Reflections for this Weekend

Today's Gospel unveils the Final Judgment not as a distant courtroom scene, but as a living revelation of the Kingdom already breaking into the world. Christ discloses that eternity is not decided by abstract belief or external piety, but by the heart's capacity to recognize and receive Him where He has chosen to dwell in the least, the wounded, the forgotten.

In this light, judgment is not postponed to the end of time; it is quietly unfolding whenever a human life stands before another in need.

When the Son of Man comes in glory and takes His seat upon the throne, this glory is not merely the brilliance of divine authority, but the radiance of self-giving love fully revealed.

In the Eastern understanding, glory and judgment are inseparable because truth itself is luminous. The light of Christ exposes what already lives within the human heart. For those shaped by mercy, that light is warmth and joy; for those closed to love, it becomes painful and unbearable. God does not change at the judgment human beings discover who they have become in the presence of uncreated Love.

The separation of the sheep and the goats reveals that communion with God is proven in concrete love. The criteria are startlingly simple: hunger answered, strangers welcomed, wounds attended, loneliness visited. These are not moral achievements tallied for reward, but signs of a heart that has learned to see sacramentally. In Eastern spirituality, this is the daily face of theosis: to encounter Christ in the suffering other is to participate in God's own life. Mercy is not an optional virtue added to faith; it is faith made visible, the natural breath of a soul united to Christ.

The astonishment of the righteous is deeply revealing. They did not know they were serving Christ, because love that is truly self-emptying does not calculate its holiness.

Their inheritance of the Kingdom flows from their openness to divine presence, not from conscious spiritual ambition. Conversely, the condemnation of the goats arises not from scandalous wrongdoing, but from absence love withheld, eyes turned away, hearts sealed shut. Sin here is revealed as relational blindness, the refusal to recognize God where He humbly stands waiting.

The gospel teaches that salvation is not primarily about escaping punishment, but about entering communion. Eternal life is participation in God's own mode of being, which is love

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poured out without reserve. Each act of mercy enlarges the heart's capacity for that communion; each act of neglect contracts it. The Final Judgment does not impose a foreign verdict upon the soul it unveils the truth the soul has been freely shaping all along.

For daily life, Matthew 25 confronts the faithful with a demanding and beautiful vision: every human encounter carries eternal weight. The poor, the sick, the imprisoned are not interruptions to spiritual life; they are its privileged meeting place. Acts of compassion become liturgy beyond the church walls, offerings made in time that echo into eternity.

Within the Eastern Catholic vision, this Gospel proclaims that the Kingdom of God is hidden in mercy and revealed in love. Christ does not ask whether we recognized Him in glory, but whether we recognized Him in hunger and weakness. The Final Judgment is therefore not a threat, but an urgent invitation to learn now how to see, to love, and to live in communion, so that when Love stands before us unveiled, we may recognize Him with joy.

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The courage to see the face of Christ in another

To see the face of Christ in another demands the most difficult courage of all: the courage to be honest before God and before ourselves. It strips away comforting illusions and forces us to confront a truth we often avoid that the Christ we claim to love will appear to us in ways we do not choose, in faces we would rather pass by, and in moments that disturb our sense of order, safety, and control.

This vision requires the death of a certain kind of faith: a faith that remains comfortable, selective, and safely enclosed within rituals and words. Christ does not ask only to be adored on the altar; He asks to be recognized in the flesh of the wounded world.

The scandal is that He binds His presence not to strength or success, but to hunger, failure, loneliness, and sin. To see Him there means allowing our hearts to be unsettled, even broken open.

The deeper resistance is not lack of generosity, but fear. If I see Christ in the other, then I can no longer protect myself with distance or indifference. Their suffering becomes a claim on my life. Their dignity demands my reverence. Their wounds mirror my own. This is why the Gospel insists on mercy: not because it is easy, but because it is the only way the heart is made truthful. Love is costly precisely because it exposes us.

In this seeing, judgment collapses. The lines we draw between “good” and “bad,” “deserving” and “undeserving,” begin to blur. Christ appears where we least expect Him, and often where we least want Him. He comes disguised in the one who interrupts our schedule, challenges our patience, threatens our certainties, or carries a story we do not know how to hear.

To turn away is not merely to refuse charity; it is to refuse encounter with God.

For Catholics today, this demands a conversion deeper than activism or moral correctness. It calls for an interior vigilance, a watchfulness of the heart. Prayer becomes the training of the eyes learning, slowly and painfully, to see as Christ sees. Fasting loosens our grip on comfort. Confession restores our capacity for compassion. The Eucharist teaches us that God chooses to be received in humility, broken and given, so that we might learn to do the same.

Practically, this courage looks ordinary and hidden. It is staying present when withdrawal would be easier. It is listening without fixing, forgiving without being understood, serving without recognition. It is refusing to reduce a person to their worst moment or loudest label. It is choosing reverence when cynicism feels safer.

In the end, to see the face of Christ in another is to accept that salvation will cost us something real: our defenses, our certainties, our illusion of innocence. Yet this loss is the narrow door to freedom. For the face we dare to love in weakness is the same face that will one day look upon us in glory. And only those who learned to recognize Him when He was hidden will be able to endure the brightness of His unveiled light.

Ukrainian Catholic Parish
Pastor
Very Rev. Hugo Soutus
Address:
3720 West Maryland Ave.
Phoenix, AZ. 85019

Rectory: (602) 973-3667
Parish: (602) 347-9267
Emergency:
602-329-3281

E-mail:
DMofGod@cox.net

Website:
www.Ukrainianchurch.org

Sunday Divine Liturgy:
8:50 a.m. The Third Hour
And
Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine.
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

Religious Education
September - May

Sacraments Penance:
Sunday before Liturgies
or by appointment

Baptism - Matrimony
In most instances
six-month membership
required

Funerals
Membership of an
immediate family member
required

Communion to the Homebound
If you or your family members are confined to a health center or are homebound, please contact Fr. Hugo directly so that arrangements can be made for his visitation.

Sunday, February 8
"Meat-fare Sunday" (Of the Fearful Judgment)
"The Holy Great-Martyr Theodore the General"
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 **Gospel** Matthew 25:31-46.
8:50 a.m. The Third Hour and
Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine
9:30 a.m. Gods blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

Monday, February 9
"The Holy Martyr Nicephorus "
Epistle: 3 John 1-15. **Gospel:** Luke 19:29-40; 22:7-39.

Tuesday, February 10
"The Holy Martyr Charalampias"
Epistle: Jude 1:1-10. **Gospel:** Luke 22:39-42, 45-23:1.
6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, February 11
"The Holy Priest-Martyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebastea"
Reading: Joel 2:12-26 **Reading:** Joel 4:12-21

Thursday, February 12
"Our Holy Father Meletius, Archbishop of Antioch"
Epistle: Jude 11-25. **Gospel:** Luke 23:1-34; 44-56.
6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, February 13
"Our Venerable Father Martinian"
Reading: Zechariah 8:7-17 **Reading:** Zechariah 8:19-23

Saturday, February 14
"The Repose of Our Venerable Father Constantine the Philosopher"
Epistle: Romans 14:19-26. **Gospel:** Mathew 6:1-13.
6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, February 15
"Cheesefare (Forgiveness) Sunday"
"The Holy Apostle Onesimus"
Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4. **Gospel:** Mathew 6:14-21.
8:50 a.m. The Third Hour and
Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine
9:30 a.m. Gods blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends