

Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

March 26, 2023

Tone 8



Fourth Sunday Of Lent

Archangel Gabriel

*St. John Climacus
(of the Ladder)*

Divine Liturgy

Readings

(Readings on Back)

- ◆ **Hebrews 6:13-20**
- ◆ **Mark 9:17-31**

Announcements:

THANK YOU!

This year our Lenten Pierogi Dinners were the most successful yet. We sold almost \$4000 between the two dinners. We couldn't have done it without all of your dedication and help. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time to make these dinners the success that they were.

Counters and Greeters Needed

We are looking for help with counting the weekly collections and serving as a greeter on Sunday morning. If you would like to help in either way, please see Amy Bastock (amybastock1967@gmail.com) for more details, and to sign up.

Church Cleaning

On Saturday, April 8, we will have liturgy for Lazarus Saturday at 9:30. Immediately following liturgy, we will have a church cleaning party. Please bring your gloves, windex, wood polish, etc.

Confessions

Please don't wait until the last minute to go to confession. Not only is it a Sacrament, and spiritual discipline of the Orthodox Church, it is one of the stipulations of being a "member in good standing."

This Week

Wednesday, March 29

6:00pm - Liturgy of the
Presanctified Gifts

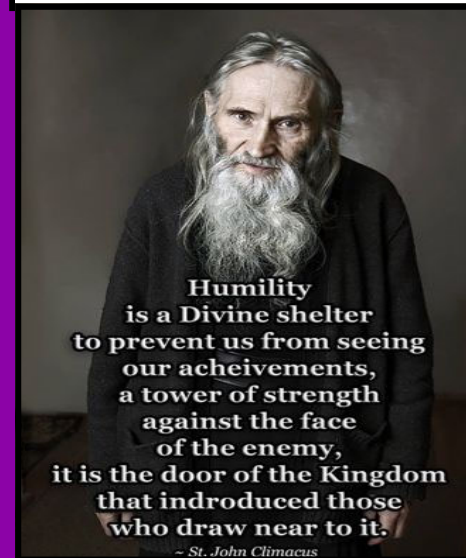
Saturday, April 1

6:00pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, April 2

9:00am - The Hours

9:30am - Divine Liturgy



Gospel Meditation

Some people speak of faith as if entrusting our lives to God were as effortless and relaxing as soaking in a warm bath. If we have pursued prayer, fasting, and almsgiving with integrity this Lent, we will know better than to make such a silly assumption. The more we have struggled to take even small steps toward the healing of our souls, the more our disordered desires and spiritual maladies have reared their ugly heads. Our Lenten practices have opened our eyes a bit to our own brokenness, and we may feel defeated and tempted simply to give up. If we do so, however, we will only weaken ourselves further and lose the opportunity to growth in the faith necessary to enter into the great joy of our Savior's victory over death and all the other corrupting consequences of sin.



The father of the young man in our gospel lesson had surely rejected simplistic views of faith long ago. For years, his son had suffered from a life-threatening condition from which no one, including the Lord's disciples, had been able to deliver him. But instead of falling into complete despair and cynicism, the father had at least enough faith to say to Christ, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" With an integrity fueled by his years of heartbreaking pain over the wretched plight of his son, the man knew that he stood before Christ with less than perfect faith. He did not even try to pretend that he possessed a sentimental spirituality that shied away from hard truths.

Today's reading from Hebrews refers to another father who also struggled to trust in God. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. He and Sarah had waited a very long time to have a child, whose birth was necessary for Abraham to become the father of a great nation, as God had promised. Obviously, Abraham's great faith was not easily acquired and grew through struggles beyond what we can imagine. Perhaps enduring those spiritual battles was necessary for him to find the spiritual strength to entrust himself fully to God as he fulfilled his unique role in preparing the way for the coming of the Savior.

It may seem odd to compare our difficulties with Lenten disciplines such as prayer, fasting, generosity, forgiveness, and repentance with the enormous burdens borne by the father in our gospel lesson or by Abraham. Their faith was shaped by how they responded to some of the most difficult challenges imaginable over periods of many years. If we want to grow in the kind of trust that they had in the Lord and gain strength to respond faithfully to the great challenges of our lives, we must open our souls to the healing mercy of Christ as we take our own small and faltering steps toward entrusting ourselves to Him more fully. That is never easy, as our distracted minds, growling stomachs, and self-centered desires remind us whenever we set out to pray, fast, and serve our neighbors.

