

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ February 19, 2012 ✠

Sunday of the Last Judgment

Meatfare Sunday

Apostles of the 70 Archippus, Philemon & Martyr Apphia (1st C)

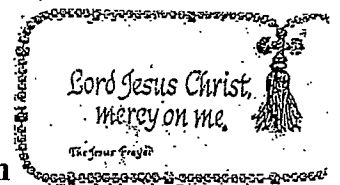
St. Dositheos of Gaza (7th C) New Nun-Martyr Philothea of Athens (1589)

St. Theodore of Sanaxar (1791)

~ Cheesefare Week ~

- ✠ Tues. Feb. 21 6:30pm Inquirer's Class – What is the Church?
- ✠ Wed. Feb. 22 6:30pm Compline w/ Canon of Repentance of St. Tikhon

- The Sayings
of the Desert Fathers



✠ Great Lent begins Monday, February 27 ✠

✠ Next Sunday, February 26 – Forgiveness Sunday :

⇒ Vespers and Rite of Forgiveness following the Divine Liturgy

✠ First Week of Great Lent: ✠ GREAT CANON OF ST. ANDREW

~ Nightly - Feb. 27 thru Mar. 1 - 6:30pm

✠ Fri. Mar. 2 6:30pm First Presanctified Liturgy

✠ Sun. Mar. 3 ~ Sunday of Orthodoxy – Vespers at the Cathedral

✠ Sat. Mar. 10 – 11:30am ~ Lenten Retreat at St. Symeon's

*** Dr. Tristan Englehardt ***



On Judgment

✠ Truly, no one knows a person's deeds without knowing the person's spirit. Truly, we must not judge someone before the time, O friends of Christ, before the Lord comes and illuminates everything. (St. Simeon's prayer was that his works might be hidden until his departure from life, so that he might escape human glory.)

St. Simeon, the Fool of Emesa

✠ You are unable to stop the mouth of one who calumniates his neighbor? At least keep yourself from having anything to do with him. Know that if fire comes forth from you and burns others, God will demand an accounting from your hands for the souls that are burned by your fire. If, on the other hand, though you do not give off fire, yet you agree with the one who ignited it and take pleasure in this, you will be reckoned his accomplice in the Judgment."

St. Isaac the Syrian

Thank Him Every Day

✠ Thank God every day with your whole heart for having given to you life according to His image and likeness - an intelligently free and immortal life...Thank Him also for again daily bestowing life upon you, who have fallen an innumerable multitude of times, by your own free will, through sins, from life unto death, and that He does so as soon as you only say from your whole heart: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee !' (Luke 15:18).

St. John of Kronstadt

Pearls of the Holy Fathers 5:2

Who is it that so wisely, delicately and beautifully arranges and transforms the ugly— is, the sightless, formless substance of the earth into flowers? Who give them their wonderful forms? O Creator, grant that we may salute in the flowers Thy wisdom, Thy goodness, Thine omnipotence.

St. John of Kronstadt

To one who is attentive to his own salvation and is sober, every place is a place for saving the soul.

Elder Hilarion

Let us go forth again and labor, that we may escape what is to come, for death draweth nigh. Let no one cause thee to err, for in that hour thou shalt have none to help thee. For every man shall eat the labor of his own hands at the hour when he departeth from his body. Therefore, run thy way with toiling, being despised in this present world, that we may receive praise and glory from our Heavenly King, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

St. Andrew the Fool for Christ

The Savior of the world calls the poor in spirit blessed, that is, those who have a humble idea of themselves, who regard themselves as fallen creatures who are here on earth in exile, outside their true home, which is heaven.

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

The Lord mercifully watches over us, and not one prayer nor a single good thought is lost with God.

St. Silouan the Athonite

The more the rain falls on the earth, the softer it makes it; similarly, Christ's holy name gladdens the earth of our heart the more we call upon it.

St. Hesychios the Priest

I saw two men travelling to the Lord by the same way and at the same time. One of them was old and more advanced in labors; but the other was his disciple, and soon outran the elder and came first to the sepulchre of humility.

St. John Climacus

Brethren, believing in the Resurrection to come, we ought also to know about the spiritual resurrection.

