

2026-09-06: Sunday of the Little Month - Be Ready

Introduction

The theme of these last two Sundays of the year is the end of the world, the end of life. The Gospel today is almost the same as last week. Last week we read the words of the Lord from Mark 13. In Vespers last night, we read the same words from Luke 21. And in the Liturgy today from Matthew 24.

Nothing in the Church is done haphazardly... at the end of each day, in the 12th Hour, the Church reminds us about being ready for the end. And in Vespers everyday we pray the Litany of the Departed to remind us of the end of life. Also at the end of the year.

The Church constantly reminds us because She wants us to be ready because when Christ comes, He will separate the wicked from the righteous. The righteous will go with Him into eternal life. But the wicked will go with the devil into the Lake of Fire.

Why Should We Be Ready?

1. We don't know when the hour is coming
 - When will we depart from this world? No one knows... happens suddenly to children, youth, adults, elders.
 - If we are ready, then when the Lord comes at any moment, we will not be afraid
 - But if we are not ready, we will be scared at the moment of death. Because God will ask for an account of our stewardship
 - Someone might say "I'm young, I'm healthy, I know the chances of dying are very very low for me. So let me just enjoy my life and when I get older, I'll repent and return back to God"
 - This is what Satan wants to convince us of. But he is a liar and deceiver. We can see two problems in this:
 - Who told you that living away from God is a joyful life?
 - God is the source of all joy. Maybe there is fleeting momentary fun... but the end result is not. Look at the life of people who spend their time drinking and dancing and drugs and sexual immorality... are they happy? Definitely not. Most of them suffer from depression, anxiety. Many commit suicide. There is no joy away from God.
 - Who told you that you will repent?
 - When I delay my repentance, it becomes more difficult. Because it becomes a habit, I get used to it, I normalize it.

- It is not impossible, God's grace will help you, but it will be very difficult

2. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- God is kind... but after God gives us everything we need in order to live a holy life,
- For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.** (Hebrews 10:26-27)

3. Life of Holiness is not difficult

- Satan tries to deceive us and tell us that to live a godly life is difficult
- Life of Holiness doesn't mean "Life of sinlessness"
- "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death." (1 John 5:16-17)
- There is a difference between a sin of weakness and a sin of betrayal
 - Sin of weakness: I am trying, I am fighting the good fight, the grace of God is working with me... but I fall. As long as I am struggling and when we fall, we rise again, we are accepted before God.
 - Sin of betrayal: Sin of resistance, I am by my own will rejecting God, I am doing the opposite of what He is saying, this is wickedness
- If I am faithful in trying to live a life of holiness, and out of weakness, I fall, the Lord tells me "don't worry! My Blood is here on the altar! It is given for salvation, remission of sins, eternal life to those who partake of It! Come and eat My Body! Come and drink My Blood!" Repent, Confess, and Partake of my Body and Blood. You will be purified! You will be made clean!
 - How many times, Lord?
 - Unlimited. Indefinite. I do not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he returns and lives.
- This should not encourage me to live a sinful life and to take the sacraments for granted... because to do that would be a sin of betrayal. But this is to say that the life of holiness is not difficult. But I have to be willing to struggle and to humble myself.

4. God Promised to Accept the Sinner

- "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"
- "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." (Matthew 9:12)
- Parable of the Prodigal Son

- My son was dead and is alive
- He was lost and is found
- The Thief on the Cross
 - When he returned in the last moments of his life and said "Remember me when You come into Your kingdom" immediately the Lord accepted him

5. There is no repentance after death

- Once we die, and give our last breath, we cannot correct anything in our life
- "Repent, O my soul, so long as you dwell on this earth. For inside the grave dust does not praise. And in death, no one remembers. Neither in Hades does anyone give thanks. Therefore, arise from the slumber of laziness, and entreat the Savior, repenting and saying, "God have mercy on me and save me." (12th Hour Litanies)
- "If life were everlasting and this world ever-existing, you would have an excuse, O my soul. But if your wicked deeds and ugly evils were exposed before the Just Judge, what answer would you give, while you are lying on the bed of sins and negligent in disciplining the flesh?" (12th Hour Litanies)
- The Foolish Virgins who did not prepare the lamps... the door was shut. They could not enter the wedding with the Bridegroom.

How to be Ready

1. We cannot live a godly life without the grace of God

- Our battle is with the devil
- The devil is stronger and smarter than any one of us
- We need to have a stronger Being than the devil... in the battle, God + me can defeat him. Me alone cannot.
- Means of Grace
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - "This kind cannot come out except by prayer and fasting"
 - Reading the Scripture
 - Worship
 - Spiritual Reading
 - Prostrations
 - Life of Repentance and Confession
 - Eucharist
- The Church is always encouraging these because they are the channels of grace. Without these channels, even if you faithfully want to fight any sin, you will have a hard time.
- That's why people who do all of these things, are stronger in their warfare, than those who are living away

2. Spiritual Guidance and Direction

- Everyone, regardless of his "position" in the Church has a spiritual father
- Even your spiritual father has a spiritual father... even the Pope! has a spiritual father

- Without spiritual guidance, we will be drifted away

3. Godly friendships

- Encourage one another
 - "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 121:1)
- If I surround myself with ungodly people, they will encourage me to stray away from God
 - "No need to go today"
 - "Let's do something else"
 - "We wake up early every day for work, let's take a break today"

4. Daily Examination

1. "Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if *there is any* wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139)
2. Examine yourself
 1. What did I do today?
 2. What did I do that pleased God?
 3. What did I do that does not please God?
 1. Make a repentance
 2. Make a resolution that tomorrow will be better than today

5. Do good works

1. When there is an opportunity to do good works, like the parable of the Good Samaritan, take it
2. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'.... Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'" (Matthew 25)

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