustj*=meat dismissal, or the discontinuance of meat), and the second name comes from the Gospel reading about the future all-inclusive Dread Judgment of the living and departed, which is described in all church services. By the commemoration of the Dread Judgment the Holy Church more strongly prompts the sinners to repentance and points out the true meaning of hope in the mercy of God. God is merciful but at the same time He is the Righteous Judge, having to render to everyone according to his deeds; therefore sinners should not be mistaken concerning their responsibility for their moral condition and abuse of the long-suffering God. Recalling the Dread Judgment and turning our mental eyes on "the eternal fire, the multitude in darkness and the Tartarus, the dread worm, the gnashing of teeth and the unceasing anguish that befalls those who have sinned without measure", "the inscrutable trembling and dread", "the incorruptible torture" and "the soul corrupting Hades", the Holy Church inspires us with the idea of the absolute necessity of repentance both of amending and preliminary plaintive prayer to the Lord, while there is still time and opportunity, and on behalf of all of us exclaims: "today let abstain from food, let us make haste to do good deeds and let us worthily repent our transgressions". The Holy Church especially calls us for spiritual struggles of philanthropy, so this order of struggles is the most possible for everyone and is most proper during the of time of fasting and repentance: "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, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you" 1).

Kontakion, tone 1

**When Thou, O God, shalt come to earth with glory,
All things shall tremble
And the river of fire shall flow before Thy Judgment Seat;
The Book shall be opened and the hidden things disclosed;
Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire
And make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand, O Righteous Judge.**

(Text tr.: 1967 OCA)

Epistle: 1 Cor. 8:8-13, 9:1-2; sel. 140 **Gospel:** Matthew 25:31-46, sel 106.
This day is the last day of eating meat.

Note:

(1) During our century the reminder of the Holy Church on this day about the Dread Judgment is especially timely. From this day we already enter into the very "preparation" of the holy fast, as it is called in the church language the stepping week, in which, according to the intention of the Holy Church even to already serve as the beginning of the Lenten effort and work; but, unfortunately, according to the usage of the world this week has become some kind of pagan feast, full of temptations and seductions, as a time of various and noisy amusements (see below). In order to not allow ourselves to begin to spin in this whirlwind of pleasures up to the self denial and darkening of the senses in order to be warned of heavy falls among diverse seductions and temptations, it is necessary to be especially attentive to the reminder of the Holy Church: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:10). Although "of that day or that hour no one knows", "only the Father" (Mk. 13:32), but our day of judgment will come for us: for the days of our life are evil, running not stopping, passing by so soon and imperceptibly, that we do not notice their flow, and for each of us the hour of death is completely unexpected and can seize us and present us to the judgment of God. That is why we should also hasten to forestall the day of the judgment of God by judging ourselves, by sincere repentance, with tears of contrition and with complete sincerity; to free our soul from the bonds of sinful and forceful passions by deeds and persistence, with vigils and prayer, with fasting and studying the Word of God, to adorn it with the garment of good deeds, of faith and piety, truth and love, humility and meekness, by compassion and mercy to neighbors, let us with graciousness and courtesy turn to our Judge and Lord, let us listen with yearning for His voice: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Mt. 25:34)".

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) p. 0493-4
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