

Readings & Hymns

Fourth Sunday of Lent:

St John of the Ladder (*Climacus*)



St John of Sinai – of the Ladder, Climacus

Troparion of the Resurrection in the tone of the week.

Troparion, St John Climacus - Tone 1

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body,
thou wast a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John.
Thou didst receive heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil and prayer,
healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to thee by faith.
Glory to Him Who gave thee strength!
Glory to Him Who granted thee a ^crown! //
Glory to Him Who through thee grants healing to all!

Kontakion, St John Climacus - Tone 4

The Lord truly set thee on the heights of abstinence,
to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, //
O our father and teacher John.

The Prokeimenon

The Prokeimenon in the Tone of the Week, and:

verse: In the 7th Tone: Let the saints be exalted in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. (*St John*) (*Ps 149: 6*)

Epistle

§ 314 : Hebrews 6: 13 - 20 (*4th Sunday of Lent*)

§ 229 : Ephesians 5: 9 - 19 (*St John Climacus*)

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews.

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to Abraham,
because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,
saying, "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."
And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
For men swear by one greater than themselves:
and an oath for confirmation is the end of all their dispute.
Thus God, willing to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise
the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,
that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie,
we may have the strongest consolation,
we who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us.
Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm,
and which entereth in even within the veil,
where the forerunner Jesus is entered for us,
made a High Priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek.
BRETHREN, Walk as children of the light
(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness, and truth),
proving what is well pleasing to God.
And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,

but rather expose them.

For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light,

for all that is made manifest is light.

Therefore He saith: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give thee light."

See therefore, that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore be not unwise, but understand what the will of God is.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is debauchery,

but be filled, rather, with the Spirit,

speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and and spiritual songs,

singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Epistle text from "The Apostol" St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2012. 2nd Edition.

The Alleluia

The Alleluia in the Tone of the Week, and:

verse: In the 4th Tone: They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in
the courts of our God. (*St John*) (*Ps 91 [92]: 13*)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Gospel

§ 40; Mark 9: 17 – 31 (*4th Sunday of Lent*)

§ 10; Matthew 4: 25 – 5: 12 (*St John Climacus*)

- ¹⁷ AT THAT TIME ONE OF THE MULTITUDE CAME TO JESUS,
BOWING BEFORE HIM AND SAYING, Master, I have brought unto thee my son,
which hath a dumb spirit;
- ¹⁸ And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him:
and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away:
and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.
- ¹⁹ He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?
how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.
- ²⁰ And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him,
straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.
- ²¹ And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him?
And he said, Of a child.
- ²² And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him:
but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.
- ²³ Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe,
all things are possible to him that believeth.
- ²⁴ And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears,
Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

- ²⁵ When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.
- ²⁶ And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.
- ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.
- ²⁸ And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?
- ²⁹ And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.
- ³⁰ And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.
- ³¹ For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.
- ²⁵ AT THAT TIME THERE FOLLOWED JESUS great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.
- ^{5:1} And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
- ² And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
- ³ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- ⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- ⁷ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- ¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Hymn to the Theotokos

All of creation rejoices in thee, O Full of Grace: the assembly of angels and the race of men. O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a child – our God before the ages. He made thy body into a throne, and thy womb He made more spacious than the heavens. All of creation

rejoices in thee, O Full of Grace. Glory to thee.

Communion Verse

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! (*Sunday*) (*Ps 148:1*)
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not fear evil tidings.

(*St John*) (*Ps 111 [112]: 6b - 7a*)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Fourth Sunday of Lent: St John of the Ladder (*Climacus*)

from the Triodion, for the 4th Sunday of Great Lent, on the Praises, Tone 1, idiomelon.

Come, let us work in the mystical vineyard, making fruits of repentance grow within it; let us not labour for the sake of food and drink, but through prayer and fasting let us gain the virtues. And the Lord of the Vineyard, pleased by our labour, will provide the payment, whereby he redeems our souls from the debt of sin, for He alone is rich in mercy.¹

from the Triodion, for St John Climacus, on "Lord, I Call ..." Tone 8, Podoben : "O Most Glorious Wonder ..."

