

March 14, 2021
Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast/St. John Climacus



SAINT GEORGE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH
Fighting the Good Fight with Faith

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever! ~ Slava Isusu Christu! Slava Na Viki!

Propers for this Sunday: Resurrectional Tone 8: pg. 1, First Sunday of Lent: pp. 226 – 227
Typica: pp. 16-17, Beatitudes: pp. 23-24, St. Basil melodies: pg. 96

Divine Services for the Week:

SUN., MAR. 14 **FOURTH SUNDAY of the GREAT FAST, St. John Climacus**
8:30 A.M. **DIVINE LITURGY of St. Basil**
+ Gordon Jn Baptiste, requested by Sister Mary Virginia

(At St. Mary: Wednesday, March 17, 6:00 P.M., Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts)

FRI., MAR. 19 **FIFTH FRIDAY OF LENT**
6:00 P.M. **LITURGY of the PRE-SANCTIFIED GIFTS**
Panachida for + Fr. Theodore Koufos, requested by Fr. Elias

(At St. Mary: Saturday, March 20, 9:00 A.M., Akathist Hymn for Akathistos Saturday)

SUN., MAR. 21 **FIFTH SUNDAY of the GREAT FAST, St. Mary of Egypt**
8:30 A.M. **DIVINE LITURGY of St. Basil**
+ Gordon Jn Baptiste, requested by Liz Guy

*Having suffered the passion for us, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.
Preterpivjy za nas strasti, Isuse Christe, Syne Bozij, pomiluj nas.*

The Power of Prayer and Fasting – The Lord himself consecrated his baptism by a forty-day fast and taught us that the more violent devils cannot be overcome except by prayer and fasting. *(St. Jerome)*

Happy Birthday Greetings This Week:

None for the Week

Wedding Anniversaries this Week:

None for the week

Please Pray For Our Sick and Shut-ins

HOME – Eileen Batcha, Rebecca Dickun, Marianne Dove, Jean Herdt, Rebecca Hutcheon, Kevin Joray, Mary Ann Jugan, Neil Jugan, Mary Salamon, John Simunick

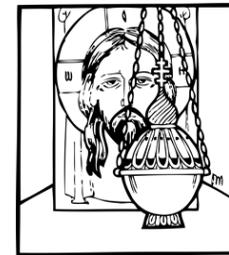
Hunter's Care Home (1916 Main St, Aliquippa, PA 15001) – Mary Poiarkoff

Beaver Elder Care (616 Golf Course Road, Aliquippa, PA 15001) – Josephine Maruhnich

Epistle Readers – March 14: Joanne Futato – March 21: JoAnn Hersh

Ushers – Stand in as needed

Troica Holders –March 14: R. Dzumba – March 21: F. Hersh



THIS WEEK'S SANCTUARY LAMP

March 14 - 20, 2021

Burns before the real presence of our Lord for:

Kevin Smith

(Health and God's blessings)

Offered By:

Mary Salamon



Prayer of Saint Ephraim *To be prayed each day of the Great Fast*

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. *(Prostration)*

Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. *(Prostration)*

Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen. *(Prostration)*

March ECF Reflection: Reverence in Receiving the Holy Eucharist

As we continue our reflections on the theme of the Holy Eucharist, we offer you the words of some of the Holy Fathers on how we should approach this great mystery:

St Basil in preparing himself for the reception of the Eucharist prayed:

... Accept, then, even me, O Lord, Lover of mankind, as you did accept the sinful woman, the thief, the publican, and the prodigal; and take away the heavy burden of my sins, you took away the sin of the world, and healed the infirmities of humankind, Who called the weary and heavy-laden unto yourself and gave them rest, Who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Do cleanse me from all defilement of flesh and spirit, and teach me to achieve holiness in fear of you; that with the pure testimony of my conscience, receiving a portion of your Holy Things, I may be united unto your Holy Body and Blood, and have you living and abiding in me with the Father and your Holy Spirit.