St. Pachomius the Great

The monastic schema is in imitation of the desert-dweller and Baptist John, whose cloak was of camel hair and the girdle about whose loins was of leather. This is also because of the grave, severe, sorrowful, suffering, humble, and poor way of life of those who enter upon the monastic way. For they all go into mourning and are dressed in black, expecting to receive the white, divine robe of glory and joy in Christ Jesus our Lord.

St. Germanus of Constantinople

For although our practice is beyond endurance, yet because by God's grace we cling with much exactness to the doctrines of the truth, we are above the malice of the evil spirits.

St. John Chrysostom

A heart full of sorrow on account of its feebleness and impotence regarding outward physical deeds takes the place of all physical works. Deeds of the body performed without sorrow of mind are like a body without a soul.

St. Isaac the Syrian

Holy Scripture speaks everywhere about the guarding of the heart.

St. Isaiah the Solitary

From the Gerontikon – The Evergetinos, Vol. 1

An ascetic Elder related the following:

There once lived an aged nun who excelled in virtue and piety. When I asked her why she had fled from the world, she told me this:

“When I was still a young girl, Reverend Father,” she began, “I remember that my father was a very tender and good man. He was thin and sickly in body, so that the majority of his time he passed confined to his bed. He was marked by such simplicity that he spoke only when compelled. When he was well, he dedicated himself to tilling the land, thereby occupying himself and bringing to our home the produce which he cultivated. But he was so reticent to speak that those who did not know him thought him to be mute.

“Wholly the opposite of my father was my mother. She was such a busybody and so idle that she was anxious to learn about things even outside our village. She talked so much that nobody ever saw her silent, even for a little; rather, one time she would be seen arguing and quarrelling, and another time saying obscene and indecent words in jest. Most of the years of her life she wasted in drunkenness and in the company of profligate men. She was often away, and was immoral and, like a prostitute, badly looked after our household, so that we could no longer get by—despite the fact that our assets were not few—since it was to her that my father had entrusted the administration of the household. Though she lived in this way, she nonetheless never became sick and never felt the slightest pain; for all of the wretched life that she lived, she maintained her bodily health.

“It happened, anyway, that my father died, ravaged by many years of illness. Now, what happened at his death? Immediately a fearful wind came up and almost razed the area. There was continual thunder, and the rain poured so violently that no one dared poke his nose out of his house even for a moment. This foul weather lasted three days, and out of necessity we kept my father inside the house, unburied.

“Our fellow villagers, seeing all of these obstacles, greatly condemned my dead father, saying: ‘My, my, what evil was living in our midst, and we did not know it! It seems that this dead man must have been an enemy of God, and for this reason God has not even allowed him to be buried yet.’

“We however, so that the corpse would not start decomposing in the house and make it uninhabitable because of the stench, risked, despite the violent rain, transporting the body to the cemetery, and buried it.

“From that time on, my mother had even greater freedom to devote herself with great brazenness to orgies and debauchery. Indeed, she became so audacious that she transformed our home into a house of ill repute and, indulging her unceasing sensual pleasures, squandered away all of our holdings; so in a short time we had nothing left. Some years after the death of my father, my mother died. She had such a splendid and magnificent funeral that one could say that nature itself cooperated in conducting it.

“Since my mother had died and I had passed the age of childhood, the flames of youth being kindled and tempting me, one evening the thought came to me: ‘Which path shall I follow in my life?’ Occupied with this thought, I said off the top of my head, talking to myself: ‘Should I choose, I wonder, my father’s way of life, and live

with kindness, modesty, and-judiciousness?

"But my father, even if he did live virtuously, nonetheless never enjoyed even one good thing, but was always devoured by illness and misfortunes. He was so unfortunate that he was not even allowed in his torments to be buried like other people. If my father's conduct and behavior were pleasing to God, why was he tested by so many disasters? And what was my mother's life like? Did she not live a healthy life, even though she was plunged into a life of pleasures and desires? I will also, therefore, live the life that my mother did, for I prefer to believe in what I can see than in promises about what is to come.'

"By the time that I had decided to follow in the steps of my mother, night had fallen. And when I went to sleep, there appeared before me a man of enormous dimensions and with a savage face. Staring at me with rage and a wild look, he asked me in a dreadful voice: 'Tell me what is in your heart.' I was so frightened that I dared not even look at his face.

"This fearful man, with the same sternness, asked me again:

"Tell me, then. What have you decided?'

