

# **St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley**

**a Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America**

**16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406      [stmichaelvannuys.org](http://stmichaelvannuys.org)**

**His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York**

**and Metropolitan of all North America**

**Archpriest Timothy Baclig, Pastor**

**Rev. Fr. Minas Sarchizian, Assisting Priest**

**Rev. Deacon Andrew Monsue**

**Subdeacon Richard Tamoush**

**Subdeacon Magued Wassef**

**Subdeacon Richard Ajalat, Pastoral Assistant**

**Parish Council Chair - Michael Mitchell**

**Council Vice-Chair - Connie Abdun-Nur Barilla**

**Council Secretary - Eric Nelson**

**Council Treasurer - Kris Thabit**

**Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of No. America (AOCWNA)**

**Chapter President - Charmaine Darmour**

**Church Comptroller - Mary Ann Coury**

**Choir Director - Art Danks**

**Church School Director - Lila Coudsy**

**Youth Director - Cooper Rowe**

**Young Adult Director - Richard Ajalat**

**Faithtree Resources Exec. Director - Michelle Moujaes**

**Project Manager - Michael J. Malouf**

**Stewardship Chair - Richard Tamoush**

**Capital Funds Campaign Chair - Ron Zraick**

**Property Management Chair - Eric Nelson**

**Bookstore Manager - Bobbi Monsue**

**50th Anniversary & Golf Classic Co-Chair - Don Meena [donmeena@sbcglobal.net](mailto:donmeena@sbcglobal.net)**

**Golf Classic Co-Chair - Fred Milkie**

**Webmaster - Dan Raju**

**Coffee Hour Coordinator - Cindy Tamoush**

**Head Usher - Ramez Hage**

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## The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

The Commemoration of St. John Climacus, Author of “The Ladder”  
Martyr Kalliopios of Cilicia; Venerable George, Bishop of Mitylene;  
Repose of Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America

Sunday, April 7, 2019

Tone 4; Eothinon 1

### Apolytikion of the Resurrection (Tone 4)

Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world Great Mercy.

### Apolytikion of St. John Climacus (Tone 8)

The barren wilderness thou didst make fertile with the streams of thy tears; and by thy deep sighing thou hast given fruit through thy struggles a hundredfold. Accordingly, thou hast become a star for the universe, sparkling with miracles. Therefore, O righteous Father John Climacus, intercede with Christ God to save our souls.

### Apolytikion of our Patron the Archangel Michael (Tone 4)

O ye foremost of the heavenly hosts we beseech thee, though we are unworthy, pray that we may be encompassed with a shadow of Thy unearthly glory, preserving us who kneel and cry endlessly: deliver us from oppression since ye are the prince of the Highest Power.

### Kontakion for the Annunciation and Great Lent (Tone 8)

To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: “Hail, O Bride without Bridegroom.”

### Daily Readings

THE EPISTLE (for the Fourth Sunday of Lent)

The Lord will give strength to His people.  
The Lord will bless His people with peace.

## The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (6:13-20)

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by one greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He interposed with an oath. So that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

## THE GOSPEL (for the Fourth Sunday of Lent)

### The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. Mark (9:16-30)

At that time, a man came to Jesus, kneeling down and saying unto him, "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 Thy Disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And Jesus 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 Jesus, 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 Thou canst do anything, have pity on us and help us." And 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!" 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 Jesus had entered the house, His Disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And Jesus 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 Jesus would not have anyone 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 after He is killed, He will rise on the third day."

## The Synaxarion

On April 7 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Martyr Kalliopios of Cilicia; Venerable George, bishop of Mitylene; and Tikhon, patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America.

On this same day, the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, we make remembrance of our godly father, John, the author of The Ladder of Divine Ascent (or Climacus).

### Verses

John, dead in the flesh and also living,  
Liveth eternally, even though appearing dead and without breath.  
Leaving letters, a ladder for the journey upwards,  
He showeth forth his pursuit of the journey upwards.

The celebration of his feast on this day arose from the custom prevalent in the honorable monasteries of starting Great Lent with the reading of his lessons. John describes the method of elevating the soul to God as ascending a ladder. He teaches those who seek salvation how to lay a firm foundation for struggles, how to detect and fight every passion, how to avoid demonic snares, and how to rise from the rudimentary virtues to the heights of Godlike love and humility. John of the Ladder came to Mount Sinai at age 16 and remained there, first as a novice under obedience, then as a recluse, and finally as abbot until his eightieth year. One time, his disciple, Moses, fell asleep under the shade of a large stone. John, in prayer in his cell, saw that his disciple was in danger and prayed to God for him. Later, when Moses returned, he fell on his knees and gave thanks to his spiritual father for saving him from certain death.

He related how, in a dream, he heard John calling him and he jumped up and, at that moment, the stone tumbled. Had he not jumped, the stone would have crushed him. John Climacus died on March 30, 606. Through his intercessions, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

## LITURGICAL CALENDAR

[Note: We are currently in the period of the Great Fast.\*]

### Weekday Lenten Services

Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup> – Great Compline, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> – Liturgy of Pre-sanctified Gifts,\*\* 6 p.m.  
[followed by parish Lenten meal]

Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> – The Akathist Hymn, (“Madeyeh”) 6:30 p.m.

The Fifth Sunday of Lent - Commemorating: St. Mary of Egypt

Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> – Orthros, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy 10 a.m.

\*For more information on fasting or questions, speak with Father Timothy.

\*\* the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy of St. Gregory Dialogist includes Holy Communion. Preparation begins with observing the fast and includes abstinence following light lunch.

Fish, wine and oil are permitted on Palm Sunday (April 21<sup>st</sup>).

Holy Pascha (Easter) is celebrated on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Note: On each of the five Sundays of Great Lent, the prayers of St. Basil the Great are used within the Divine Liturgy. The five Sundays of Lent are among the ten times when the Liturgy of St. Basil is used each year. Others include: January 1st, the Feast of St. Basil, January 6th, Holy Theophany, Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday and Christmas Eve.

The origin of the Liturgy of St. Basil is Antiochian, specifically from Cappadocia where St. Basil was a bishop. It is older than the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, perhaps by two centuries. The Liturgy of St. Basil was known to be the standard weekday liturgy in the Great Church of Constantinople (St. Sophia) up until the 6th century, after which the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom began being commonly celebrated on Sundays.

To follow the service from our red Service Book, you will find the prayers of St. Basil beginning on page 132, replacing the prayers that begin on page 103 in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. In the spiral congregational Service Book the prayers of St. Basil are printed alongside the prayers of St. John Chrysostom.

## OFFERINGS

We welcome back to the church the newly-married Dena Nicola and Dilan Swain for the prayer of their uncrowning. The coffee hour is being hosted in their honor by Barbara & Fred Nicola, Freddy and Paige; assisted by Marilee & Charles Ajalat and grandchildren. May God grant Mr. & Mrs. Dilan Swain many healthy and happy years!

Holy Bread is being offered this morning by Ramona Darmour in memory of her father Habeeb George (+28 March 1967) and her Godson, Farris Abdallah (+21 March, 2011). Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is being offered this morning by the O'Dea family, thanking God for our precious Kiera, Robin & Brian, celebrating their birthdays this month. May God continue to bless and protect them always.

Special heartfelt thanks to you, Father Timothy and to all our dear St. Michael friends for your prayers, care, love and support this past week during Ramez's illness and hospitalization. He spent some rough days but now we are thankful that he is doing much better.

The Post Communion bread was offered and Lenten meal hosted last Wednesday night by: Laila Abughazaleh, Daher & Vera Ababseh, Nabeel & Sharon Abughazaleh, Elias & Rana Azzam, Nick & Mimi Hallak, and Adeeb & Nuha Abughazaleh. [Note: the proceeds of the Lenten meal collection are being used to assist with the 2019 project of the Antiochian Women.]

Special offerings and requests for prayer are being made . . .

for Carolyn Sadd on the occasion of her birthday by her loving family:  
Chrissa Sadd, Carrie & John Khouri and George, Leilah & Daniel Lewin and  
Gabriella. May God continue to bless her with good health and  
a full life for many more years!

by Emile F. Skaff and Don Meena for the speedy recovery  
and continued health of Ron Zraick.

Included in our prayers throughout the month of April are those celebrating their birthday: John Andrews (4/2), Carolyn Sadd (4/2), Mae Theodora Tortolano (4/2), Safwat Ibrahim (4/4), Lisa Gascou (4/6), Mandy Nasr (4/6),

