25/02/2025

Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily at the Divine Liturgy – Sunday of the Last Judgment, February 23, 2025 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Orlando in Maitland, Florida



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Homily at the Divine Liturgy – Sunday of the Last Judgment

34th Annual Leadership 100 Conference

February 23, 2025

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Orlando

Maitland, Florida

Beloved Brother, Metropolitan Sevastianos of Atlanta,

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers,

Beloved Children in the Lord,

I am so happy to be at this wonderful Holy Trinity parish of Greater Orlando – a fitting endpoint to attending the Annual Leadership One Hundred Conference. Many Leadership members are with us today, and their presence reminds us that our Archdiocese stretches across the American landscape, and encompasses a spiritual family much larger than any local community.

Indeed, one of the signs that we are united as a family is that we all follow the same liturgical timeline. Today, that calendar brings us to Meatfare Sunday – Ἀπόκρεω, or as this day is also called, the Sunday of the Last Judgment.

We know the parable – how the Lord sets up this opposition of the sheep and the goats – the ones on the right and the ones on the left. But let us never forget, there is only One Shepherd Who cares for both kinds.

One Divine Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, does all things for our benefit, our growth, and our realization. Even the goats on the left are under His care. And their consignment to κόλασιν αἰώνιον – "eternal punishment," is a chastisement, a correction, to bring them to a greater realization of their lack of love for their fellow beings.

For the question of each group to the Son of God – of those on the left, as well as those on the right – is exactly the same:

Πότε σε εἴδομεν …;

When did we see You …?

When did we see you hungry?

When did we see you thirsty?

When did we see you a stranger?

When did we see you naked?

When did we see you sick?

When did we see you in prison?

And the answer to each question is not necessarily an awareness of the presence of the Lord. Neither group seems to understand the connection between their relationship with the Lord and their relationship with their fellow human beings. For they simply ask: "When did we see You …?"

It truly is a remarkable moment. An apocalypse, if you will – a revelation of how we are to be in relation with our Creator God. And it is a moment when we are reminded to sharpen our focus, so that we might encounter the Lord in all His children.

You will notice that there are no other standards applied to this judgment. No criteria about the faith. No norms about religion. Everything is based in how we treat one another.

There is a reason that the Holy Church places this Gospel on the penultimate Sunday of Triodion. As we are preparing our homes and our lives for the journey of the Great Lent – which is filled with observances and special services and all manner of an intensified liturgical experience – we are reminded not to forget that in every face we encounter, we behold the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, my beloved Christians – the question:

Πότε σε είδομεν …;

When did we see You …?

… has an answer. It has an answer that is so pervasive, it is almost impossible to comprehend.

What the Lord is telling us is that every time we encounter another human being, and we have an opportunity to help them, to relieve their suffering, to feed and nourish them … we are doing it to Him. This is truly a radical way of living as a Christian.

Can you even imagine spending one entire day, and treating everyone you meet as if that person was Jesus Christ Himself?

There's a challenge! Seemingly impossible, but with God, all things are possible! It is a question of our vision. It is a matter of our consciousness, our awareness that the spark of God is within every human soul.

My friends – and I feel that all of you are my friends – I can honestly say that as I look into you faces, I see Christ. I see Him dwelling within you. I see him in your smiles and in the brightness of your eyes.

Here, in the Divine Liturgy, is the practice ground for all of us to cultivate this kind of vision. We see in the icons the faces of the Saints, but our theology tells us that what we are really looking at, is the multiform manifestations of the Lord of glory, Who is glorified in His Saints.

And once we leave the Temple – even for the coffee hour in the parish Hall, we know it is a lot more difficult to maintain that vision.

Thus, the Lord gives us today's parable. Because every situation that answers the question, "When did we see You …?" – is a circumstance of suffering and need.

Therefore, let us not shut the eyes of our hearts to the pain and misery of our

fellow human beings. For the Lord Himself endured the pain and misery of us all. And He will judge us on how we ease His suffering, in the lives of others.

A blesséd and fruitful Lent to you all.

Amen.

goarch.org