

*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
 a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

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 Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

*Please join us for prayer and fellowship.*

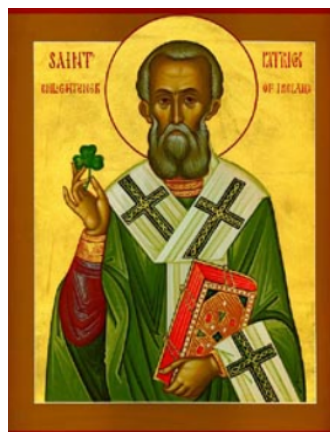
**Upcoming Services:**  
**Saturday, March 9, 16**  
**Great Vespers: 5pm**

**Sunday, March 10, 17**  
**Divine Liturgy: 10am**  
**Coffee and fellowship**  
**will follow the service**

*The above services are  
 at St. Olympia Church  
 34 North Main Street  
 Norwood, NY, 13668*

**Mailing Address**  
**St. Olympia Orthodox**  
**Church PO Box 122**  
**Canton, NY 13617**

## **Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise** **March 17**



**Saint Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland**  
**March 17**

**Reflections in Christ: *Lives Worth Judging***  
**[Sunday of the Last Judgment]**  
**By Father Steven Kostoff**

As we draw closer to the beginning of Great Lent – which begins on Monday, February 19—we are able to set our Lenten efforts against the background of the Last Judgment, thus giving us the “big picture” within which we live our lives and determine our personal destinies. The Gospel read at the Eucharistic Liturgy this past Sunday—the Sunday of the Last Judgment—was that of the Parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. In highly symbolic form and with awesome imagery, the Lord speaks of His own Parousia as the glorified Son of man at the end of time and reveals to us that this will be a time of judgment. And this judgment will lead to separation. The “sheep” (the saved) will be placed on the right hand, and the “goats” (the lost) on the left hand of the eternal Throne of God. This, in turn, will reveal the “quality” of our lives, though not in the way in which we today use the term “quality of life.” We will be confronted with the question as to how well we served the Lord by how well we served the “least” of His brethren: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these brethren, you did it to me” [Matthew 25:40]. These “least” are the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner. How many of us have to admit that these are precisely the people that we neglect? The fact that society removes such people from our sight does not offer a very reassuring excuse for our neglect. It simply makes it more convenient and less troubling for our consciences. Sadly, this may point to one of the most glaring of “disconnects” between the Gospel and our Christian lives, expressed in the following hymn:

*Why do you not think of the fearful hour of death? Why do you not tremble at the dread judgment seat of the Savior?  
What defense then will you make, or what will you answer? Your works will be there to accuse you.  
Your actions will reproach you and condemn you. O my soul, the time is near at hand!  
Make haste before it is too late, and cry aloud in faith: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against You.  
But I know Your love for humanity and Your compassion.  
O good Shepherd deprive me not of a place at Your right hand in Your great glory*

[Vespers, Sunday of the Last Judgment]

I, for one, am not ready to dismiss this hymn as excessively rhetorical, overly pessimistic, or unfairly harsh in its outlook. It is rather a sober and honest plea calling us to repentance and the re-direction of our lives. It further reminds us that it is never too late, and that the Good Shepherd will place us upon His shoulders to the accompaniment of rejoicing angels in heaven over our repentance.

“God is love” [1 John 4:8]. And yet God is demanding. If God “so loved the world that He gave His only Son” to die on the Cross for our redemption, then God expects us to approach and treat others with the same love. This is a love expressed in action and in giving, and is not to be confused with emotions or feelings. We are all outcasts and alienated from God based upon the primordial sin of Adam, and yet God did not forget us or abandon us. “You were bought with a price” [1 Corinthians 6:20]. If we are indeed to “imitate the divine nature,” as Saint Gregory of Nyssa taught, then we could convincingly say that God expects us to “perform” according to the full capacity of our human nature made in the “image and likeness of God”—all the more plausible and possible because our fallen human nature has been renewed in and through the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Our rescue from a condition of “ontological poverty” is meant to arouse in us a desire to rescue “the least of these” from the impoverishing conditions of a fallen world.

