

THE ORTHODOX Faith

FOR TEENS

SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2017 - SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 30

THE MESSAGE

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

By the grace of God, we have already reached the fourth Sunday of Great & Holy Lent. As we know, each Sunday in Great Lent offers a special commemoration. On this Sunday, the Church glorifies the righteous John of the Ladder, one of the greatest ascetics, which the Church in speaking of him, calls "an earthly angel and a Heavenly man."

This Sunday also honors and remembers the beautiful book written by St. John, "The Ladder of Divine Ascent." This book can be likened to a trumpet calling us to the spiritual life and inspiring in us a zeal to leave the things of this world and focus on the "things on high." We need this message today more than ever. As we read in the gospel message of the day, Christ admonished us all that with prayer and fasting we are able to cast away from us whatever is evil and demonic. While our society today so many times is sowing seeds of evil and deceit in the hearts of many, let us, as good and faithful Orthodox Christians counter attack with living and practicing a virtuous life through our prayer, fasting, and spiritual reading of such divine texts. Let us make every attempt to spend more time going to church as a family especially with Holy Week upon us. And as a family of God, let us hasten to fast and pray intensely these remaining two weeks of Lent so that we can all behold the Resurrection of our Lord with pure hearts and clear minds.

Reverend Father Sotirios Malamis

FR. SOTIRIOS SERVES THE COMMUNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD IN LINCOLNSHIRE, ILLINOIS

A Christian is one who imitates Christ in thought, word, and deed, as far as is possible for human beings, believing rightly and blamelessly in the Holy Trinity. Follow Christ without anxiety or hesitation, always looking heavenward and expecting help from there.

From the Ladder of Divine Ascent by St. John Climacus

FROM
THE
FATHERS

THE TRUTH

Mark
9:17-31

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

Proverbs

14:2-3

HE WHO WALKS
UPRIGHTLY FEARS
THE LORD
BUT HE WHO IS
CROOKED IN HIS
WAYS WILL BE
DISHONORED
FROM THE MOUTH
OF A MAN WITHOUT
DISCERNMENT COMES
COMES A ROD OF
ARROGANCE
BUT THE LIPS OF
wise
MEN GUARD
THEMSELVES



Sunday of St. John Climacus

CELEBRATED ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT



St. John Climacus is one of the great-saints of our Church. He is so special that the Church remembers St. John, not once, as we do with most saints, but twice a year. His feast day is celebrated on March 30th and the Church devotes the 4th Sunday of Great Lent to this majestic church father.

The early life of St. John is shrouded in mystery. While we know that he was born in Palestine in the year 579 A.D., not much is known of his parents or of the days of his youth. All we know is that St. John received a general education and that he entered into the

monastic ranks at the age of sixteen. From that early age, St. John embraced the life of solitude and asceticism, as he progressed greatly in the spiritual life.

Like Moses, St. John spent forty years in the desert and ascended the same mountain as Moses, Mt. Sinai. He was likened to Moses because, like the great prophet of old who brought down the tablets of the Law, he too brought down a gift to share with the people. That gift, a book called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, is still read by Orthodox Christians today. It is a book that describes how man can ascend to God, like the Ten Commandments tells the faithful how they will find order and harmony in their lives.

The writing of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* took place at the end of St. John's life. Our tradition says that a certain monk begged St. John to write a book that would help Christians progress in the spiritual life. That monk asked St. John to write such an authoritative book because he, like others, observed that the people of the day were losing touch with the tradition that was handed down to them.

As we continue to struggle to live the Christian life, let us remember the life of St. John Climacus and cling to the old Orthodox tradition of reading his majestic work. For, as St. John himself teaches, no one can ascend to the Kingdom without first using a ladder.

LENTEN CHALLENGE

TURN OFF

There are only a few weeks remaining until Pascha. Put down the phone and make better use of your time. By limiting social media and your phone use in general, you will have more time for prayer, attending Lenten church services, reading spiritual books and helping others.



YOUR PHONE

The Akathistos Hymnos (Akathist Hymn) is a devotional poem, which sings the praises of the Holy Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary. It is one of the most beloved services in the Orthodox Church. It was composed in the city of Constantinople, "the city of the Virgin," by St. Romanos the Melodist, who reposed in the year 556. Source: GOARCH.org



Dear Lord, we ask You not to turn Your face away from us...but how many times, Lord, have we turned away from You when we sin... daily, weekly...countless of times! Show us the way, Lord, as we try to seek Your forgiveness. And show us, Lord Your endless mercy, as we try to love You with all our minds, our hearts and our souls.

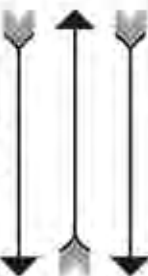
Amen

From the book, *Daily Lenten Meditations for Orthodox Christians* by Presbyteria Emily Harakas

WHAT'S THE WORD?

FAITH

ΠΙΣΤΗΣ



Sing PRAISES TO THE Lord



Kontakion Of The Akathist Hymn

To you, Theotokos, invincible Defender, having been delivered from peril, I, your city, dedicate the victory festival as a thank offering. In your irresistible might, keep me safe from all trials, that I may call out to you: "Hail, unwedded bride!"

Faith is an act of trust, an attitude of confidence and an inward decision of reliance on God. Faith activates the power of God in our lives. Through our commitment of faith we enter into a

personal relationship with God and become open to the flow of His love.

• The theme of "faithfulness" is emphasized in the hymns and readings of the 4th Sunday of Lent. The Gospel reading indicates the necessity of faith in order to receive God's blessings.

• The example of St. John Climacus is brought before us on this Sunday in order to illustrate to us that our faithfulness to God is expressed through repentance, prayer, fasting and the practice of Christian virtues leading to a paschal renewal.

From the book, *A Year of the Lord: Liturgical Bible Studies, Vol. 3, Triodion & Lent* by Rev. Fr. Theodore

MORE INFORMATION

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