"When he saw that I was paralyzed by fear and was in danger of losing my senses, he himself reminded me in detail of all that I had just been thinking of myself.

"Recovering from my fear and astonishment and being unable to deny anything that the man had said, I began begging and imploring him to forgive me.

"Then, as though he had become calmer, he took me by the hand and said:

"Come and see where your father and mother are. On the basis of this you can choose which way of life you want for yourself.'

"Taking me from where I was, he guided me to a vast garden, which was planted with various beautiful trees, beyond description in their charm and filled with different kinds of fruits. And there, as I was walking with this fearful man, my father came up to me, embracing me and covering me with tender kisses, saying, 'My beloved child.' "I embraced my father with joy, asking if I might remain with him. My father sweetly replied:

"Now, my child, this is not possible; if, however, you will follow my own way of life, not much time will pass and you will be here, too.'

"Just as I was about to continue in my requests to remain with my father, the Angel who was accompanying me pulled me by the hand and said:

"Come, now, to see your mother, too, so that you can determine firsthand which way of life you want to lead.'

"Then, taking me to a place that was all dark, in which one could hear great disorder and groans, he showed me a furnace, the fires of which would spill over every time it surged up. And outside the furnace, a number of ghastly and frightening individuals were gazing at the sight.

"As I was looking at this frightening and terrible place of torture, I saw my mother, submerged to her neck in the flaming furnace, numberless worms gnawing on her all over. From my pain and fear, I was trembling, while my teeth began to chatter and to gnash.

"When my mother raised her eyes to look at me, she began to cry harrowingly and said to me: "Alas, my child, my pains are unbearable. My torments are unceasing. For a few years of delight and sinful pleasure, I brought all of this terrible punishment on myself. Woe to me, such an unfortunate one! Woe to me, wretch that I am! Because of the ephemeral pleasures of temporary life, I am now tormented eternally. But, my child, take pity on your mother, who, as you see, is in flames and is being

devoured by fire. Remember, my child, how I gave you suck and reared you, and take pity on me. Give me your hand and pull me out of here.'

"I, however, did nothing, and could not even approach my mother, who, with shame before those who were around her, cried out even more strongly and with tears:

"My child, help me and do not scorn your mother and her lamentations. Do not close your eyes to this unfortunate mother, who is tortured in the Gehenna of fire and continually consumed by unsleeping worms.'

"Moved by sympathy for my mother, I stretched out my hand, so that I could pull her out of that frightful Hell. No sooner had the flames of the fire only slightly touched my hand, however, than I felt great pain and began to cry in moans. From my lamentations and moans, I awoke everyone in the house. They got up, turned up the lamps, and ran to my bed, asking with incessant questions to learn why I was crying in my sleep and groaning.

"So, having come to a bit, I began to relate to them everything that I saw in my vision.

"From that day on, I most decisively resolved to live as did my father, whose way of life I longed for. I pray that God will deem me worthy to succeed therein and to see my father again and live with him; for by the Grace of God, with my own eyes I saw the glory and honor which awaits those who ready themselves by living reverently and virtuously and, on the other hand, again, what fearful punishment and Hell awaits those who squander their lives on pleasures and passions." ❖ ❖ ❖

Two Stories from St. Gregory the Dialogist concerning St. Benedict :

1. One day St. Benedict, the man of God, while he was sitting in his cell, lifted his eyes up toward the Heavens and saw the soul of his saintly ascetic sister rising up to Heaven like a brilliantly white dove. His soul was thus filled with spiritual joy and happiness, and he thanked God. Afterwards, he announced his sister's death to his disciples and sent them immediately to the place where she had lived her ascetic life, in order to get her honorable and pure body and bring it to the monastery; for the area in which this virgin dwelled was not far from St. Benedict's monastery. Indeed, thus, the brothers set out, found the dead nun, and brought her holy body back. Thereupon, St. Benedict buried her in the grave which he had prepared for himself. In this way, the sacred bodies of these two, whose minds were joined by the bond of the Holy Spirit, were not separated even in burial.

2. And yet another time this man of God was standing at the window of his cell, beseeching our All-Good God. Suddenly, he lifted his eyes toward Heaven and saw something strange. Wholly unexpectedly, there appeared from Heaven such a bright light that it lighted up the darkness of the night, so illuminating the air that it seemed to make the whole area brighter than the light of day. Now, along with this miraculous flood of light, as the Saint himself subsequently related, another miracle ensued (at the same time as the vision): a miracle filled with mystery.

