



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

If the Church use the first two Sundays of *Triodion* to emphasize the virtues of humility and repentance in our journey to Lent & Pascha, then Judgment Sunday reminds us of the need to act before the Son of man returns. As the Evangelist relates in the Gospel reading, at the Last Judgment, the Son of man will shepherd the nations into the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left (*Matthew 25:31-34*).

Christ's ministry is in many ways paradoxical: He, who created us in His image and likeness, willingly took on our flesh. He chose to die to achieve victory over death; and He who came to earth as a Child, will return as the one prophesied by Daniel: "...*a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven...He was crowned king and given power and glory, so that all people of every nation and race would serve him. He will rule forever, and his kingdom is eternal, never to be destroyed*" (*Daniel 7:13-14*).

When we are called to stand before His glorious throne, He will greet us by reminding us how we behaved towards the Son of man: did we offer Him food or drink? Did we welcome Him as a stranger, or clothe His nakedness? Did we visit Him in His sickness, or His imprisonment? And we, sheep, or goat, will ask, "*Lord, when did we see you...?*" (*Matthew 25:37, 44*) Therefore, as we reflect, waiting for the Son of man to return with all His Angels, we must remember how we already see Him in the image of our fellow man and woman, every day of our lives.

Christ is the person on the street, hungry and ill-clothed; Christ is struggling in a hospital bed, in prison, or under persecution, ostracized from their families and communities. And the only thing that separates the sheep from the goats, is how we choose to respond to "*the least of these...*" (*Matthew 25:45*) Do we look away from those in difficulty, waiting for another neighbor to come along and help? Do we make excuses: that such a person cannot be helped, or that maybe they did something to deserve this treatment?

Judgment Sunday shows us that it is not enough to proclaim our belief in Christ. When Christ returns, He will not ask us if we believed in Him, but whether we followed Him in continuing His work of comforting the poor, the unloved, and the forgotten. Christ demands this from us, the followers who bear His Name, because He knows what it means to be despised, rejected and forgotten. On this Judgment Sunday, let us remember the great paradox at the heart of our faith: that it is "*the least of these*" who are most like Christ.

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