



From The Ambvon

ST MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT — Tone 8. Leavetaking of the Annunciation.
Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel. St. John Climacus (of *The Ladder*).
Sunday, March 26, 2023

Birthdays & Anniversaries for March

Birthdays: Matushka Emilia Shepherd (3/3); Marie Pasternek (3/7);

Nameday: Diane Buranich (3/19);

Anniversary:

Baptism:

Travelers:

Prospora Schedule: Please sign up to bake prospora.

Thank you to Marie Pasternek for this week's Prospora!

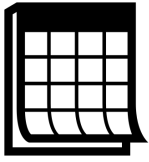
Visitors: PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE HOUR DOWNSTAIRS

Agape Meal: A Light Agape Meal. Thank you to everyone who donated.

All are encouraged to sing the “Lord Have Mercy” & “Amen” responses. And please sing along if you know the other verses, troparions, and kontakions as well.

Service Attendance: 48 Last weekend Divine Liturgy:

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive themselves by fasting and a recent (monthly) confession..If you have questions please ask Fr Michael!*



Service Schedule

WEEK of 27Mar-2Apr

WED, Mar 29th 5:00 PM Presanctified Liturgy
 SAT, Apr 1st: @ 5:00 PM Great Vespers
 SUN, Apr 2nd: Hours @ 9:20 Hours, St Mary of Egypt -
 Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 AM

UP COMING

WED, Apr 5th: @ 5:00 PM Presanctified Liturgy
 SAT, Apr 8th: @ 5:00 PM Great Vespers
 SUN, Apr 9th: Hours @ 9:20 Hours, Palm Sunday -
 Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 AM

I will send out Holy Week Schedule via Email on Monday and have a printout next Sunday.



Announcements

Upcoming Parish & Diocesan Events

Silent Prayers: Every Wednesday 11:00AM - 1:30PM

Church Work Day: Every Friday is Church Maintenance day. Come help!

Catechumen Class: Every Saturday 3:30 PM Catechumen Class - All are invited

Proshora Baking Class - 30Mar 10AM

First Security: Final installation of fire alarms 30Mar

Confessions: As we enter the fourth week of the Great Fast, please do not wait until the fifth week or Holy Week to go to Confession. Confessions are available before and after most scheduled services, and by appointment. It is an experience to be prayerfully prepared for, and should be done with sufficient time and attention, not squeezed in hastily.

How Much is my tithe

Weekly	2%	4%	5%	10%
\$200	\$4	\$8	\$10	\$20
\$500	\$10	\$20	\$25	\$50
\$750	\$15	\$30	\$37	\$75
\$1000	\$20	\$40	\$50	\$100
\$1500	\$30	\$60	\$75	\$150

WEEKLY GIVING UPDATE: We thank you for your continued giving in gratitude for all that our loving God does for each of us, for His Holy Church, and all the blessings we receive through her.

March Deposits

6th: \$2465 10th: \$5650 13th: \$2345

20th: \$2111

March Expenditures: \$7135.82

Bank Balance: \$40,897.52

Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$2,551.08

Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$10,204.29

Parish Prayer List

Please remember in your prayers LIVING

Ill-afflicted Archpriests John Nightingale & Fr Theodore Orzolek

All those caring for the sick and suffering at this time throughout the world, especially our families and friends: Mike Jadick, Bernie Elko, Margaret Pregmon, Marie Buranich, Helen Wytovich, Tammy Wytovich, Rosemary Kuzmich, Sandra Pritchky, Marie Pasternak, Sandy Batton, Paula Stavisky, Al Pritchky, Eli Stavisky, Evelyn Bunevitch, Nadia Macheska, John Pritchky, Paulette Ezbiansky, Andrew Lutzick, Daniel Jones, Charissa Voroziichak, Matushka Paula Soucek; Al Horek

Servants of God Fr Nathan, Mat. Katherine, Micaiah, Evangeline, Gideon, Zacharias, Ignatius, Basil (Clausson), Mat. Emilia, Blaise, Maximus, Rodion, Savina (Shepherd), Barbara Sevensky, Bev Elko, Sandra Condon, Ann Tyrpak, Sandy & Danny Pregmann, Walter Pritchky, Michael & Euphemia (Mia) (Keklak); Amaya Jackson; Robert Kane; Maria & Vitaliy Rakovsky; Ekaterina & Anna; Kelly Cigna; George, Natasha, & Rosa Coyoy

Catechumens: Jason, Emily, Judah, Nadia, & Silas

DEPARTED

Newly Departed: Helen Bezuhly 40th Day Panikhida

Departed: Stephen Polanchik (3/3); Joseph Kuzmich (3/8); Diane Yacopchak (03/11); Michael Buday (3/18);

VIGIL LIGHTS

From
For the health of:

From
For the health of:
In memory of:

Donations In Memory of

‡

“it is advisable to avoid such kinds as add to the body’s weight and appetite: strong spices, meat, spirituous drinks and such foods as are solely for the palate’s enjoyment. For the rest, one may eat what is cheap and most easily available, they say. But by “moderate” they mean one meal a day, and that one light enough not to fill the stomach to satiety.”