Yes, O Lord Jesus Christ my God, let not the communion of your immaculate and life-giving Mysteries be unto me for judgment, neither unto infirmity of soul and body because of my partaking of them unworthily; but grant me until my last breath to receive without condemnation the portion of your Holy Things, unto communion with the Holy Spirit, as a provision for life eternal, for an acceptable defense at your dread judgment seat; so that I also, with all your elect, may become a partaker of your incorruptible blessings, which you have prepared for those who love you, O Lord, in whom you are glorified unto the ages. Amen.

St. Hippolytus, The Apostolic Tradition, 215 AD:

The Body of Christ is meant to be eaten by the faithful, not to be treated with irreverence.

St. John of Damascus:

Wherefore with all fear and a pure conscience and certain faith let us draw near and it will assuredly be to us as we believe, doubting nothing. Let us pay homage to it in all purity both of soul and body: for it is twofold. Let us draw near to it with an ardent desire, and with our hands held in the form of the cross let us receive the body of the Crucified One: and let us apply our eyes and lips and brows and partake of the divine coal, in order that the fire of the longing, that is in us, with the additional heat derived from the coal may utterly consume our sins and illumine our hearts, and that we may be inflamed and deified by the participation in the divine fire.

St. Justin Martyr, First Apology:

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."

In conclusion, let us ever be mindful of whom we are approaching and show in our bodies the reverence and awe we feel in our mind and spirit.

A Note from Father Geoff

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Two and a half years ago, I had the honor of leading a pilgrimage to the Monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai in the Sinai Desert in Egypt. At 2:00 in the morning, we began our ascent up the "God-trodden" mountain, where Moses had received the Ten Commandments, so that at sunrise we would be at the summit, and we could avoid the unbearable desert heat of the day.

Today, we commemorate St. John "of the Ladder" (or *Climacus*), who lived on and around Mt. Sinai in the 6th and 7th centuries. He was a monk, having been tonsured at the top of the mountain, and eventually served as the Abbot of St. Catherine's Monastery which sits at its base.

With his life centered on this mountain, it's no wonder that St. John used "climbing" as his overarching metaphor for the Christian life. His book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, was written for monks, striving for perfection in the Christian life.

But the metaphor of a ladder was not original to him. In the Book of Genesis, the Patriarch Jacob has a dream. *"And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood above it and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac..."* (Gen. 28.12-13)

Many saints likened the Mother of God to the Ladder. St. Bernard of Clairvaux called Mary "the ladder of sinners" and St. Maximilian Kolbe called her the "ladder to heaven." Why? Because it is her willingness to bear the Word of God that gave Jesus Christ his human nature, thus *himself* becoming the ladder between earthly things and divine things; the creature linked inseparably to the Creator.

As we continue our Lenten journey, this image of a ladder can be a useful one. We want to "ascend" to holiness of life. We climb to root out sinfulness that weighs us down. But we do so knowing that our *ascent* has already been made possible by his *descent*. He became one of us, that we might be made like him. St. Cyril of Alexandria said that "he came down into our condition solely in order to lead us to his own divine state."

The poet Harry Loper wrote these words that I would offer you today for your consideration:

*Come, let us ascend! All may climb it who will;
for the angels of Jacob are guarding it still:
and remember, each step that by faith we pass o'er,
some prophet or martyr has trod it before.
Alleluia! to Jesus who died on the tree
and has raised up a ladder of mercy for me!*

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Geoff

Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast

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!"



On this Sunday Our Lord says to the father: "Bring him to me".

One of the great secrets of life is to be found in these few words...Bring him to me! When we have a sickness or a problem, we as followers of Christ always have someone to whom we can go. We recall the words of Our Lord: "Come to Me all you who are tired from carrying your heavy burdens and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). How many cries for help we hear every day! If we try to help alone, we are helpless. But if we believe in Christ, it is our mission to bring them to the true Helper, the Divine Physician of our souls and bodies. As parents, friends, employers, fellow workers, we can be Our Lord's helpers. But before we can bring others to Christ, we must bring ourselves to Him. We must let Our Lord strengthen our faith. We must let him break the power of sin in our lives and set us free.

