



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

March 10, 2024

The Sunday of the Final Judgment (Meatfare Sunday)

*Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)*

Reverend Priests and Deacons, Students and Teachers of Day, Afternoon and Sunday Schools,
Parents, Children, and all Friends of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago:

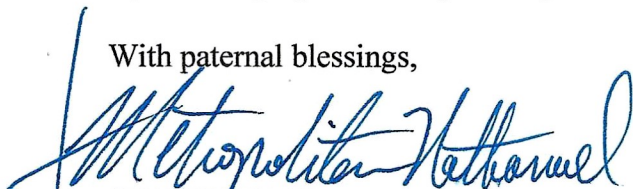
I greet you all on this Sunday as we recall the final judgment of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. According to the image presented in the Gospel, the standard of God's judgment is the measure of our love for our neighbor. We often ask, "who is this neighbor I am to love"? The Lord's answer is quite vivid: Our neighbor is the person who is hungry or thirsty; the stranger; the cold and afraid; or the infirm and imprisoned. Christ doesn't mix his words. The way we treat each other—especially during our weakest moments—indicates how we treat the Lord Himself.

It is love that unites us together in Christ, and Great and Holy Lent affords us an opportunity to intensify our practice of love. This is the purpose of our fasting, our increased prayer, and contrition for imperfection and failures: to accept the love of the Lord and to express love to others. Yet this practice of love is not limited to Great Lent. Within our Holy Metropolis we seek out numerous opportunities to express and practice love *for* Christ and *in* Christ. Often, this means literally serving the countless hungry people through our Philoptochos and Project Hope initiatives.

Another opportunity of special intensity is provided for our own "children of God" through our Camping Ministries at Saint Mary's Camp, Fanari Camp, Lighthouse Camp, and our individual parish camps. These programs provide our young people the opportunity to come together and recognize Christ Jesus "encamped within us" (John 1:12-14). Such camping ministries provide the same opportunity for our adult and young adult volunteers as well.

Beloved friends, as we celebrate *Camping Ministry Sunday* today in our Holy Metropolis of Chicago, I invite you to support these effective camping programs that have brought generations of our youth closer to Christ. Consider volunteering, promoting, making a financial gift, and sending your children to camp. As we embark on our journey to Pascha, I extend to each of you my fervent prayers for a spiritually fruitful and uplifting Great Lent.

With paternal blessings,



†NATHANAEL
Metropolitan of Chicago