Tito Colliander
Way of the Ascetics p.77

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT: FEAST OF OUR RIGHTEOUS FATHER JOHN (CLIMACUS) OF SINAI, AUTHOR OF THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT

Introduction

On March 30 and on the Fourth Sunday of Holy Lent the Orthodox Church commemorates our Righteous Father John Climacus. He is called Climacus due to his authorship of the great spiritual work The Ladder of Divine Ascent. His commemoration is designated by the Church on one of the Sundays of Lent as his life and writings affirm him as a supreme bearer and proponent of Christian asceticism. The ascetic example of this great Saint of the Church inspires us in our Lenten journey.

Life Of The Saint

Saint John Climacus was probably born in the second half of the sixth century; but his country and origins are alike unknown because, from the beginning of his renunciation of the world, he took great care to live as a stranger upon earth. "Exile," he wrote, "is a separation from everything, in order that one may hold on totally to God." We only know that, from the age of sixteen, after having received a solid intellectual formation, he renounced all the pleasures of this vain life for love of God and went to Mount Sinai, to the foot of the holy mountain on which God had in former times revealed His glory to Moses, and consecrated himself to the Lord with a burning heart as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.

Setting aside, from the moment of his entry into the stadium, all self-trust and self-satisfaction through unfeigned humility, he submitted body and soul to an elder called Martyrios and set himself, free from all care, to climb that spiritual ladder (klimax) at the top of which God stands, and to "add fire each day to fire, fervour to fervour, zeal to zeal." He saw his shepherd as "the image of Christ" and, convinced that his elder was responsible for him before God, he had only one care: to reject his own will and "with all deliberateness to put aside the capacity to make [his] own judgement," so that no interval passed between Martyrios' commands, even those that appeared unjustified, and the obedience of his disciple. In spite of this perfect submission, Martyrios kept him as a novice for four years and only tonsured him when he was twenty, after having tested his humility. Strategios, one of the monks present at the tonsure predicted that the new monk would one day become one of the great lights of the world. When, later, Martyrios and his disciple paid a visit to John the Savaite, one of the most famous ascetics of the time, the latter, ignoring the elder, poured water over John's feet. After they had left, John the Savaite declared that he did not know the young monk but, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he had washed the feet of the Abbot of Sinai. The same prophecy was confirmed by the great Anastasios the Sinaite (April 21), whom they also went to visit.

In spite of his youth, John showed the maturity of an elder and great discernment. Thus one day, when he had been sent into the world on a mission, and finding himself with lay-people, he had preferred to give in somewhat to vainglory by eating very little, rather than to gluttony; for, of these two evils, it was better to choose that which is less dangerous for beginners in monastic life.

He thus passed nineteen years in the blessed freedom from the care that obedience gives, freed from all conflict by the prayer of his spiritual father and on "a safe voyage, a sleeper's journey," moved towards the harbor of impassibility. On the death of Martyrios, he resolved to continue his ascension in solitude, a type of life suitable for only a small number, who, made strong on the rock of humility, flee from

others so as not to be even for a moment deprived of the "sweetness of God." He did not commit himself to this path, one so full of snares, on his own judgment, but on the recommendation of the holy elder George Arsilaite, who instructed him in the way of life proper to hesychasts. As his exercise ground, he chose a solitary place called Tholas, situated five miles from the main monastery, where other hermits lived, each not far from the others. He stayed there for forty years, consumed by an ever-increasing love of God, without thought for his own flesh, free of all contact with men, having unceasing prayer and vigilance as his only occupation, in order to "keep his incorporeal self shut up in the house of the body," as an angel clothed in a body.

He used to eat all that was compatible with his monastic profession, but in very small quantities, thus subduing the tyranny of the flesh while not providing a pretext for vainglory. By living in solitude and retreat, he put to death the mighty flame of greed, which, under the pretext of charity and hospitality, leads negligent monks to gluttony, the door to all passions, and to the love of money, "a worship of idols and the offspring of unbelief." He triumphed over sloth (acedia) that death of the soul which attacks hesychasts in particular and laxity, by the remembrance of death. By meditating on eternal rewards, he undid the chain of sadness; he knew only a single sadness: that "affliction which leads to joy" and makes us run with ardor along the path of repentance, purifying the soul from all its impurities.