Hanna Yazbek (4/8), Tamara Barney (4/10), Waleed Haddad (4/13), Robin O'Dea (4/14), Averie Abughazaleh (4/15), Muriel Khoury (4/15), Christina Thabit (4/15), Noha Simon (4/16), Nickie Malouf (4/17), Brian O'Dea (4/18), Reed Alexander Nassir (4/18), Anne Hoyt-Mallouk (4/20), Ameen Mittry (4/20), Philip Khoury (4/21), Braden Luke McLinn (4/21), Hanna Mitchell and Olivia Mitchell (4/21), Jocelyn Skaff (4/21), Ronald Joseph Zraick, Jr. (4/21), Kiera O'Dea (4/22), DeAnne Abraham (4/25), John Gantus (4/26), Alana Worotko (4/26), Lila Coudsi, (4/27), Kevin Khouri (4/27), Luca Matarese (4/27), Denise Cruz (4/28), Elizabeth Thabet (4/29), Tanya Rishwain Milkie (4/30); and those celebrating their wedding anniversary: Michelle & Waleed Moujaes (4/17), Cathy & Art Danks (4/18), Araceli & Fred Yazbek (4/18), Andony and Carrie El-Khoury (4/23); Danielle & Damien Contes (4/29). May God grant them all many years!

Included in our prayers for the departed throughout the month of April are:

Thomas Saliba, +April, 1936  
Metre Chala Saleet, +23 April, 1953  
Leila Milkie, April, 1961  
George Thabit I, +April, 1968  
Florence Barkett, +19 April, 1974  
Evelyn Mittry, +16 April, 1979  
Gwen Abraham, +15 April, 1981  
Henry Abraham, +17 April, 1981  
Lindsey Reinhart, +25 April, 1981  
Charlotte Black, +26 April, 1981  
Bader S. Haddad, +4 April, 1984  
Renee Kabbez, +2 April, 1987  
Rudy George +15 April, 1995  
Lowen Thabet, +18 April, 1999  
Melvina Chala, +6 April, 2000  
Marie Davis, +28 April, 2000  
Nazira Rihbany, +11 April, 2001  
Fouad Zabaneh, +11 April, 2001  
William Haddad, +15 April, 1988  
Karoleen Abughazaleh +21 Apr. 1991  
Frieda Nichols, +21 April, 1992

Cathrin Fayard, +26 April, 2003  
Marie Yazbek, +1 April, 2005  
Elia Ayoub, +4 April, 2004  
Constantine Stath, +19 April, 2004  
Fedelis Abodeely, +21 April, 2006  
Lucas James Scott, +13 April, 2007  
Joseph Dabbour, +15 April, 2007  
Hamid Sweis, +15 April, 2008  
Sarah Sadd, +15 April, 2008  
Carolyn Gearheart, +12 April, 2009  
James N. Goson, +3 April, 2010  
Theodore Zogob, +5 April 2010  
Leila Malouf, +17 April 2010  
Mike Malouf, +25 April, 2012  
Youssef Ghazal, +2 April, 2013  
Frieda Malouf, +21 April, 2013  
Eddie Tamoush, +11 April 2014  
George Djarrah, +16 April, 2014  
Mary Lipyaniak, +16 April, 2014  
Yvonne Latif, +24 April 2014  
James Tintocalis, +20 April 2014

Roullah Najjar, +8 April, 1994  
Jamilie Habib, +13 April, 1995  
Rudy George, +15 April, 1995  
Velma Akoury, +3 April, 1998  
Bob Chambers, +3 April, 1999  
Joseph Betras, +4 April, 1999

Ron Stapleton, +17 April, 2015  
Salwa Dahdah, +6 April, 2015  
Matthew Tambouras +23 Apr. 2016  
Harriet Lihs +12 April, 2017  
Anya Khachatourian +23 Apr. 2017  
Jeff Gorup +9 April, 2018

#### Memory Eternal!

Please phone the Church Office if there are any omissions or corrections to the above listing of names. Please bear in mind that some have chosen not to be included in our announcement. Please pardon any errors.

#### A Note Regarding Holy Communion

Since we understand Communion to mean that we have all things in common, sharing an identical Faith, *only* those who are members of the Orthodox Church and who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and recent Confession may participate in Holy Communion. (We invite all, however, to partake of the blessed bread which is distributed at the dismissal.) Please see the Pastor for inquiries on how to become a member.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Events (see the foyer bulletin board for more information)

So. California Antiochian Women's 40th Annual Diocesan Spring Retreat  
Camp St. Nicholas (Frazier Park, CA); April 12-14, 2019  
Speaker: V. Rev. George Ajalat; Topic: "Holy Week:  
The Bride Receives Her Bridegroom;" on-line registration at:  
[antiochianladiocese.org](http://antiochianladiocese.org) (scholarships also available)

50th Anniversary St. Michael Golf Classic - Monday, May 13, 2019  
Woodland Hills Country Club; 12 noon "tee-off;" dinner, 6 p.m.  
IOCC "Share the Love" Valentine Dinner, Sunday, May 19, 2019  
St. Luke Church (Garden Grove) at 5 p.m., \$50/person  
Go to: [iocc.org/sharethelove](http://iocc.org/sharethelove)

#### Please Do Not Enter the Construction Site

Please stay clear and keep all children away from the construction site on our property to avoid any accident or unintended mishap. The newly paved parking areas is now available for your convenience. However, please observe a 5 mph speed limit and be cautious in using the unmarked double lane driveway in front of the building. Thank you for your patience and continued cooperation.