O holy father John, / truly hast thou ever carried / on thy lips the praises of the Lord, / and with great wisdom / hast thou studied the words of Holy Scripture / that teach us how to practice the ascetic life. / So hast thou gained the riches of grace, / and thou hast become blessed, // overthrowing all the purposes of the ungodly.

Most glorious father John, / with the fountain of thy tears thou hast cleansed thy soul, / and by keeping vigils through the night / thou hast gained God's mercy. / Thou wast raised on wings, O blessed one, / to the love of Him and of His beauty; / and as is right thou dwellest now in His unending joy, / with thy fellow soldiers in the spiritual fight, // O holy saint of God.

O holy father John, / through faith thou hast lifted up / thy mind on wings to God; / hating the restless confusion of this world, / thou hast taken up thy Cross; / and, following Him who sees all things, / thou hast subjected thy rebellious body / to His guidance through ascetic discipline, // by the power of the Holy Spirit.

from the Triodion, for St John Climacus, "Glory ..." on "Lord, I call ..." Tone 5

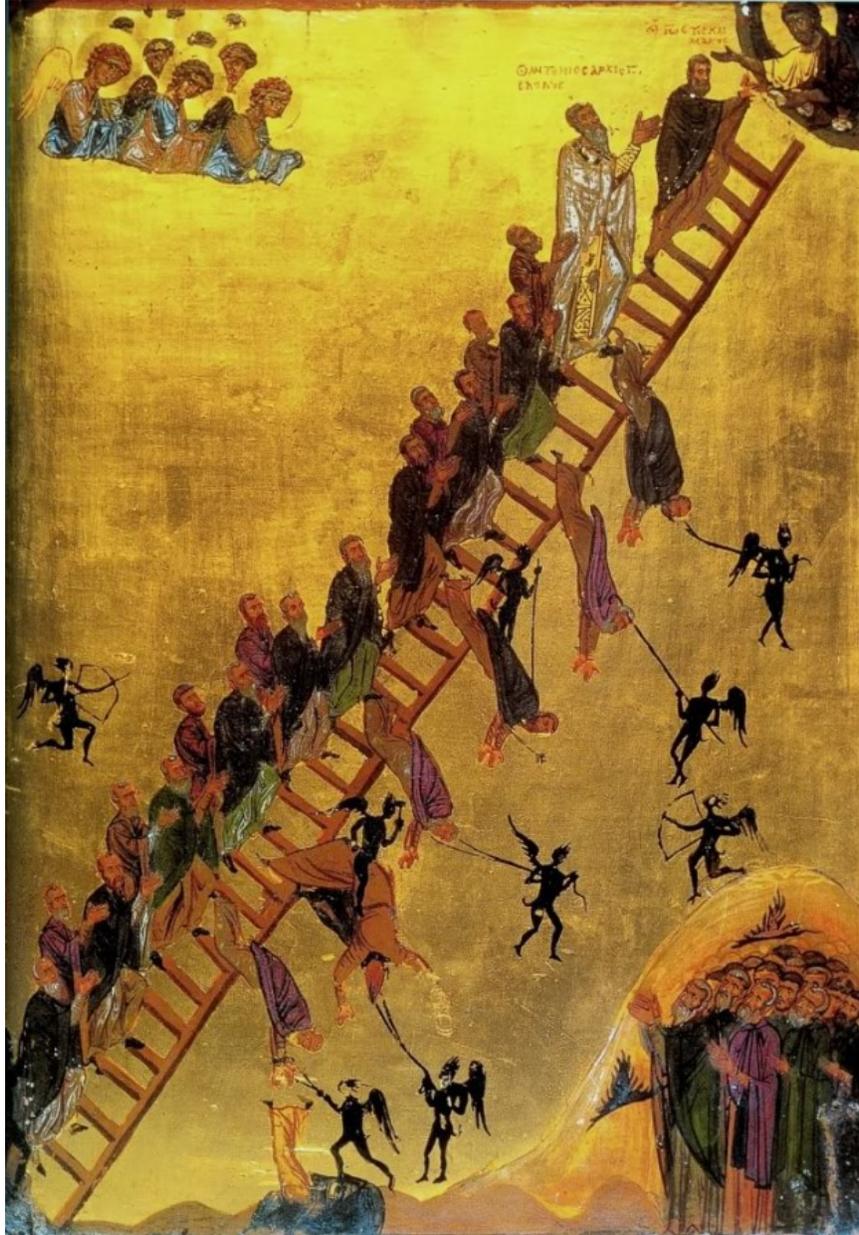
O holy father, / hearing the voice of the Gospel of the Lord, / thou hast forsaken the world, / counting as naught its riches and its glory; / and so thou hast cried out to all: / 'Love God, and ye shall find eternal grace. / Set nothing higher than His love, / that, when He comes in glory, / ye may find rest with all the saints.' // Through their prayers, O Christ, guard and save our souls.