What still prevented him from arriving at impassibility (apatheia)? He had long since conquered anger by the sword of obedience. He had suffocated vainglory, that three-pointed thorn which forever harasses those who battle for holiness, and which entwines itself with every virtue like a leech, by solitude and even more by silence. As a reward for his labors, which he took care to season constantly with self-accusation, the Lord gave him the queen of virtues, holy and precious humility: "a grace in the soul, and with a name known only to those who have had experience of it, a gift from God."

As his cell was too near the others, he would often withdraw to a distant cave at the foot of the mountain, which he made an antechamber of heaven by his groans and the tears which fell effortlessly from his eyes like an abundant spring, transfiguring his body as with a "wedding garment." By this blessed affliction and these continual tears, he "did not cease to celebrate daily" and kept perpetual prayer in his heart, which had become like an inviolable fortress against the assaults of evil thoughts (logismoi). Sometimes he was ravished in spirit in the midst of the angelic choirs, not knowing if he was in the body or out of it, and then with great simplicity he asked God to teach him about the mysteries of theology. When he came out of the furnace of prayer, he sometimes felt purified as if by fire, and sometimes totally radiant with light.

As for sleep, he allowed himself just the measure necessary to keep his spirit vigilant in prayer and, before sleeping, he prayed at length, or wrote down on tablets the fruit of his meditations on the inspired Scriptures.

He took great care over many years to keep his virtues hidden from human eyes, but, when God judged that the time had come for him to transmit to others the light he had acquired for the edification of the Church, He led a young monk named Moses to John, who, thanks to the intervention of the other ascetics, succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the man of God, and was accepted as his disciple. One afternoon, when Moses had gone a long way away to find earth for their little garden, and had lain down under a large rock to rest, Abba John, in his cell, received the revelation that Moses was in danger, and he immediately seized the weapon of prayer. In the evening, when Moses returned, he told

John that in his sleep he had, all of a sudden, heard the voice of his elder calling him, at the very moment when the rock began to break away from its moorings and threatened to crush him.

Saint John's prayer also had the power to heal visible and invisible wounds. It was thus that he delivered a monk from the demon of lust, which had pushed him to the point of despair. On another occasion, he made rain fall. Yet it was above all in the gift of spiritual teaching that God manifested His grace in him. Basing his teaching on his personal experience, he generously instructed all those who came to him on the snares which lay in wait for monks in their battle passions and against the prince of this world. This spiritual teaching, however, attracted the jealousy of some who then spread around calumnies about him, accusing him of being a conceited chatterer. Although his conscience was clear, Abba John did not attempt to justify himself but, seeking rather to take away any pretext from those who sought one, he stopped teaching for a whole year, convinced that it was better to do some slight harm to his friends rather than to exacerbate the resentment of the wicked. All the inhabitants of the desert were edified at his silence and by this proof of humility, and it was only at the insistence of his repentant calumniators that he agreed to receive visitors again.

Filled with all the virtues of action and contemplation, and having arrived at the summit of the holy ladder through victory over all the passions of the old man, Saint John shone like a star on the Sinai peninsula and was held in awe by all the monks. He thought himself no less of a beginner for all that and, avid to find examples of evangelical conduct, undertook journeys to various Egyptian monasteries. He visited in particular a great coenobitic monastery in the region of Alexandria, a veritable earthly paradise which was governed by a shepherd gifted with infallible discernment. This brotherhood was united by such charity in the Lord, exempt from all familiarity and useless talk, that the monks had scarcely need of the warnings of the superior, for they mutually encouraged each other to a most divine vigilance. Of all their virtues, the most admirable, according to John, was the way they were especially careful never to "injure a brother's conscience" in the slightest. He was also very edified by a visit to a dependency of this monastery, called "The Prison," where monks who had gravely sinned lived in extreme asceticism and gave extraordinary proofs of repentance, straining by their labors to receive God's forgiveness. Far from appearing as hard and intolerable, this prison seemed rather to the Saint to be the model of monastic life: "A soul that has lost its one-time confidence and abandoned its hope of dispassion, that has broken the seal of chastity, that has squandered the treasury of divine graces, that has become a stranger to divine consolation, that has rejected the Lord's command ... and that is wounded and pierced by sorrow as it remembers all this, will not only take on the labors mentioned above with all eagerness, but will even decide devoutly to kill itself with penitential works. It will do so if there is in it only the tiniest spark of love or of fear of the Lord."

When the Saint had sojourned these forty years in the desert, he was charged by God, like a second Moses, to be at the head of this new Israel by becoming abbot of the monastery at the foot of the holy mountain (c. 650). It is recounted that, on the day of his enthronement, six hundred pilgrims were present, and when they were all seated for the meal, the great prophet Moses himself, dressed in a white tunic, could be seen coming and going, giving orders with authority to the cooks, the cellarers, the stewards and the other helpers.

