

Who will be so presumptuous and so blind as to think that he can preserve his own without daily help from the Lord? This is how it is, especially in view of what the Lord Himself says: ‘As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in Me’ (Jn. 15:4). ‘You can do nothing without Me’ (Jn. 15:5). Since He says this, since He asserts that nobody can show forth the fruits of the Spirit unless he has been inspired by God and has worked with God, it would be foolish, indeed sacrilegious, to attribute any good actions of ours to our own effort rather than to the divine grace.

Saint John Cassian

**Sunday 14 April 2013 is the
Sunday of Saint John Climacus**

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

Apolytikion for the feast:

With the streams of your tears you cultivated the barren desert, and with deep sighings from the heart you made your toils bring forth fruit a hundredfold, and you became a beacon, shining in the world by your wonders, our venerable Father John; intercede with Christ God that our souls may be saved.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Isaiah 37:33-38:6; Genesis 13:12-18; Proverbs 14:27-15:4
Martyr Crescens; Hieromartyr Leonidas

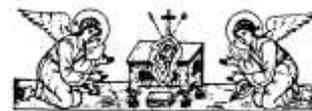
Tuesday: Isaiah 40:18-31; Genesis 15:1-15; Proverbs 15:7-19
Virgin Martyrs Agape, Chionia, & Irene

Wednesday: Isaiah 41:4-14; Genesis 17:1-9; Proverbs 15:20-16:9
Hieromartyr Symeon; Makarios, Abp. of Corinth

Thursday: Isaiah 42:5-16; Genesis 18:20-33; Proverbs 16:17-17:17
John the Righteous; Euthemios the Enlightener of Karelia

Friday: Isaiah 45:11-17; Genesis 22:1-18; Proverbs 17:17-18:5
Martyr Paphnutius; George the Confessor

Saturday: Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 1:39-49, 56
Saturday of the Akathist Hymn ; Theodore Trichinas; Apostle Zacharias



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

14 April 2013

Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!

Today, on the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, which is the Sunday of Saint John Climacus, we hear the account of the healing of the boy with a dumb spirit. His father, desperate that he was going to destroy himself, had brought him to Jesus’ disciples, but they had been unable to cast out the spirit. However, Jesus Christ declares that everything is possible for those who have faith, at which his father cried out: “I believe; help my unbelief.”

Once again, we are reminded that the salvation that Jesus Christ offers us involves our healing. While we may not be possessed by spirits that try to throw us into the fire, we too have been affected by a spirit of dumbness. Our human communication has been affected by the fall, we have lost the ability to speak as we should, and human speech has too often become marked by anger and aggression. And yet, if we are honest with ourselves, we know that this is not as it should be and that we long for healing.

We have already seen that we need faith – even faith in the midst of doubt – in order to be healed. But Christ also tells us that this sort of spirit “can be driven out only by prayer.” It is in and through prayer that we discover the power of God in our lives, that we gradually learn to have faith. It is through prayer that we can be healed of our distorted patterns of communication, for there is a direct link between our relationship to God and our relationships to those around us. True prayer leads us to a place where God can heal us. It enables us to lay aside the various competing noises that the world and our own disordered state throws at us, so that we may be touched by the healing power of God.



There is no need at all to make long discourses; it is enough to stretch out one's hand and say, “Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy.” And if the conflict grows fiercer say, “Lord help!” God knows very well what we need and He shows us His mercy.

Saint Macarius the Great

Our Lenten Prayer

The Liturgy of Saint Basil

On Sundays during Great Lent the Church celebrates the Divine Liturgy according to the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, rather than that of Saint John Chrysostom, which is used on most Sundays outside Lent. Saint Basil, who was bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia in the fourth century, reformed the Liturgy that was in use at the time. His Liturgy was taken to Constantinople by Saint Gregory the Theologian and from there it also became known in Alexandria and throughout the Church.

The Liturgy of Saint Basil follows the same pattern as that of Saint John Chrysostom, which we are used to using during most of the year. The main difference is in the prayers prayed by the priest, and particularly the Anaphora, or Eucharistic prayer, which is considerably longer. These prayers reflect the theological debates of Saint Basil's time and the need that he felt for setting out clearly what the Church believes. But they also provide us with an excellent summary of the history of our salvation and what we believe as Christians. The following extract is worth reading slowly and carefully:



“Having made man by taking dust from the earth, and having honoured him with Your own image, O God, You placed him in a garden of delight, promising him eternal life and the enjoyment of everlasting blessings in the observance of Your commandments. But when he disobeyed You, the true God who had created him, and was led astray by the deception of the serpent becoming subject to death through his own transgressions, You, O God, in Your righteous judgment, expelled him from paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Your Christ. For You did not forever reject Your creature whom You made, O Good One, nor did You forget the work of Your hands, but because of Your tender compassion, You visited him in various ways: You sent forth prophets; You performed mighty works by Your saints who in every generation have pleased You. You spoke to us by the mouth of Your servants the prophets, announcing to us the salvation which was to come; You gave us the law to help us; You appointed angels as guardians. And when the fullness of time had come, You spoke to us through Your Son Himself, through whom You created the ages. He, being the splendour of Your glory and the image of Your being, upholding all things by the word of His power, thought it not robbery to be equal with You, God and Father. But, being God before all ages,

He appeared on earth and lived with humankind. Becoming incarnate from a holy Virgin, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, conforming to the body of our lowliness, that He might change us in the likeness of the image of His glory. For, since through man sin came into the world and through sin death, it pleased Your only begotten Son, who is in Your bosom, God and Father, born of a woman, the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary; born under the law, to condemn sin in His flesh, so that those who died in Adam may be brought to life in Him, Your Christ. He lived in this world, and gave us precepts of salvation. Releasing us from the delusions of idolatry, He guided us to the sure knowledge of You, the true God and Father. He acquired us for Himself, as His chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Having cleansed us by water and sanctified us with the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself as ransom to death in which we were held captive, sold under sin. Descending into Hades through the cross, that He might fill all things with Himself, He loosed the bonds of death. He rose on the third day, having opened a path for all flesh to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible that the Author of life would be dominated by corruption. So He became the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first born of the dead, that He might be Himself the first in all things.”

Sunday of Saint John of the Ladder

Today the Church celebrates the Sunday of Saint John Climacus, or Saint John of the Ladder. He was a monk on Mount Sinai in the seventh century, having entered the monastery at the age of sixteen. He spent twenty years in strict asceticism as a hermit, but was forced to leave his hermitage when he was chosen as abbot. He was recognised as a wise spiritual father, and his book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* has become a classic Orthodox text that guides and encourages all those on the ascetical way.

Today the Church holds up Saint John of the Ladder in order that his example may encourage us on our ascetical path during Lent. He is given to us an example of repentance who can inspire us and remind us Christian life involves a struggle as we seek to discipline the demands of the flesh so that we may grow in likeness to Christ.

However, our asceticism is not simply something negative. The texts of the Church remind us that our acts of bodily asceticism are only valuable if they bear fruit in an inner transformation and the softening of our hardened hearts. And the example of Saint John reminds us that it is love that motivates our asceticism. As we pray at Vespers: “This is why thou dost entreat us: Love God so that ye may live in His eternal goodwill, and let nothing be set higher than this Love.”



In this icon which depicts Saint John's *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, we see a visual representation of our ascent to Christ. While the demons seek to snatch us away from the path to salvation, we are assisted by the prayers of the saints.

As thy body became thin through abstinence, so didst thou renew the power of thy soul, enriching it with heavenly glory.

From Matins for the
Sunday of St John of the Ladder

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 honour your patience.

Saint John of the Ladder