from the Triodion, for St John Climacus. "Glory ..." on the Apostikha. Tone 2

Let us honor John, / angel upon earth and man of God in heaven, / adornment of

¹ Matt. 20: 1-16.

the world, joy of the good and virtuous, / glory of ascetics. / For planted in the house of God he has blossomed with the flower of holiness, / and spread abroad like a cedar in the desert, // causing the sheep of Christ's spiritual flock to increase in sanctity and righteousness.



St John and the Ladder, Sinai Icon 13C

Sunday of St John of the Ladder

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The Fast – the time of repentance, the time when, by the power of God, our petrified hearts must from being insensible become sensitive, from cold and hard – to

warm and open for others and for God Himself.

The Fast is a time of renewal, when, like in spring, everything becomes new again; when our life, which gradually came to naught, barely flickering, revives again with the power that God can give us, joining us to His Holy Spirit, making us in the Holy Mysteries and in the direct gift of Himself partakers of the Divine nature.

This is the time of reconciliation, and reconciliation is the joy of God and our joy; this is a new beginning.

Today we celebrate the memory of St. John of the Ladder, and I want to read you some of his words, especially significant for that period of the church year that we are now experiencing: "Repentance is our return to God, the renewal of our baptism; it is a feat to renew our union with God, our vow to change our lives. This is the time when we can learn humility, that is, peace: peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with all creation. Repentance is born of hope and a determined rejection of despair. And the repentant is the one who deserves condemnation, but leaves the judgment without shame and shame, because repentance is our reconciliation with God. And this is achieved through a worthy life, through the war with the sins that we have committed in the past. Repentance is the cleansing of our conscience. Repentance is a readiness, without a word of murmur and in transfiguration of love, to bear all sorrow and all pain."

And if we ask ourselves how, in what way to achieve this, how can we respond to God, who accepts us as the father received the prodigal son; how can we respond to God, who waited so long and fervently for us, even when we rejected Him, and never turned away from us – how can we respond to such a God? To this, here is another short excerpt about prayer: "Do not be sophisticated in eloquence at prayer; because our Heavenly Father is often pleased with the shy, simple babbling of children. Do not talk too much when you talk to God, because otherwise, looking for words, you will get confused in them. For one word alone, God had mercy on the publican; one word of faith saved the thief on the cross. Verbosity in prayer scatters the mind and fills it with an abundance of images. A single word addressed to God gathers the mind in His presence. And if, when you pray, what word hits you in your heart, reached your very depths, – hold on to this word, repeat it, for at such moments the guardian angel himself prays with you, because then we are truthful and true to ourselves and to God."

Let us remember what St. John of the Ladder says, even if one forgets my explanations; let us remember his words, because he was a man who knew what it meant to turn to God and stay with Him, to be joy for God and rejoice in Him. The memory and personality of St. John of the Ladder are offered to us now, when we ascend to the days of the Passion, as an example of how the grace of God can transform an ordinary, simple person into a lamp to the world.

Let us learn from him, let us follow his example, let us rejoice in what God can do with man by His power; and with confidence, with hope, with jubilant yet quiet, unperturbed joy, let us follow this advice to listen to God, who begs us to find the way of life and tells us that with Him, in Him we will live, because He is the Truth, but so is the Way and Eternal Life. Amen.



St John and the Ladder, Novgorod Icon, 16C

Excerpts from "The Ladder of Divine Ascent"

1:21. Some people living carelessly in the world have asked me: 'We have wives and are beset with social cares, and how can we lead the solitary life?' I replied to them: 'Do all the good you can; do not speak evil of anyone; do not steal from anyone; do not lie to anyone; do not be arrogant towards anyone; do not hate any one; be sure you go to church; be compassionate to the needy; do not offend anyone; do not wreck another man's domestic happiness; and be content with what your own wives can give you. If you behave in this way you will not be far from the Kingdom of Heaven.'

4:62. Do not be deceived, son and obedient servant of the Lord, by the spirit of conceit, so that you confess your own sins to your master as if they were another person's. You cannot escape shame except by shame. It is often the habit of the demons to persuade us either not to confess, or to do so as if we were confessing another person's sins, or to lay the blame for our sin on others. Lay bare, lay bare your wound to the physician and, without being ashamed, say: 'It is my wound, Father, it is my plague, caused by my own negligence, and not by anything else. No one is to blame for this, no man, no spirit, no body, nothing but my own carelessness.'

8:1. As the gradual pouring of water on a fire completely extinguishes the flame, so the tears of true mourning are able to quench every flame of anger and irritability. Therefore we place this next in order.

8:2. Freedom from anger, or placidity, is an insatiable appetite for dishonour, just as in the vainglorious there is an unbounded desire for praise. Freedom from anger is victory over nature and insensibility to insults, acquired by struggles and sweat.

8:3. Meekness is an immovable state of soul which remains unaffected whether in evil report or in good report, in dishonour or in praise.

8:4. The beginning of freedom from anger is silence of the lips when the heart is agitated; the middle is silence of the thoughts when there is a mere disturbance of soul; and the end is an imperturbable calm under the breath of unclean winds.

8:5. Anger is a reminder of hidden hatred, that is to say, remembrance of wrongs. Anger is a desire for the injury of the one who has provoked you. Irascibility is the untimely blazing up of the heart. Bitterness is a movement of displeasure seated in the soul. Peevishness is a changeable movement of one's disposition and disorder of soul.

8:6. As with the appearance of light, darkness retreats, so at the fragrance of humility all anger and bitterness vanishes.

14:4. Gluttony is a delusion of the eyes which receives in moderation but wants to gobble everything at once.

14:5. Satiety in food is the father of fornication; but mortification of the stomach is an agent of purity.

15:2 He is pure who expels fleshly love with divine love, and who has extinguished the fire of passion by the fire of heaven (i.e. the Holy Spirit).

15:24. Do not expect to confute the demon of fornication by arguing with him; for with nature on his side, he has the best of the argument.

15:26. Offer to the Lord the weakness of your nature, fully acknowledging your own incapacity, and you will receive imperceptibly the gift of chastity.

15:33. And our merciless foe, teacher of fornication, says that God is very merciful towards this passion as it is a natural one. But if we observe the guile of the demons we shall find that after sin has been committed they say that God is a just and inexorable Judge. They said the former in order to lead us into sin, and now the latter to drown us in despair.

15:35. The Lord, being incorruptible and incorporeal, rejoices in the purity and incorruptibility of our body. But nothing gives such joy to the demons, some say, as the stench of fornication, and no other passion so gladdens them as the defilement of the body.

22:5. The sun shines on all alike, and vainglory beams on all activities. For instance, I am vainglorious when I fast, and when I relax the fast in order to be unnoticed I am again vainglorious over my prudence. When well-dressed I am quite overcome by vainglory, and when I put on poor clothes I am vainglorious again. When I talk I am defeated, and when I am silent I am again defeated by it. However I throw this prickly-pear, a spike stands upright.

25:37. A holy team are love and humility; the one exalts, and the other, supporting the exalted ones, never allows it to fall.

28:1. Prayer by reason of its nature is the converse and union of man with God, and by reason of its action upholds the world and brings about reconciliation with God; it is the mother and also the daughter of tears, the propitiation for sins, a bridge over temptations, a wall against afflictions, a crushing of conflicts, work of angels, food of all the spiritual beings, future gladness, boundless activity, the spring of virtues, the source of graces, invisible progress, food of the soul, the enlightening of the mind, an axe for despair, a demonstration of hope, the annulling of sorrow, the wealth of monks, the treasure of solitaries, the reduction of anger, the mirror of progress, the realization of success, a proof of one's condition, a revelation of the future, a sign of glory. For him who truly prays, prayer is the court, the judgment hall and the tribunal of the Lord before the judgment to come.