**Note to Coffee Hour hosts: coffee and paper goods will be provided each week.**

**Holy Bread Offering List**

Apr 14 - Ron & Kathy Zraick, Farid Najjar  
and the Safady family  
Apr 21 - Palm Sunday  
Apr 28 - Holy Pascha  
May 05 - open  
May 12 - open

**Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar**

Apr 14 - Ron & Kathy Zraick  
Apr 21 - Palm Sunday Bake Sale  
Apr 28 - Paschal Breakfast  
May 05 - The Castillo family  
May 12 - open

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; [pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org](mailto:pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org)) to sign-up to offer Holy Bread and Cindy Tamoush at: (818-345-4363; [famtam5@socal.rr.com](mailto:famtam5@socal.rr.com)) to sign-up for the Coffee Hour.

Antiochian Archdiocese Convention - July 21-28, 2019

Host: St. Nicholas Church; Grand Rapids, Michigan

Go to: [AC2019gr.org](http://AC2019gr.org) to register for your hotel room, view the Convention schedule and download forms for the ad book and registration. There are two (2) Convention hotels: 1) the Amway Grand Plaza (\$149/night) with free self-parking and WiFi; 2) the JW Marriott (\$184/night), adjacent to the Convention hotel.

67th Annual Diocesan Parish Life Conference

Host: St. Anthony Church; San Diego, California, July 3-7, 2019

Go to: [antiochianevents.com/la.html](http://antiochianevents.com/la.html) to register for your hotel room (\$169/night) at the Sheraton Harbor Island and Marina.

**Paschal Breakfast**

The Feast of the Resurrection (Holy Pascha/Easter) is April 28th and only a few weeks away. Like previous years, we will be celebrating the Feast with a "pot luck" Paschal "Agape" Breakfast following the midnight Liturgy in the early morning. Last year's breakfast was a tremendous success and we are again depending upon your generous offerings as we celebrate the Feast. All dishes and desserts should be brought to the church kitchen prior to the start of the late evening service that begins at 11:30 p.m. Please consider one of the following categories and e-mail me at [kthabit66@hotmail.com](mailto:kthabit66@hotmail.com) with the item(s) that you will be bringing.

Please choose from the following: a) main dish (meat, poultry, fish), b) kid friendly meal, c) side dish (salad, veggies, relish dish, fruit, etc.), d) desserts or pastries, e) beverages (water, coffee, tea, juice, soft drinks), f) paper plates, cups, etc. Some of you may also consider assisting us with the buffet set-up and kitchen clean up. Please inform me of your availability. This will save in helping us to hire a clean-up crew. God bless you and grant you and your family a blessed Lent and Pascha! [Kris Thabit].

### Food for the Hungry People Drive

You may have received the Food for the Hungry People mailing from Robin Nicholas. Your contribution may be made through our parish by writing your check to "St. Michael Church", earmarked: "FFHP" and our parish collection will be sent in at the end of Great Lent. Thank you for your support of our annual Lenten charity campaign.

### Attention Parents:

Come and learn the meaning of our offerings and prayers at the Liturgy: Father Timothy will be teaching the children (and any adult interested in having an "up-close" lesson) about the preparation of the Holy Bread offering just before the Lazarus Saturday Liturgy on Saturday, April 20, 2019, beginning at 10 a.m. The prayers for the preparation of the offering at the "table of the offering," called the Prothesis [pro-THEE-sus] table, will take place outside the altar for all to see with explanations of the prayers and actions by the priest. A brunch will follow Liturgy and the children will be taught about Palm Sunday and Holy Week and learn how to weave palm crosses. It will be a beautiful way to begin Holy Week as we celebrate Christ's entrance into the Holy City of Jerusalem.

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# LITURGICAL CALENDAR

NOTE: *Confessions will be heard before and/or after the services, or by appointment during the week. It would be most appropriate for confessions to be completed by Holy Wednesday (April 24<sup>th</sup>) just prior to the Sacrament of Holy Unction and the Holy Thursday morning Liturgy.*

## THE SERVICES OF GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

### Palm Sunday Evening – April 21<sup>st</sup>

Bridegroom Orthros and Procession, 6:30 p.m.