"It looked," he relates, "as though the whole world were gathered at the end of a beam of sunlight; and though my attention was turned toward this heavenly light, I saw the holy soul of Germanus, the Bishop of Capua, being taken up into Heaven, like a fiery sphere, by the Angels." Right away the next day, this righteous man sent one of his disciples to Capua, and he was informed that, at exactly the same moment that St. Benedict had seen this vision, St. Germanus, whose soul he had seen rising up to Heaven, had come to his end. ❖ ❖ ❖

This and That

"There is unity among the (Roman Catholic) bishops about abortion always being wrong, and that you can't be a Catholic and be in favor of abortion – the bishops all agree to that – but there's just an inability among the bishops together to speak clearly on this matter and even to say if you're a Catholic and you're pro-choice, you can't receive holy communion."

RC Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia

I think our politics are getting increasingly to the point where anyone who suggests we are going in the wrong direction is so demonized and is called so many names that it's intimidating. People simply refuse to face up to the truth. The country is in the grip of an ideology that seeks to lead us toward some sort of Utopia . But that's a country that's never existed before. – Pat Buchanan

An air of predatory virtue diffuses across the US, of passive-aggressive goodness by do-gooders taking out their unhappy lives on others. I would rather be left alone. This isn't what the country was. It is what the country is... From a Commie under every bush, America has moved to a Mommy behind every bush. Can I have my Commies back?

Fred Reed

I like horses. They eat grass and mind their own business. I can think of countries that might try the approach.

Fred Reed

A war on drugs—foolish phrase—may be said to succeed if the price of drugs rises on the American street. It didn't. It won't. ... Meanwhile, as always, drugs remain everywhere available in America.

Fred Reed

There is with us a complete chaos in Christian doctrine... We worship ourselves, we worship the nation; other nations; or we worship (some few of us) a particular economic arrangement believed to be the satisfaction of social justice...

Yet, Islam has not suffered this spiritual decline; and in this contrast between our religious chaos and Islam's religious certitudes, still strong throughout the Mohammedan world, may lie our peril. Secular attempts to simply "buy them off" do not seem to be working, nor have the recent attempts to "blow them away", democratize them, inculturate them, modernize them etc..

The forces of secular humanism are fighting a divided foe in their war against religious freedom. Our Lord's prayer "that they may all be one" has practical implications for survival as well as spiritual ones. The spectacle of thousands of denominations squabbling and not agreeing on many theological points is a scandal to the non-Christian world and also gives invaluable strength to the enemy. In addition, the heretics and apostates in all the denominations are a fifth column in their support for abortion, sexual deviancy and heterodoxy in general.

It is very heartening to (finally) see the Catholic hierarchy, with a very special leader in Archbishop Timothy Dolan, finally willing to take the fight on a national forum and not be shackled by decades of accommodation to the zeitgeist and highly publicized clerical scandals. About time.....Unfortunately, where are the other leaders of other Christian denominations in support of the Catholic Church in its fight for religious freedom? How will the Southern Baptist Convention react if they are mandated a few years from now to provide abortion services as part of their health plans? This is a Rubicon moment for the supporters of religious freedom. If the enemy wins this battle against the Catholic Church, it will pick off and destroy the rest one by one. If you need a historical example read the history of the Elizabethan police state and its persecutions of Catholics in the 16th century.

P. Mulvey, internet comment

An understanding of man as somewhere between angels and beasts, or saints and sinners, is very rare in times of quiet desperation and visceral reaction to every deviation from party politics.

Robert Reavis, internet comment

What is the Mark of a True Christian? {Conclusion}

Compiled by St. Anastasius of Sinai

St. Basil the Great, from *The Ascetics*: "If we believe the Lord when He says, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin (John 8:34), and again, Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do (John 8:44), we see that he (the sinner) is not only in fellowship, but a slave (of the devil), and his father and his master he calls the one whose work he does. The Apostle also bears witness to this, saying, Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness (Rom. 6:16)? Nor should faith be dead, as the body without the spirit is dead. And again: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble (James 2:19). The Lord asks, why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? We, who are ruled by the Lord, must confess Him also by our actions, not having sin reigning or ruling within us, so that it may not be said of us that they loved Him with their mouth... their heart was not right with Him (Ps. 77:39).