Having penetrated into the mystical darkness of contemplation, this new Moses, having been initiated into the secrets of the spiritual Law, and coming back down the mountain impassible, his face transfigured by divine grace, was able to become for all the shepherd, the physician and the spiritual

master. Carrying within him the Book written by God, he did not have need of other books to teach his monks the science of the sciences and the art of arts.

Orthodox Commemoration Of The Sunday Of Saint John Climacus

The feast day of Saint John Climacus is March 30, however, due to the popularity of the Saint and the practice of not having weekday Divine Liturgies during Great Lent, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Saint on the Fourth Sunday of Lent. As a Sunday of Great Lent, the commemoration is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, which is preceded by a Matins (Orthros) service. A Great Vespers is conducted on Saturday evening.

Scripture readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent are the following: At the Orthros (Matins): The prescribed weekly Gospel reading. At the Divine Liturgy: Hebrews 6:13-20; Mark 9:17-31.

Selected sayings from The Ladder of Divine Ascent

Step 5 - On Penitence

Repentance is the renewal of baptism. It is a contract with God for a second life. Repentance goes shopping for humility and continually distrusts bodily comfort. Repentance is critical awareness and a sure watch over oneself. . . . Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience.

Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. . . . A fresh, warm wound is easier to heal than those that are old, neglected, and festering, and that need extensive treatment, surgery, bandaging, and cauterization.

Step 8 - On Tranquility and Meekness

Freedom from anger is an endless wish for dishonor, whereas among the vainglorious there is a limitless thirst for praise.

Meekness is an immovable state of soul which remains unaffected by whether or not it is spoken well of, whether or not it is honored or praised.

The first step toward freedom from anger is to keep the lips silent when the heart is agitated; the next, to keep thoughts silent when the soul is upset; the last, to be totally calm when unclean winds are blowing.

If it is true that the Holy Spirit is peace of soul . . . then there is no greater obstacle to the presence of the Spirit in us than anger.

And this is how anger replies: "I come from many sources and I have more than one father. My mothers are vainglory, love of money, greed, and lust. My father is named conceit

Step 10 - On Slander

Do not regard the feelings of a person who slanders his neighbor, but rather say to him: "Stop, brother! I do worse things every day, so how can I criticize him?" You accomplish two things when you say this. You heal yourself and you heal your neighbor with the one bandage. To pass judgment on another is to usurp shamelessly a prerogative of God. To condemn is the ruin of one's soul.

A grape picker chooses to eat ripe grapes and does not pluck what is unripe. A charitable and sensible mind takes careful note of the virtues it observes in another, while the fool goes looking for faults and defects. . . . Do not condemn.



Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

From the Saints & Teachers

Hebrews 6:13–20 (ACCS He): 6:13–20 The Unchangeable Character of God’s Purpose He Swore by Himself. St John Chrysostom: Do you see that God regards not his own dignity, but more so how he may persuade people, even though God bears with having unworthy things said of himself. His wish is to impart full assurance. In the case of Abraham, indeed, the apostle shows that the whole promise was of God, not of [Abraham’s] patient endurance, since God was even willing to add an oath—for it was by him by whom men swear that God also “swore,” that is “by himself.” People swear by one greater. God swore not by one greater, for there was none greater, yet he did it. It is not the same thing for man to swear by himself as for God, for man is not the final authority over himself. You see then that this is said no more for Abraham than for ourselves: “that we who have fled for refuge,” he says, “might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.” Here too again, “having patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” ...

He did not say, “when he swore.” One shows the seriousness of an oath by speaking of swearing by one greater. But since the race of humanity is hard of belief, he condescends to communicate on our level. So then for our sake he [so to speak] swears, even though it be unworthy of him that he should not be believed. So also in this sense the apostle made that other statement, “He learned obedience through what he suffered,” because people think going through experience to be more worthy of reliance. **On the Epistle to the Hebrews 11.2**

Mark 9:24 (ACCS Mk (Rev)): 9:24 I Believe; Help My Unbelief Emergent Faith Seeking Maturity. St Augustine: In saying, “When the Son of Man shall come, shall he find faith upon the earth?” our Lord spoke of that faith which is fully matured, which is so seldom found on earth. The church’s faith is full, for who would come here if there were no fullness of faith? And whose faith when fully matured would not move mountains? Look at the apostles themselves, who would not have left all they had, trodden under foot this world’s hope, and followed the Lord, if they had not had proportionally great faith. And yet if they had already experienced a completely matured faith, they would have not said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” Rather we find here an emerging faith, which is not yet full faith, in that father who when he had presented to the Lord his son to be cured of an evil spirit and was asked whether he believed, answered, “Lord, I believe, help me in my unbelief.” “Lord,” says he, “I believe.” “I believe”: therefore there was faith; but “help me in my unbelief”: therefore there was not full faith. **Sermons on New Testament Lessons 65.**