### Great and Holy Monday – April 22<sup>nd</sup>

Bridegroom Orthros and Confessions, 6:30 p.m.

### Great and Holy Tuesday – April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Bridegroom Orthros and Confessions, 6:30 p.m.

### Great and Holy Wednesday – April 24<sup>th</sup>

Confessions

The Sacrament of Holy Unction, 6:30 p.m.

### Great and Holy Thursday – April 25<sup>th</sup>

Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil, 10 a.m.

Orthros of the Twelve Passion Gospels, 6:30 p.m.

### Great and Holy Friday – April 26<sup>th</sup>

Great Vespers of the Descent from the Cross, 3 p.m.

Orthros of the Lamentations and Procession, 6:30 p.m.

### Great and Holy Saturday – April 27<sup>th</sup>

Service of the Preparing of the Holy Gifts (Proskomedia), 8:30 a.m.

Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, 9 a.m.

## SERVICES OF THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION – HOLY PASCHA

The “Rush Procession” Orthros, 11:30 p.m.

The Divine Liturgy and “Agape Breakfast”

### Holy Pascha – April 28<sup>th</sup>

The Paschal Vespers of Love (Agape), 11 a.m.

## Holy Friday Arabic Choir

We encourage your participation in the Arabic Choir on Holy Friday Lamentations Service (April 26) and to attend the rehearsal sessions led by our Choir Director, Art Danks, on Wednesday, April 24 and again on Friday, April 26 at 5:30 p.m. in classrooms 3 and 4.

## Holy Friday Teen Vigil - April 26

Our teens will again be participating in our Annual Vigil that will take place on Holy Friday, April 26, following the Holy Friday Lamentations service. It will include a light dinner, preparing the church for Pascha, cutting bay leaves and a group discussion with Father Timothy. Please speak with Cooper Rowe, Youth Director for more information.

## St. Michael 50th Anniversary Golf Classic - May 13

The St. Michael Golf Classic is our largest annual fundraiser and we need your help for its success. This year the Golf Classic is celebrating our parish's 50th Anniversary and will again take place at the Woodland Hills Country Club. The evening will be filled with fun and fellowship with friends. A barbecue dinner will be followed with raffles, auctions and awards for our golfers. How can you help?

1) consider a donation toward our Golf Ball Raffle. Each golf ball recipient will receive a prize equivalent to its purchase price of \$50. One of the golf balls will reward the winner a free trip Grand Prize! Donations of gift cards and cash are being received for the Golf Ball Raffle. Consider giving your unused or newly purchased Gift Cards or your donation to DeAnne Abraham at: <[dmarieabe@aol.com](mailto:dmarieabe@aol.com)> or 818-389-0065; 2) consider a donation toward our Chinese Auction Baskets. In years past, these baskets have consisted of a Money Tree, Disney gift items, including tickets to Disneyland, a wine basket, picnic basket, golf basket, sports basket, cooking basket, restaurant basket, religious basket, Starbucks basket, Trader Joe basket, and many others. Each basket must be at least \$75 in value with an itemized list of its contents. Please let Sean O'Dea know if you are able to make a donation by contacting him at: <[guinnessodea@gmail.com](mailto:guinnessodea@gmail.com)> or 818-642-7278.

**Pastor's Sermon**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent**  
By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig  
April 7, 2019

If Great Lent is to become a means of spiritual transformation before the time of the forty days ends we must ask ourselves some serious questions if we have not yet made a commitment to allowing the Lenten season to become a time of renewal for us as Orthodox Christians. One important question is: What is God's greatest challenge to me. Another is: What am I willing to reasonably do? Do I truly desire to do something?

Often our response to these questions is like the disciples in today's Gospel, who without prayer and fasting were weak in spiritual power. However, it would help us to think of fasting in terms of what not only pertains to food—what we eat, but also our time management, or the use of our talents and skills, as well as our resources.

Each and every day, you and I are challenged to take control of the passions of our life: those things that become the stumbling blocks and distractions in our quest for God's Kingdom. It could be an obsession, an addiction, or compulsive behavior. We are unable to controlling any of our passions without first accepting responsibility for our failings and our weaknesses. This cannot be done with a nonchalant attitude. After accept responsibility for our failings and weaknesses we must also identify what is a sin; what hinders or even breaks our relationship or communion with Him and with others. That means recognizing that it is wrong and to acknowledge that it must end. In doing so, we must also be determined in doing our best not to do it again and not to be discouraged by our weakness. For some sins it may require more time. For that reason a person may choose to abstain from the Sacrament but not in church attendance.

We learn from behavioral psychology that it takes thirty days for a habit to be broken or for a new habit to be established. Thirty days, however is only a plateau in one's recovery. When we struggle with a vice or any sin, we must make a very conscious and intentional effort of seeking to find God's perspective when we acknowledge that something is wrong. This effort must be prompted and motivated by our love for God. It is a purposeful attempt to seek God's higher objective for our

life and then to commit ourselves to positive action. Any successful recovery involves being aware of the influences of: 1) the people in our lives, 2) the places and environment of our choosing, and 3) the things that we find ourselves dependent upon. Our aim must be: a positive affect with the support of good influences, which may involve our friends and loved ones; to be a good husband or wife, parent, godparent, teacher, employer, model and example.

We each choose whether to be an encouragement or discouragement to others; of support or neglect, a stronghold of faith, or of no faith. This also means that we must be very selective in who we are trusting in sharing our personal thoughts with. Not everyone is a “confidant.” But every person who keeps his or her sanity confesses. It may be a hairdresser, a psychologist, a therapist, a good friend, a teacher, a parent, an employer, a classmate, or a priest! The Sacrament of Confession with a priest in the church, however, is unique. A good Confession in the Holy Sacrament brings “closure” to our resolve with the Prayer of Absolution and is prescribed by the Church for our healing. It is culminated in the Sacrament of Holy Communion: “...for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.”

We find many examples in the Bible of people who knew what they had to do and simply did it. One is of **four men who, while facing obstacles, were determined to bring a paralytic man to the Lord for healing (Luke 5:17-26)**. They took action upon the need of the paralyzed man and helped brought him to the Lord. Another example is Jesus’ encounter with **the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15)**. When Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well, the man who only had excuses, responded with great pessimism: 1) Others go ahead of me, 2) I have no one to help me, and 3) I cannot be healed. Three negatives which only resulted in no results.

Life’s most difficult challenges require bold and courageous steps. **Faith is the spark of hope and love is the energy that moves one to act.** A serious desire or a good intention is never enough to achieve results. When you or I say that I don’t feel motivated, we surrender ourselves to our condition and circumstances. Waiting for something to move us or waiting for someone to do something for us is to concede helplessness. In some cases it is a sign of self-centeredness and unwillingness to accept responsibility. It can also be failure to recognize one’s calling.

God's promise to Abraham (mentioned in today's epistle) was not a promise without Abraham's obedience. In other words, God's promise to Abraham was based upon Abraham's faithfulness. The same could be said about the Holy Virgin Mary who was chosen because of her choice to obey God.

The boy with the evil spirit in today's Gospel lesson was helpless. Reading further, we find that the boy's father was also helpless. Hear his words to Jesus: "...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Can you hear his desperation? To paraphrase the father's cried: "**If you can in fact do something, let me see that you care, and please do something to help us.**" To which Jesus responded: "**If you can?" "Everything is possible for him who believes."**" Now notice what the next words of the boy's father were: "**I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.**" Sincerity is the point where positive action has its best chance. However, being sincere begins with the choice of being humble.

Today's gospel lesson is only the beginning of what was to become the Disciple's greatest challenge. The passage in Mark's Gospel continues: (Jesus) said to (his disciples), "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it." (verses 31b-32) "...they did not understand... and were afraid..." Such was also the case after the crucifixion when the Disciples ran away to hide.

**Fear can be one's greatest enemy. Fear also can become something far greater than the infliction of a disease.** However, we are told that "There is no fear in love" (I John 4:18) and "Perfect love drives out fear". Such love was the supreme sacrifice by our Lord on the Cross. St. John Climacus said, "Fear [appears] if love ever departs, for the man with no fear is either filled with love or is dead in spirit" (p. 287).

### Prayer

O Christ our God, in faith and love we draw near to Thee with grateful hearts for your mercy and the forgiveness of our sins. O Holy Spirit, guide us in the way of salvation that we may overcome our fears by seeing the Cross of Christ our God, and glorify His Holy Resurrection!

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT**

COMMEMORATION OF JOHN CLIMACUS, AUTHOR OF “THE LADDER”  
 MARTYR KALLIOPIOS OF CILICIA; VENERABLE GEORGE, BISHOP OF MITYLENE; REPOSE OF TIKHON,  
 PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ENLIGHTENER OF NORTH AMERICA

**طروبارية القيامة على اللحن الرابع**

إن تلميذاتِ الربِ تعلم من الملائكةِ الكرزَ بالقيامةِ البهجِ، وطرحنِ القضاءِ الجديِ، وخطابِنِ  
 الرسلِ مفترخاتِ وقائلاتِ: سُبِيَ الموتُ وقامَ المسيحُ الإلهُ، مانحاً العالمَ الرحمةَ العظمى

**طروبارية القديس يوحنا السلمي على اللحن الثامن**

بمجاري دموعكِ أمرعت البريةَ غيرَ المثمرةِ، وبالتنهداتِ العميقَةِ أثمرتِ أتعابكِ مائةَ ضعفِ.  
 فصرتَ كوكباً للمسكونةِ متلائناً بالعجبائبِ، يا أبانا البارِ يوحنا، فتشفعْ إلى المسيحِ الإلهِ أنْ  
 يُخلصَ نفوسنا.

**طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع**

أيها المتقدمونَ على الأجنادِ السماوينَ، نتوسلُ إليكمَ نحنُ غيرَ المستحقينَ، حتى آتكمَ  
 بطلباتِكم تكتوفوننا بظلِّ أجنحةِ مجدهِم غيرَ الهيوليِّ، حافظينَ إياناً نحنُ الجاثينَ  
 والصارخينَ بغيرِ فتورِ، أنقذونا من الشدائِدِ، بما آتكمَ رؤساءُ مراتبِ القواتِ العلويةِ.

**قداق آحاد الصوم على اللحن الثامن**

إني أنا عبدكِ يا والدة الإلهِ، أكتب لكِ راياتَ الغلبةِ يا جنديةَ محاميةِ، وأقدم لكِ الشكرَ كمنقذةِ من  
 الشدائِدِ. لكن بما أنَّ لكِ العزةَ التي لا تحاربِ، أعتقيني من صنوفِ الشدائِدِ، حتى أصرخَ إليكِ:  
 افرحي يا عروسَا لا عروسَ لها

**الرسالة**

**الربُ يعطي القوةَ لشعِيهِ، قدموا للربِ يا أبناءَ اللهِ إكراماً ومجدًا  
 فصلٌ من رسالةِ القديس بولس الرسولِ إلى العبرانيين**

يا إخوهُ، إنَّ اللهَ لما وَعَدَ إبراهيمَ أقسمَ بنَفْسِهِ، لأنَّهَ لم يمكنَ أنْ يُقسمَ بما هو أعظمُ مِنهِ،  
 وقالَ: «بَرَكَةً أَبَارِكُكَ وَكثِيرًا أَجْعَلُ نَسْلَكَ». وهكذا احتملَ إبراهيمُ صابراً فنالَ الْوَعْدَ.  
 والناسُ يُقسِّمونَ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَعْظَمُ مِنْهُمْ، والقَسْمُ تَثْبِيتٌ لِأقوالِهِمْ يَنْهِي كُلَّ خِلَافٍ بَيْنَهُمْ.

وكذلك الله، لَمَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يُبَرِّهَنَ لِوَرَثَةِ الْوَعْدِ عَلَى ثَبَاتِ إِرَادَتِهِ، عَزَّزَ قَوْلَهُ بِقَسْمٍ. فَكَانَ لَنَا بِهذِينِ الْأَمْرَيْنِ التَّابِتَيْنِ الَّذِيْنِ يَسْتَحِيلُ أَنْ يَكْذِبَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمَا، مَا يُعَزِّزُنَا كُلَّ التَّعْزِيَةِ، نَحْنُ الَّذِيْنَ النَّجَانَا إِلَى التَّمَسُّكِ بِالرَّجَاءِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَنَا وَهَذَا الرَّجَاءُ هُوَ لِنُفُوسِنَا مِرْسَاهُ أَمِيَّةً مِتَّيَّنَةً تَدْخُلُ إِلَى دَاخِلِ الْحِجَابِ، إِلَى حِيثُ دَخَلَ يَسْوَعُ مِنْ أَجْلِنَا، سَابِقًا لَنَا، وَصَارَ رَئِيسَ كَهْنَةِ إِلَى الأَبَدِ عَلَى رُتْبَةِ مَلِكِيَّصَادَقَ.

## الإنجيل

### فصل من بشارة القديس مرقص

في ذلك الزمان، دنا من يسوع إنسان وسجد له وقال: "يا مُعلِّم، حُنْتُ إِلَيْكَ بَابْنِي، لَأَنَّ فِيهِ رُؤْحًا نَحِسًا يَجْعَلُهُ أَبَكَّ، وَأَيْنَمَا أَمْسَكَ بِهِ يَصْرَعُهُ، فَيُزِيدُ الصَّبَّيُّ وَيَصْرُفُ بِأَسْنَانِهِ وَيَتَشَنَّجُ. وَطَلَبَتُ مِنْ تَلَامِيذِكَ أَنْ يَطْرُدُوهُ، فَلَمْ يَقْدِرُوا". فأجابهم: «أَيُّهَا الْجِيلُ غَيْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِ، إِلَى مَتَى أَبَقَّ مَعَكُمْ، وَإِلَى مَتَى أَحْتَمَّكُمْ؟ قَدَّمُوا الصَّبَّيَّ إِلَيَّ!» فَقَدَّمُوهُ إِلَيْهِ فَلَمَّا رَأَهُ الرُّوحُ النَّجِسُ، صَرَّعَ الصَّبَّيَّ فَوْقَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ يَتَلَوَّيْ وَيُزِيدُ. فَسَأَلَ يَسْوَعُ وَالْأَدَمُ الْمُصَبَّبِيَّ: «مَتَى بَدَا يُصِيبُهُ هَذَا؟» قال: «مِنْ أَيَّامِ طُفُولَتِهِ، وَكَثِيرًا مَا رَمَاهُ الرُّوحُ النَّجِسُ فِي النَّارِ أَوْ فِي الْمَاءِ لِيُقْتَلُهُ. فَإِذَا كُنْتَ قَادِرًا عَلَى شَيْءٍ فَاشْفَقْ عَلَيْنَا وَسَاعِدْنَا». فقال له يَسْوَعُ: «إِذَا كُنْتَ قَادِرًا أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ، فَكُلْ شَيْءٍ مُمْكِنٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ». فَصَاحَ الْوَالَدُ فِي الْحَالِ: «عِنْدِي إِيمَانٌ! سَاعَدْنِي حَتَّى يَزِيدَ». وَرَأَى يَسْوَعُ أَنَّ النَّاسَ يَتَجَمَّعُونَ، فَانْتَهَرَ الرُّوحُ النَّجِسُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: «أَيُّهَا الرُّوحُ الْأَصْمَمُ الْأَخْرَسُ! أَنَا أَمْرُكَ، أَخْرُجُ مِنْ الصَّبَّيِّ وَلَا تَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِ!» فَصَرَّخَ وَصَرَّعَهُ صَرَعَةً قَوِيَّةً وَخَرَجَ مِنْهُ فَصَارَ الصَّبَّيُّ كَالْمَيْتِ، حَتَّى قَالَ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّهُ مَاتَ. فَلَأَخْذَهُ يَسْوَعُ بِيَدِهِ وَأَنْهَضَهُ فَقامَ. وَلَمَّا دَخَلَ الْبَيْتَ، سَأَلَهُ تَلَامِيذُهُ عَلَى اِنْفِرَادِهِ: «لِمَاذَا عَجِزْنَا نَحْنُ أَنْ نَطْرُدَ الرُّوحَ النَّجِسَ؟» فأجابهم: «هَذَا الْجِنْسُ لَا يُطْرَدُ إِلَّا بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالصُّومِ. وَخَرَجُوا مِنْ هُنَاكَ وَمَرُّوا بِالْجَلِيلِ. وَكَانَ يَسْوَعُ لَا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَعْلَمَ بِهِ أَحَدٌ. وَكَانَ يَعْلَمُ تَلَامِيذهِ فَيَقُولُ لَهُمْ: "إِنَّ ابْنَ الْبَشَرِ سَيَسْلِمُ إِلَى أَيْدِي النَّاسِ فَيَقْتُلُونَهُ وَبَعْدَ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ يَقُولُ".

### ملاحظة بخصوص تناول القربان المقدس

إن مفهومنا لتناول القربان يعني عمومية المشاركة فيه لذوى العقيدة الواحدة، الا إن المشاركة في سر القربان المقدس هنا مقتصرة فقط على أعضاء الكنيسة الارثوذكسية والذين يحضرون أنفسهم بالصلوة والصوم والاعتراف منذ فترة قريبة (وعلى كل حال، فإننا ندعو الجميع للمشاركة في الخبز المقدس الذى يوزع عند انتهاء مراسيم القدس). وجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً في الكنيسة الارثوذكسية.