Our Lord performed two miracles today. He not only healed the epileptic boy; He also increased the father's faith. From saying: "If you can do anything", the desperate father reached the point where he would say: "I believe!" His one sentence prayer; "I believe; help my unbelief!" showed that he did not possess complete and absolute faith. He expressed and acted on the faith he had, but he did not hide his doubt. He was honest with Christ. No person believes perfectly. But the important thing is whether we let ourselves be controlled by the faith by the faith we have or by our doubts. Miracles happen not because of perfect faith, but rather of imperfect faith in the perfect Christ.

Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast Reflection

In the Epistle appointed for this Sunday, we learn about the "oath" which God has made with us. What is an oath? Saint Paul tells us in the epistle that it is a "promise," a "guarantee," a "sure and firm anchor of the soul," the "final settlement" of disagreements. When two people swear an oath, they are promising to be of one mind regarding the thing promised. The oath is the outward sign of the interior union of the two parties. In the case of Jesus, the oath and promise that he makes with us is that he will take us with him beyond the "veil," and make us partakers of the divine nature. In other words, Jesus promises us that He will give us His life. Today the Lord swears an oath to us that if we willingly die to our old selves through "prayer and fasting" and promise to give ourselves to him, then the demons of our former life will be cast out, that our sins will be washed away, and that we will rise with him in His resurrection on the third day. We have hope then, having promised our life to the Lord, that when the day of Pascha arrives, we who have died with him will receive a new life in him

From the Ladder of Divine Ascent

"Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly the angel who guards you will honor your patience. While a wound is still fresh and warm it is easy to heal, but old, neglected and festering ones are hard to cure, and require for their care much treatment, cutting, plastering and cauterization. Many from long neglect become incurable. But with God all things are possible [Matthew 19:26]." "The first stage of this tranquility consists in silencing the lips when the heart is excited. The second, in silencing the mind when the soul is still excited. The goal is a perfect peacefulness even in the middle of the raging storm."



+ St. John Climacus

Have you attended the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts during this Fast?

Then you noticed how the first half of this service is a Lenten vespers. The second half is a Communion service modeled in part on the Divine Liturgy... with one essential difference. After the usual litanies there is a Great Entrance. In this Entrance there are no gifts of bread and wine carried to the holy table. Instead it is the Gifts sanctified last Sunday which are carried and we sing: "Behold, the completed mystical sacrifice in procession!" People bow and prostrate before the Eucharist as the procession enters the holy place. The service continues with the litany before the Lord's Prayer. The entire heart of the Divine Liturgy is skipped – the Creed, the anaphora, the offering and consecration of the Gifts – because the Gifts we receive at this service are "pre-sanctified." The rest of the service follows much of the usual form of the Liturgy. When we find ourselves tired by Lenten fasting we should remember that Christ is there in the Pre-sanctified Gifts to refresh us spiritually and renew our commitment to Him through the Great Fast.

I believe; help my unbelief!



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E.C.F. coordinator: Jo Ann Hersh

Facilities Supervisor: John Poiarkoff

Holy Mystery of Reconciliation Before and after Liturgies
 Holy Mysteries of Initiation Contact the church office
 Holy Mystery of Anointing Ask prior to surgery or serious illness
 Holy Mystery of Marriage Contact the church office eight months prior to wedding
 Religious Education Classes September through May, following Sunday Divine Liturgy
 St. George Ladies' Guild & Men's Club Everyone welcome to participate

"Forgetting offenses is a sign of sincere repentance. If you keep the memory of them, you may believe you have repented but you are like someone running in his sleep."

- St. John Climacus