If we are to complete our Lenten journey to our Lord's Cross and glorious resurrection, we must learn to entrust ourselves to Him as honestly and fully as we possibly can. We must do so not with an escapist faith suited only for an imaginary world of perfection, but one in which our hearts are often broken for the suffering of loved ones and we ourselves endure chronic diseases and other persistent personal challenges that we lack the ability to overcome. We must do so with a spiritual clarity that enables us to name our own sins and battle even our most deeply rooted inclinations in order to reorient our lives toward God. We must do so with the recognition that we will never find deliverance from our spiritual maladies by leaving them untreated, but must do the hard work of embracing the healing of our souls through deliberate repentance, which is never easy. Let us use the remaining weeks of Lent to do precisely that so that we will have the strength to enter with faith into the deep mystery of our salvation, for "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and after He is killed, He will rise on the third day." - Fr. Philip LeMasters

Sunday of St. John Climacus (of The Ladder)

On the 4th Sunday of Lent we commemorate St. John Climacus and his famous writing, the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*. St John is also commemorated on March 30th. St John was born around the year 525, the son of devout and wealthy parents. He received a very good education, but at the age of sixteen, he forsook the world and went to Mount Sinai, subjecting himself to the spiritual guidance of Elder Martyrios. After 19 years, his Elder reposed. Then St John entered the arena of hesychasm, visiting the monastic communities of Skētē and Tabénnisē in Egypt. For another forty years, he lived in a cell at Thora in the Sinai Desert, which was a two hour (5 mile) walk from the Monastery of Saint Katherine.

He slept only as much as was necessary to prevent his mind from being distracted. Before going to sleep he prayed a great deal, and he also wrote books. This was how he subdued despondency. His entire life was spent in unceasing prayer, and incomparable love for God.

After writing The Ladder at the request of Igumen John of Raithu Monastery, and leading a God-pleasing life, Saint John fell asleep in the Lord when he was about seventy-five years old (ca. 603). He is also commemorated on March 30.

His book, The Ladder, was originally intended for monks but all faithful can benefit from this great work. It is broken down into thirty chapters representing the years of Christ's earthly life.

Each chapter or "rung" pertains to a particular vice or virtue. In the icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, there is a ladder that stretches from Earth to Heaven with Christ at the apex waiting to receive the righteous into His Kingdom. On one side of the ladder are demons and the other, angels. The demons try to drag the people off the ladder, while the angels support them from falling. The icon represents the journey of our earthly life and the struggles we face as we strive to enter into God's Kingdom. It also emphasizes for us that the higher someone may ascend, potentially the greater the fall he or she could have. The Ladder signifies that as we grow spiritually and acquire virtues, it is imperative that we safeguard them. The way to do this is to be humble and vigilant.

Troparion - *Dweller of the desert and angel in the body, you were shown to be a wonderworker, our*

Prayers Appreciated for:

Living:

Archpriest Emil
Dn. Doug
Mat. Kathy
Katherine, Sam,
Lisa, Paula, Marianne,
Suleiman
Brianna & Infant Jack
Natalie & Infant Caleb
Steve, Marlys

Departed:

Tall Candles

Are available to be sponsored. \$15 each. See Fr Joseph for availability.

WEEKLY READINGS

Monday, March 27

St John the Clairvoyant
Genesis 13:12-18
Proverbs 14:27-15:4

Tuesday, March 28

St. Hilarion the New (754)
Gen. 15:1-15
Prov. 15:7-19

Wed, March 29

St. Eustathius the Confessor
Gen. 17:1-9
Prov. 15:20-16:9

Thurs, March 30

St. John Climacus
Gen 18:20-33
Prov. 16:17-17:17

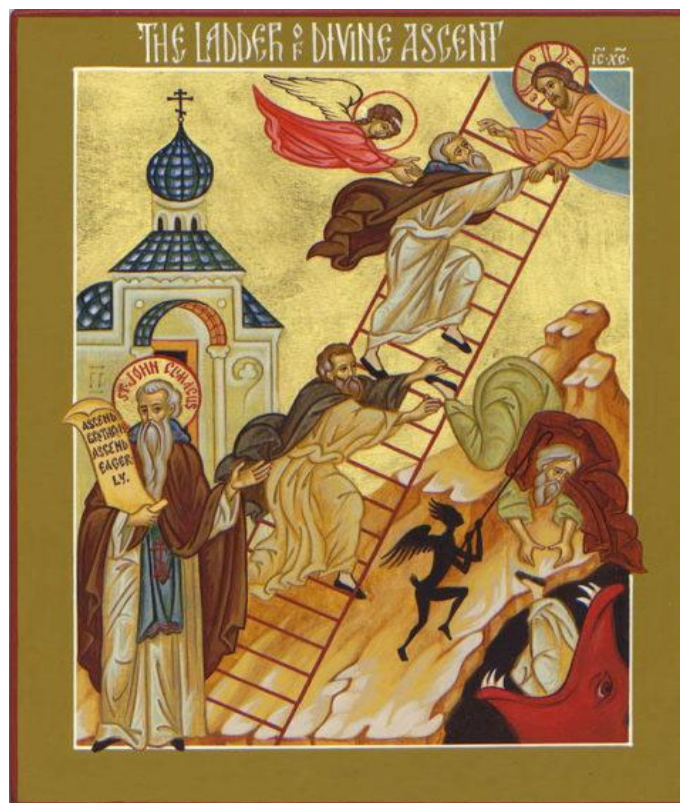
Friday, March 31

St. Innocent, Apostle to America
Hebrews 7:72-8:2
John 10:9-16

Saturday, April 1

St. Mary of Egypt
Heb. 9:24-28
Mark 8:27-31

God-bearing Father John. You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil, and prayer: healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith. Glory to Him who gave you strength. Glory to Him who granted you a crown. Glory to Him Who, through you, grants healing to all.



Today's Scripture Readings

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

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