Simultaneously with the external history of our lives there is occurring the internal history of our hearts. The outer life is more readily open to being accurately recorded, from the date of our birth to the date of our death and the significant events in between that make up our personal histories. What is happening within our hearts is far more difficult to record, because the human heart is deep and mysterious. Yet the prophecy of the Last Judgment, testing the direction of our hearts, raises some very real questions: On what we call the “spiritual level,” is our heart expanding or contracting? Is it growing larger or smaller? Is it becoming more generous or more grasping? Is it letting the neighbor in, or keeping the neighbor out? Is it, as the years move inexorably forward, embracing God and neighbor, or is it shrinking in self-protection? These are questions to explore as we move into the Lenten season.

If our lives are worth living, then they are worthy of being judged. Our deeds, words and thoughts are significant because we must answer for them before a God who is love. Since God loves us and save us, God will also judge us, though our judgments is actually self-inflicted and not imposed on us as a punishment. In a wonderful article titled “On Preaching Judgment,” Father John Breck put it this way: “Judgment is indeed self-inflicted. God offers us life, and we choose death. He opens us the way into the Kingdom of Heaven, and we continue down our own pathway, which leads to destruction. Yet like the father of the prodigal son, God pursues us along that pathway, desiring only that we repent and return home. It is our decision to do so or not” [*God With Us*, p. 230].

In a bleak and cold universe absent of the presence of God and governed by immutable “laws of nature,” there is no judgment. But what does that say about the significance of our lives?

*Enter not into judgment with me, bringing before me the things I should have done,  
examining my words and correcting my impulses. But in your mercy, overlook my sins  
and save me, O Lord Almighty*

[Sunday of the Last Judgment, Matins Canon, Canticle One]

### **Lorica of Saint Patrick**

*Lorica* means *breastplate* in Latin. The story of this prayer is that Patrick and his followers used this most beautiful prayer to protect themselves from the people who wanted to kill them as they travelled across Ireland. It is also called the *Deer's Cry* (*Fáed Fíada*) because their enemies saw, not men, but deer. It may not have been written by Patrick, but is considered to reflect his theological focus on the Trinity.

I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity, through belief in the Threeness, through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation.

I arise today through the strength of Christ with His Baptism, through the strength of His Crucifixion with His Burial, through the strength of His Resurrection with His Ascension, through the strength of His descent for the Judgment of Doom.

I arise today through the strength of the love of Cherubim, in obedience of Angels, in the service of the Archangels, in hope of resurrection to meet with reward, in prayers of Patriarchs, in predictions of Prophets, in preachings of Apostles, in faiths of Confessors, in innocence of Holy Virgins, in deeds of righteous men.

I arise today through the strength of Heaven: light of Sun, brilliance of Moon, splendour of Fire, speed of Lightning, swiftness of Wind, depth of Sea, stability of Earth, firmness of Rock.

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me: God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me, God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me, God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me, God's host to secure me: against snares of devils, against temptations of vices, against inclinations of nature, against everyone who shall wish me ill, afar and anear, alone and in a crowd.

I summon today all these powers between me (and these evils): against every cruel and merciless power that may oppose my body and my soul, against incantations of false prophets, against black laws of heathenry, against false laws of heretics, against craft of idolatry, against spells of witches and smiths and wizards, against every knowledge that endangers man's body and soul.

Christ to protect me today against poison, against burning, against drowning, against wounding, so that there may come abundance of reward.

**Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height,  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.**

I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity, through belief in the Threeness, through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation.

**Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is of Christ.  
May Thy Salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.**

## Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise (Cheesefare Sunday)

March 17

As we begin the Great Fast, the Church reminds us of Adam's expulsion from Paradise. God commanded Adam to fast (Gen. 2:16), but he did not obey. Because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden and lost the life of blessedness, knowledge of God, and communion with Him, for which they were created. Both they and their descendants became heirs of death and corruption.

Let us consider the benefits of fasting, the consequences of disobedience, and recall our fallen state. Today we are invited to cleanse ourselves of evil through fasting and obedience to God. Our fasting should not be a negative thing, a mere abstention from certain foods. It is an opportunity to free ourselves from the sinful desires and urges of our fallen nature, and to nourish our souls with prayer, repentance, to participate in church services, and partake of the life-giving Mysteries of Christ.