"Let us listen to the Apostle saying, Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate,... nor drunkards, ... nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9,10). And again, no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be ye not partakers with them (Eph. 5:5-7). If we were to be among these, we who claim to believe, who await the kingdom, we would not be partners of the King, but associates of the King's enemies.

"If we have come to know Christ, we have come to know the Truth. If we know the Truth, we will live in truth, in our deeds. Otherwise, when He comes again, He will put our lot with the unbelievers, saying: Verily I say unto you, I know you not (Matt. 25:12). It will not help us to cry, Lord, Lord. Even the demons believe with an empty faith.

Chrysostom, *On Fasting*: "Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee, the lifting up of my hands... (Ps. 140:2). Look at your hands and examine them. And if they hold nothing stolen or defiling, say this with boldness: Let my prayer be set forth as incense. If you have stolen something or committed something forbidden, do not call, do not lift your hands until you cease your wickedness. Even if, by God's permission, you are able to lift your hands, your prayer, being defiled, can in no way ascend to heaven, but you will hear When ye stretch forth your hands, I will turn away mine eyes from you: and though ye make many supplications, I will not hearken to you (Is. 1:15)."

Chrysostom, *On St. Matthew*: "Let us now learn what things defile a man. Let us learn, and shun them. Even in the Church we see among many that they try to keep such a custom, to make an effort to come in clean clothing, and to wash their hands and feet, but not even giving a thought to presenting God with a clean soul. Saying this, I do not forbid anyone to wash his hands and his mouth, but I would that he wash them as is proper. Not only with water, but, instead of water, with virtues. Defilement of the hands is theft, evil actions, attacks on one's neighbor. (Defilement) of the mouth is blasphemy, abuse, foul language, ribaldry, mockery,

insult.

"If, then, you are conscious of committing or uttering none of these things, nor being defiled by any of these defilements, come with confidence. Or have you received these defilements a myriad times? Do you rinse your hands and tongue, but carry in them deadly and noxious filth? Tell me, if you had dung and mire in your hands, would you dare to pray? Not at all. There is, however, no harm in these, in the other there is death and destruction. How is it that you show piety in the irrelevant but indifference to what is forbidden? What then, says one, should one not pray? One should, but not in a defiled state and in such filth. What then, he says, if I have been taken by it? Cleanse yourself. How and by what means? Weep, groan, give alms, confess, apologize to those offended by you, be reconciled. With these wipe clean your tongue, so as not to anger God more greatly.

"If someone were to embrace your feet with hands full of dung, you would not only not hear him, but even repel him with your foot. How do you then thus dare to approach God? The tongue of one who prays is the hand with which we embrace God's knees. Do not therefore defile it, so that He may not say to you: Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear you. Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Prov. 18:21). By your words you will be either justified or condemned. You do not dare to pray fresh after the company of your wife, but after abusive and insulting speech and other wickedness you stretch forth your hands before being properly cleansed. How do you not tremble, tell me, calling on that terrible and awesome name? Have you not heard St. Paul say: I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hand without wrath and doubting (I Tim. 2:8).

Chrysostom, *On St. John*: "The Lord tells us that faith is of no benefit to us if our life remains corrupt: Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; Many will say unto Me on that day Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Thy name?... And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you (Matt. 7:21-23). What use is faith when the Lord does not acknowledge us? When we do not do God's will, we are in the snare of the devil. And, just as the sparrow, even if it is not completely entangled, but caught only by one foot, is in the trapper's power, so it is also with us. Even if we are not completely entangled, but only in respect to either our faith or our life, we are in the devil's power, for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage (II Peter 2:19)."

St. John of the Ladder: "He who claims to have true faith, but commits sins, is like a face with no eyes. Conversely, he who does not have faith, but is good in his actions is like one drawing water and pouring it into a vessel with holes."

Mark the Monk: "Some, without doing the commandments, think they have right faith. Others, doing (the commandments), expect the kingdom as their just desert. Both miss out on the kingdom."

Maximus the Monk, from *The Ascetic Chapters*: "A Christian pursues wisdom in the following three things: the commandments, dogma, and faith. The commandments free the mind from the passions, dogma leads to a knowledge of the truth, and faith to contemplation of the Holy Trinity, to Whom be all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages."