

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

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The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

The Commemoration of St. John Climacus,

Author of “The Ladder”

Abbot Nikitas the Confessor of Medikion; Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer; New-martyr Paul the Russian

Sunday, April 03, 2022

Tone 8; Eothinon 8

Apolytikion of the Resurrection (Tone 8)

From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

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 03 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Venerable Nikitas the Confessor, Abbot of Medikion; Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer; and New-martyr Paul the Russian.

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 rudimental 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 Service

Monday, April 4th - Great Compline, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 6th - Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, 6 p.m.

Friday, April 8th - The Akathist Hymn, ("Madeyeh") 6:30 p.m.

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

Sunday, April 10th - Orthros, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy 10 a.m.

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

Fish, wine and oil are permitted on Palm Sunday (April 17th).

Holy Pascha (Easter) is celebrated on April 24th.

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

Holy Bread is being offered on the occasion of the 90th birthday of Theodora Mae Skaff Tortolano, St. Michael Choir Founding Member, by her children: Tony and Cristina, her grandchildren, Ryan and Erica, and great-granddaughter, Emely, as well as all of her nieces, nephews and their families. May God grant her many years of health and happiness.

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

for sweet Nicole Webster by her family, on the occasion of her birthday.
May God grant Nicole and her husband Robert,
long, healthy happy and joyful lives!

for the speedy recovery and continued health of Katie Nassief

for Juliana Turk Tannous by her secret sister

for the repose of the newly-departed servant of God, Valentina Adamovich
(+16 March, 2022) of Ukraine; and the good health of
Olga & Yaraoslav; Galina and Katerina

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

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH made the following statement regarding Ukraine; originally published on February 25, 2022:

“As Orthodox Christians, we oppose any type of violence or injustice throughout the world. Rather, we call upon Almighty God to send us His heavenly peace and bring us together to resolve our disputes through fair and open discussions. I join with all the clergy and faithful of this God-protected Archdiocese to pray fervently for the immediate end of hostilities, and for the health and safety of His Beatitude Metropolitan

ONUFRYI, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian people in these difficult times."

Those of you who would like to donate to IOCC restricted to Ukraine would be to go to www.IOCC.org/OVFUkraine. If you would prefer donating by check, please make it out to IOCC and in the memo line put "OVF/Ukraine" and mail to IOCC, Attn: Donor Services; 110 West Road, Suite 360, Baltimore, MD; 21204. If you have questions you can contact IOCC at 410-243-9820.

Zoom Meeting Virtual Bible Studies Will Resume in May

Our Weekly Bible Study will resume after Pascha. Our study will be on the "Prayer Book of the Church" — The Psalms. For more information contact: frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

Wednesday Evening Lenten Meal

If you would like to host the after-Liturgy Lenten meal this Wednesday, April 6th, please let us know. We have a host for Wednesday, April 13. The sole purpose for the meal, following the Pre-sanctified Liturgy, is to provide a simple and uncomplicated meal and not a full dinner. The purpose of the meal is for renewed strength after fasting for the evening Liturgy. The meal should be modest and not require accumulating leftovers. This will also reduce the need for time consuming clean-up. **The Wednesday evening liturgies now begin at 6 p.m. and not 6:30.** This will avoid eating late, and allow enough time for travel home, especially when children get up early for school in the morning. Contact Subdeacon Richard Ajalat [rajalat@stmichaelvannuys.org] should you be interested. Note: The Pre-sanctified Liturgy is the Liturgy for all of the forty-day weekdays of Great Lent. The festal Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is celebrated on the Saturday (for the departed) and St. Basil the Great on Sunday (for the Resurrection), when wine and oil are permitted. In vigilant Church communities, the Pre-sanctified Liturgy is the sole sustenance for the faithful during Great Lent. It is important to keep in mind that our Lenten discipline is the practice of fasting, prayer and good works—all three.

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. Coin boxes are also available in the narthex. Thank you for your support of our annual Lenten charity campaign.

Note to Coffee Hour hosts: Please contact Father Timothy for Instructions.

Holy Bread Offering List

Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Apr 10 - Ron & Kathy Zraick; Marcia O'Dea

Apr 17 (Palm Sunday) - open

Apr 21 - Holy Thursday Liturgy

Apr 23 - open (Holy Saturday)

Apr 24 - open (Holy Pascha)

Paschal Breakfast

**Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org)
to sign-up to offer Holy Bread.**

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley

16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, California 91406-4622

Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York and all North America

V. Rev. Timothy Baclig, Pastor
frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

Church Telephone: 818/994-2313
www.stmichaelvannuys.org

Dear St. Michael Church Family,

We all have much to still learn as we prepare to transition to our new church sanctuary, that we pray, will be achieved this year. There are several resources that you may or may not have known about that is available on our parish website. They are as follows:

a. Homepage slider #6 — "Building a Worshipping Community:" A five part slide presentation on the different parts of an Orthodox Church structure and its practical function liturgically.

b. Homepage slider #2 — Gallery Update: Church Sanctuary "Orthodox Church Architecture, Iconography and Hymnography" (20 Articles that help to

understand Orthodox liturgical worship and the relationship between church architecture, iconography and hymnography (music); including a history of Orthodox Church structures in North America.)

<https://www.stmichaelvannuys.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Articles-on-Orthodox-Architecture.pdf>

c. Homepage slider #3 — “Coming Out of Chaos:” A recent podcast produced by The Antiochian Men (AMEN) of the Antiochian Diocese of the Southeast; an interview reflecting upon the 39 years of the Holy Priesthood and comments on the distinct ministry of men as servants of God in the Church.

It is my sincere hope that you will explore these references as we thank God for all that He has accomplished in the many ministries of our parish and the hard work of our Founders, predecessors, and current parishioners who continue to provide us with a solid foundation for our growth.

In Christ

V. Rev. Timothy Baclig

Pastor

Upcoming Events

Diocesan Women Lenten Retreat: April 8-10, 2022
at Camp St. Nicholas; speaker: Fr. John Valadez of St. Timothy Church,
Lompoc, California; contact: jeanbaba68@gmail.com

St. Michael Antiochian Bake Sale - Palm Sunday, April 17

St. Michael 29th Golf Classic: Monday, May 23, 2022 at Wood Ranch
Golf Club (Simi Valley) <www.woodranchgc.com>

Diocesan Parish Life Conference hosted by The Church of the
Redeemer (Santa Clara Marriott) — June 29 - July 3, 2022
Conference Registration link: [https://www.antiochianevents.org/events/
diocese-of-los-angeles-and-the-west-1/registration](https://www.antiochianevents.org/events/diocese-of-los-angeles-and-the-west-1/registration)

Conference Schedule: https://www.antiochianevents.com/la_schedule

Archdiocesan Clergy Institute — July 18-22, 2022
(Antiochian Village; Bolivar, Pennsylvania)

Our 2022 Pledge Forms Provided with this Bulletin

As a committed member of St. Michael Church, please complete a new 2022 form. Everyone's financial situation is subject to changes from year to year. In the same way, our parish depends upon the financial pledge commitments of its members in order to meet its monthly expenses. May God bless us all in practicing good Christian stewardship.

SAINT MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH 2022 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FORM

- 1. All enrolled members must first fulfill a fair share contribution that is paid 100% by St. Michael Church to the Archdiocese annually (this does not include your family pledge obligation BELOW).**

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 18 & above) in your household _____ \$50 each _____

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 17 & under) in your household _____ \$35 each _____

(Please print all names with information in the section below)

- 2. In gratitude of God's blessings, I / we pledge to contribute St. Michael Church expenses.**

A total annual amount of: ____ (see Treasure self-assessment chart)

\$ _____ weekly \$ _____ monthly \$ _____ quarterly \$ _____ semi-annually \$ _____ annually

Name _____ Spouse Name _____

Phone number _____ E-mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- 3. How do you wish to pay? We accept personal checks, credit card payments in-person, automatic bill pay, automatic payments from your bank (See back). Church address: 16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406-4622; Website: www.stmichaelvannuys.org**

Ways to pay your pledge or donation:

- You may write a check to "St. Michael Church" and mail it to the Church Office. (see address above)
- You may process an "automatic bill pay" with your bank that will mail a recurring monthly hard-copy earmarked check to St. Michael Church.
- You may pay by credit card using our website donation page (a 3% processing fee will apply) at: <https://www.stmichaelvannuys.org/donate/> and we will be immediately notified.
- You may arrange for a recurring monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account using our church bank routing number and bank account.

Note: Each donation to St. Michael Church should be earmarked, i.e., "Building Fund," "Pledge," etc.

Print names of baptized Orthodox persons in your household.

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age



Save The Date For:

The St. Michael

29th Annual Golf Classic

Honoring those who've served

Carl Andrews. Ameen "Babe" Mittrv and Emile F. skaff

COME HELP CONTINUE THE LONG-STANDING TRADITION OF
"GETTING OUT FOR THE DAY" BY PARTICIPATING IN OUR
ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC AND BBQ

MONDAY, MAY 23rd – WOOD RANCH GOLF CLUB:

12:00 Noon Shotgun Start

GOLFERS – or those who claim to be!!!!

Make up your own foursome or we'll pair you up.

Shotgun Start – 4 Golfer Scramble Format – 2 Mulligans –

Participation in Putting Contest

Closest to the Line – Team and Individual Awards – Raffles

Continental Breakfast – Box Lunch – Barbeque Dinner

Sodas – Water – Beer – and More!!!!

\$185.00 Per Player!



NON-GOLFERS



Unable to get out for the whole day?

Then join us later for an evening of fun and frolic!

Barbecue Dinner; Chinese Auction – Golf Ball Raffle – Door Prizes

\$50.00 each

For reservations or more information contact:

Don Meena (661) 623-0340 or donmeena@sbcglobal.net

Fred Milkie, Jr. (818) 535-4243 or milkief@aol.com

HOLE SPONSORSHIP

Michael Srour (818) 314-9363 or mcsrour@gmail.com



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 20th) 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 17th

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

Great and Holy Monday – April 18th

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

Great and Holy Tuesday – April 19th

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

Great and Holy Wednesday – April 20th

Confessions

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

Great and Holy Thursday – April 21st

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

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

Great and Holy Friday – April 22nd

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 23rd

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

Vespertal 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 24th

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

Thank You!

What a fabulous outpouring of support this past month with our 2 service projects.... We sent a van full of children's clothing to FOCUS Southern CA and we have another load ready to go! Our friends at FOCUS will be distributing the clothing to children in the families they serve & are in need - Glory to God! This past Sunday, several ladies worked together to assemble individual emergency hygiene kits from all the generous donations to be donated to three domestic violence shelters operating in the Valley. What a blessing! Thank you to all who brought donations, donated towards goods, helped pack hygiene kits - all of it greatly appreciated!



Attention Parents:

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 16, 2021, beginning at 10 a.m. by live-streaming on FaceBook, and YouTube. The prayers for the preparation of the offering at the "table of the offering," called the *Prothesis* [pro-THÉE-sus] table, will take place just prior to the beginning of

the Divine Liturgy for all to see, with explanations of the prayers and actions by the priest. It will be a beautiful way to begin Holy Week as we celebrate Christ's entrance into the Holy City of Jerusalem.

WITH THE BLESSING OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN JOSEPH



THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST PRESENTS...

AN ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL RETREAT! April 8-10 (Fri-Sun), 2022

**In Person at Camp St. Nicholas
11770 Frontier Rd.
Frazier Park, CA 93225**

COST

- \$145 Includes 5 meals, snacks, room, and board.
- \$65 Saturday only, Includes 3 meals, and snacks.



**Featured Keynote Speaker: Rev. Fr. John Valadez
St. Timothy Antiochian Church
Lompoc, CA**

**Theme
May it Be
Blessed:
Conforming
Our Will to
God's**



V. Rev. Fr. David Hovik

DLAW Antiochian Women Spiritual Leader

St. Andrew Antiochian Church

Arlington, WA

**For any questions, please contact Khourieh Jean Baba, DLAW
Retreat Coordinator @ (916) 955-4736**

Pastor's Sermon
The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig

April 3, 2022

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 begin doing things differently?

Often our response to these questions is like the disciples in today's Gospel, who without prayer and fasting were weak in spiritual power. 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 desire of drawing closer to Christ as members of His God's Kingdom. It could be an obsession, an addiction, or compulsive behavior. We are unable to control any of our passions without first accepting responsibility for our failings and our weaknesses. This cannot be done with a nonchalant attitude. After accepting responsibility for our failings and weaknesses we must also identify what is a sin; what hinders or even breaks our relationship or communion with God and with others. This means recognizing that it is wrong and acknowledging that it must end. In doing so, we must also be determined to doing our best and to not to perpetuate sinful actions or to entertain temptations. We must also not be discouraged by our weaknesses or failures. Some sins may require more time to overcome. 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 must be with the intentional desire 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 change with the support of good influences that 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; to be of support or to be neglectful; a stronghold of faith, or of little or no faith. This also means being very selective in who we are trusting in sharing our personal thoughts with. Not everyone is a trusted "confidant." However, 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"

ABBOT NIKITAS THE CONFESSOR OF MEDIKION; VENERABLE JOSEPH THE HYMNOGRAPHER;
NEW-MARTYR PAUL THE RUSSIAN

طروبارية القيامة على اللحن الثامن

انحدرت من العلوّ يا متحنن، وقبلت الدفنَ ذا الثلاثةِ الأيامِ، لكي تُعْتَقَنَا من الآلامِ، فيا حياتنا وقيامتنا يا ربّ المجدُ لك.

طروبارية القديس يوحنا السلمي على اللحن الثامن

بمجاري دموعك أمرعت البريةَ غيرُ المثمرةِ، وبالتهداتِ العميقةِ أثمرت أتعابك مائةَ ضعفٍ. فصرت كوكباً للمسكونةِ متلألئاً بالعجائبِ، يا أبانا البارِ يوحنا، فتشفّعْ إلى المسيحِ الإلهِ أنْ يُخلصَ نفوسنا.

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة بالحن الرابع

أيها المتقدمون على الأجناد السماويين، نتوسّلُ إليكم نحن غيرِ المستحقّين، حتّى أنكم بطلباتكم تكتنوفوننا بظلِّ أجنحةِ مجدكم غيرِ الهولي، حافظين إيانا نحن الجاثين والصارخين بغير فتور، أنقذونا من الشدائد، بما أنكم رؤساء مراتب القوّاتِ العلويةِ.

قنداق آحاد الصوم على اللحن الثامن

إني أنا عبدك يا والدة الإله، أكتب لك رايات الغلبة يا جنديّة محامية، وأقدم لك الشكر كمنقذة من الشدائد. لكن بما أن لك العزة التي لا تحارب، أعتقيني من صنوف الشدائد، حتى أصرخ إليك: افرحي يا عروسا لا عروس لها.

الرسالة

الربُّ يُعطي القوّة لشعبه، قدّموا للربِّ يا أبناء الله إكراماً ومجداً

فصلٌ من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول إلى العبرانيين

يا إخوة، إنّ الله لما وعد إبراهيمَ أقسمَ بنفسه، لأنّه لم يمكن أن يُقسمَ بما هو أعظمُ منه، وقال: «بركةٌ أباركك وكثيراً أجعلُ نسلكك». وهكذا احتمل إبراهيمُ صابراً فقال الوعد. والناس يُقسمون بمن هو أعظمُ منهم، والقسمُ تثبيتٌ لأقوالهم ينهي كلّ خلافٍ بينهم.

وكذلك الله، لما أراد أن يُبرهن لورثة الوعد على ثبات إرادته، عزز قوله بقسم. فكان لنا بهذين الأمرين الثابتين الذين يستحيل أن يكذب الله فيهما، ما يُعزينا كلَّ التعزية، نحن الذين التجأنا إلى التمسك بالرجاء الذي جعل لنا. وهذا الرجاء هو لِنُفوسنا مرساة أمينة متينة تدخل إلى داخل الحجاب، إلى حيث دخل يسوع من أجلنا، سابقاً لنا، وصار رئيس كهنه إلى الأبد على رتبة ملكيصادق.

الإنجيل

فصل من بشارة القديس مرقس

في ذلك الزمان، دنا من يسوع إنسان وسجد له وقال: "يا معلّم، جئت إليك بابني، لأنّ فيه روحاً نجساً يجعله أبكم، وأينما أمسك به يصرعه، فيزبد الصبّي ويصرف بأسنانه ويتشجّج. وطلبت من تلاميذك أن يطردوه، فلم يقدروا". فأجابهم: «أيها الجيل غير المؤمن، إلى متى أبقي معكم، وإلى متى احتملكم؟ قدّموا الصبّي إليّ!» فقدموه إليه. فلما رآه الروح النجس، صرع الصبّي فوق على الأرض يتلوى ويزبد. فسأل يسوع والد الصبّي: «متى بدأ يصيبه هذا؟» قال: «من أيام طفولته. وكثيراً ما رماه الروح النجس في النار أو في الماء ليقتله. فإذا كنت قادراً على شيء فأشفق علينا وساعدنا». فقال له يسوع: «إذا كنت قادراً أن تؤمن، فكل شيء ممكّن للمؤمن». فصاح الوالد في الحال: «عندي إيمان! ساعدني حتى يزيد». ورأى يسوع أن الناس يتجمعون، فانتهر الروح النجس وقال له: «أيها الروح الأصبم الأخرس! أنا أمرك، أخرج من الصبّي ولا ترجع إليه!» فصرخ وصرعه صرعه قويّة وخرج منه. فصار الصبّي كالصبي، حتى قال كثير من الناس إنّه مات. فأخذه يسوع بيده وأنهضه فقام. ولما دخل البيت، سأله تلاميذه على انفراد: «لماذا عجزنا نحن أن نطرد الروح النجس؟» فأجابهم: «هذا الجنس لا يطرد إلا بالصلاة والصوم. وخرجوا من هناك ومروا بالجليل. وكان يسوع لا يريد أن يعلم به أحد. وكان يعلم تلاميذه فيقول لهم: "إن ابن البشر سيسلم إلى أيدي الناس فيقتلونه وبعد ثلاثة أيام يقوم."

ملاحظة بخصوص تناول القربان المقدس

إن مفهومنا لتناول القربان يعني عمومية المشاركة فيه لذوى العقيدة الواحدة، إلا إن المشاركة في سر القربان المقدس هنا مقتصر فقط على أعضاء الكنائس الارثوذكسية والذين يحضرون أنفسهم بالصلاة والصوم والاعتراف منذ فترة قريبة (وعلى كل حال، فإننا ندعو الجميع للمشاركة في الخبز المقدس الذي يوزع عند إنتهاء مراسيم القداوس). رجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً في الكنيسة الارثوذكسية.