At Forgiveness Vespers we sing: "Let us begin the time of fasting in light, preparing ourselves for spiritual efforts. Let us purify our soul; let us purify our body. As we abstain from food, let us abstain from all passion and enjoy the virtues of the spirit..."

### Forgiveness Sunday

By Mother Sophronia

This Sunday, known as Forgiveness Sunday or Cheesefare Sunday, commemorates the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. While at first these three themes may seem unrelated, the teaching of the Holy Fathers and Mothers reveals a connection.

On the matter of food and eating: Adam and Eve were given the fruit of every tree and the plants of Paradise by God to be their food. Thus they clearly recognized God as the source of their life in the partaking of the food. They lived without fear, without anxiety about what they would eat or drink, or about clothing themselves; in communion with God and His creation. But there was a boundary set up for them. God forbade them to eat the fruit from the tree "of the knowledge of good and evil" warning them that they would die if they tasted it. Lured by the temptation of desire and encouraged by the serpent's lies they disobeyed and were exiled from Paradise. In the fallen world they would have to struggle to obtain food but God still provided the means of obtaining it. However, in the fallen world this is easily forgotten and God's gift of food often becomes used for abuse both of ourselves and others. Great Lenten fasting, which actually began on Monday, is the medicine which the Church prescribes for healing this condition.

*"We are gluttons, who revel in our fallen nakedness; exiles banished from the face of God!*

*The delights of food have become exceedingly bitter for us!*

*Let us return through repentance, and enlist for the battle!*

*Let us complete the days of fasting, that our flesh may be cleansed.*

*Strengthening our hearts with the hope of grace, let us not labor for the food which perishes,  
for the Lamb of God will feed us on the night of His radiant Resurrection."*

(Vespers of Sunday in Cheesefare week)

When God humbly approached Adam and Eve after their transgression of His commandment not to eat of the forbidden tree they recoiled in fear and shame. Because, like each of us, their descendants, they now had fallen wills and resisted the opportunity to repent of what they had done and ask for God to forgive them; they denied their personal sin of disobedience and shifted the blame. Adam blamed Eve (the woman that God gave him) and Eve blamed the serpent (a creation of God). In the fallen world this willful estrangement of persons from each other and from the creation of God around us manifests itself in global proportions. The Torah which comes down to us from the Old Testament attempted to temper the human bloodthirstiness for vengeance on one another within a code of Law (an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth). But the New Commandment of Jesus Christ our God is "Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you".



We begin the path to love for our enemies in obedience to the commandment of Christ our Lord by struggling to love our brothers and sisters in Christ; our family members and friends; coworkers and parish members. We begin the Great Fast of Lent with Vespers of Forgiveness and we extend our forgiveness of those who are present at the service to all the people in our lives.

*“The Lenten Spring has come!  
The flower of repentance!*

*(Vespers of Wednesday in Cheesefare week)*

#### PARISH WISH LIST

*A wish list to help our parish grow!*

##### RECURRING needs:

**Paper Plates** (small and large), **Paper Bowls**, **Hot Cups**  
**Napkins**  
**Plastic Utensils**, especially **Forks**  
**Paper Towels**  
**Toilet Paper**

*Holy Mother Olympia, pray to God for us!*

#### UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

**Lenten Women’s Retreat:** Friday, March 22 – Sunday, March 24, 2024  
St Andrews Camp – see the Diocesan website to register

**Presanctified Liturgy with Archbishop Michael**  
Wednesday, April 17, 6 PM

**Presbyter’s Council Meeting**  
Thursday, April 25, 11 AM  
Zoom



*O Master, Guide to wisdom, Bestower of prudence,  
Instructor of the foolish, and Defender of the poor:  
make firm my heart and grant it understanding.  
O Word of the Father, give me speech,  
for behold, I shall not restrain my lips from crying out to Thee:  
"Have mercy, have mercy on me who have fallen."*

**Kontakion of the Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise**