

Just as if a man were bound hand and foot with chains, and someone came and loosed his bands, and let him walk free without interference, so the Lord looses from its bonds the soul that is bound with the chains of death, and lets it go, and sets the mind free to walk at ease and unhindered into God's air.

Suppose a man were in the middle of a river in full flood, and overwhelmed by the water lay lifeless, drowned, with dreadful monsters all round him.

If another man, who is not used to swimming, should wish to save the one who fell in, he too is lost, and is drowned with him. Clearly there is need of a skilled swimmer, an expert, to go out into the depth of the water of the gulf, and dive, and bring up the drowned man there among the monsters.

The water itself, when it sees a man skilled and knowing how to navigate it, helps such a man, and bears him up to the surface.

The soul, in the same way, has been plunged and drowned in the abyss of darkness and the deep of death, and is dead and parted from God among dreadful monsters; and who is able to go down into those secret chambers and the depths of hell and death, except that expert Workman who fashioned the body?

In His own person He enters into two quarters, into the depth of hell, and into the deep gulf of the heart, where the soul with its thoughts is held fast by death, and brings up out of the darksome hole the Adam that lay dead.

Saint Macarius the Great

**10 April 2016 is  
the Sunday of St John Climacus**

**Matins Gospel:** Matthew 28:16-20

**Epistle:** Hebrews 6:13-20

**Gospel:** Mark 9:17-31

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Having learned the joyful proclamation of the Resurrection from the Angel, and having cast off the ancestral condemnation, the women disciples of the Lord spake to the Apostles exultantly: Death is despoiled and Christ God is risen, granting great mercy to the world.

**Apolytikion for the Sunday of the Holy Cross:**

With the rivers of your tears, you have made the barren desert fertile. Through sighs of sorrow from deep within you, your labors have borne fruit a hundred-fold. By your miracles you have become a light, shining upon the world. O John, our Holy Father, pray to Christ our God, to save our souls.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

To you, Theotokos, invincible Defender, having been delivered from peril, I, your city, dedicate the victory festival as a thank offering. In your irresistible might, keep me safe from all trials, that I may call out to you: "Hail, unwedded bride!"

### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday, 11 April:** Isaiah 37:33-38:6; Genesis 13:12-18; Proverbs 14:27-15:4  
5th Monday of Lent; Martyr Antipas; Pharmuthios the Anchorite

**Tuesday, 12 April:** Isaiah 40:18-31; Genesis 15:1-15; Proverbs 15:7-19  
5th Tuesday of Lent; Basil the Confessor; Mother Anthousa

**Wednesday, 13 April:** Isaiah 41:4-14; Genesis 17:1-9; Proverbs 15:20-16:9  
5th Wednesday of Lent; Martin the Confessor

**Thursday, 14 April:** Isaiah 42:5-16; Genesis 18:20-33; Proverbs 16:17-17:17  
5th Thursday of Lent: The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete; Aristarchus, Pudens, & Trophimus of the 70; Thomais the Martyr of Alexandria

**Friday, 15 April:** Isaiah 45:11-17; Genesis 22:1-18; Proverbs 17:17-18:5  
5th Friday of Lent; Martyr Crescens; Hieromartyr Leonidas

**Saturday, 16 April:** Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 1:39-49, 56  
5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn; Virgin Martyrs Agape, Chionia, & Irene



# ***Evangelion***

***A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith***

10 April 2016

**Archbishopric of Good Hope  
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa**

## **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



## 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."

## The 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 recognized 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 that 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.

What is it that the God-man gives to man which no one else is capable of giving? It is victory over death, over sin, and over the devil, Eternal Life, Eternal Truth, Eternal Justice, Eternal Virtue, Eternal Love, Eternal Joy: the entire fullness of the Godhead and of Divine Perfection. As the Apostle tells us: the God-man gives to men 'those things which God has prepared for those who love Him, which no eye has seen, which no ear has heard, and which have not entered the heart of man' (1 Cor. 2:9).

In fact only He, the wondrous God-man, is the 'one thing that is needed' (cf. Luke 10:42) by man in all his worlds and in his every life. Therefore, only the God-man is justified in asking of us that which no one else has ever dared to ask: that we love Him more than we love parents, siblings, children, friends, the earth, the angels, anyone and everyone in all the worlds, visible and invisible (Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 14:26, Romans 8 31-39).

Saint Justin Popovich