

• FROM THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT of St. John:

Fire and water are incompatible; and so is judging others in one who wants to repent. If you see someone falling into sin at the very moment of his death, even then do not judge him, because the Divine judgment is hidden from men. Some have fallen openly into great sins, but they have done greater good deeds in secret; so their critics were tricked, getting smoke instead of the sun.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the concerted effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (Mt.10: 12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of the present darkness ... the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places ..." (Eph 6:12). Saint John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt.24:13).

• GLIMPSES OF THE RESURRECTION

The Resurrection of Christ is the restoration of our human nature. Such things God gives freely, for just as He forms us without us willing it, so He forms us anew though we have contributed nothing to it. On the other hand, the Kingdom and vision of God and union with Christ are privileges which depend on willingness. They are thus possible only for those who have been willing to receive them and have loved them and longed for them. For such it is fitting that they should enjoy the presence of the things for which they longed; for the unwilling it is impossible... Like a blind man he would fall out of this life into that, bereft of every sense and faculty by which it is possible to know and love the Savior and to wish to be united to Him and to be able to achieve it. One need not therefore marvel that while all will live in immortality, it is not all who will live in blessedness. All equally enjoy God's providence for our nature, but it is only those who are devout towards God who enjoy the gifts which adorn their willingness. —*St. Nicholas Cabasilas, The Life in Christ*

ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



April 11, 2021 ~ St. John of the Ladder



• RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION, Tone Three:

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; for the Lord hath shown strength with His arm; He hath trampled down death by death; He hath become the first-born of the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of hades, and hath granted the world great mercy.

• TROPARION OF ST. JOHN, Tone One:

O John, our father, saint of God, thou wast revealed as a citizen of the desert, an angel in a body and worker of miracles. Through fasting, prayer and vigils thou hast received heavenly gifts of grace, and thou healest the sick and the souls of those that turn to thee with faith. Glory to Him who gave thee strength; glory to Him that crowned thee; glory to Him who through thee grants to all men healing.

• KONTAKION OF ST. JOHN, Tone Four:

Truly the Lord has set thee as a fixed star in the firmament of abstinence, giving light to the ends of the earth, O Father John, our teacher.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, April 10: 3:30 PM, Catechism *On Holy Unction*
5 PM, Vigil and Confessions
- Sunday, April 11: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday, April 13: 8 AM, Matins
5 PM, Holy Unction at Sts. Peter and Paul
(confession *required* before participation)
- Wednesday, April 14: 8 AM, Matins
5 PM, Confession
6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy
- Thursday, April 15: 9 AM, Matins with the Great Canon of St.
Andrew of Crete
7 PM, Parish Council Meeting, **Parish Hall**
7 PM, Study of Proverbs with Fr. James via
Zoom
- Friday, April 16: 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Matins with the Akathist Hymn to the
Theotokos
- Saturday, April 17: 3:30 PM, Catechism *On Death and the Funeral*
Services
5 PM, Vigil and Confession
- Sunday, April 18: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy / St. Mary of Egypt

• THE FIFTH WEEK OF GREAT LENT:

The observant Orthodox worshipper will have noticed, looking at the liturgical calendar for this, the fifth week of Lent, that there are additional Church Services to be done. Also, the usual Services will be more lengthy. These extra and longer Services are “designed” to help us intensify our Lenten efforts of prayer, yes. But mostly, they direct our attention, with one last push, to acquire for the newness of God-inspired repentance. After next week the hymns focus on two things: Jesus coming to raise Lazarus, and our Savior’s journey to Jerusalem for the true and everlasting Passover/Pascha/Exodus, which is the destruction of the power of sin and the abolition of death! These Services provide the context for Pascha. If we only attend the Sunday Liturgy (and yes, that IS essential for the Orthodox Christian, one

will notice that there is not much different during Great Lent compared to outside of Lent (yes, we wear purple, but that’s not essential, is it?). The Lenten experience is found in the morning Matins, the Presanctified Liturgy; in the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete of the fifth week (see www.pravmir.com/the-whos-who-of-the-great-canon-of-st-andrew-of-crete/ with the reading of the *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*). The week will culminate on Friday evening at 6 PM, with the magnificent, joyful and very consoling Matins and Akathist lauding the Theotokos, the Living Ark of God, who is our model.

• SLOW AND STEADY:

The County has just lifted some of the covid-related restrictions, and our Archbishop Benjamin has instructed us, in response, to increase our indoor attendance. We are allowed 50% — which would be just over 100. However, after discussing all this with the Parish Council and the Ushers, we have decided to not jump from 40 to 100, but to “nudge up” the number to 70 and see how that goes. Those who prefer to stand outside are of course welcome to do so. We have a fine sound system, and the prayers and hymns are much easier to hear outside, oddly enough, than in church.

—Fr. Lawrence

• PASCHA:

Holy Week and Pascha are only three weeks away. The plan is to hold steady with our indoor attendance numbers at 70 (although we shall have to revisit that eventually). As the church calendar shows, all the usual Services will be celebrated. There will be no Paschal BBQ after the Agape Vespers on Pascha this year. The Parish is of course a family, but it is also an institution, at least for the general public, which means we are required to follow the many and various local food service guidelines now in place—our kitchen is inspected by the county health inspectors once a quarter or so, as are the well, septic and bathrooms. Our Paschal BBQs are extremely well-attended, with lots of non-parish family and visitors. An event here, in the waning days of covid (we hope) this year requires more work than any of those—and they are indeed very few—who do set-up, serving and clean-up are prepared to do. Because of all this, the Parish Council is in agreement with me, that we not host a BBQ. Let’s set our sights on Pentecost.

—Fr. Lawrence