

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

**26 March is the Sunday of Saint John Climacus**

**Matins Gospel:** John 20:1-10

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

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

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

**Apolytikion of Sunday of St John Climacus:**

With the rivers of your tears, you have made the barren desert fertile. Through sighs of sorrow from deep within you, your labours 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, 27 March:** Isaiah 37:33-38:6, Genesis 13:12-18, Proverbs 14:27-15:4  
Matrona of Thessalonica; Paul, Bishop of Corinth

**Tuesday, 28 March:** Isaiah 40:18-31; Genesis 15:1-15; Proverbs 15:7-19  
Hilarion the New; Herodion the Apostle of the 70

**Wednesday, 29 March:** Isaiah 41:4-14, Genesis 17:1-9, Proverbs 15:20-16:9  
Hieromartyr Mark of Arethusa; Martyr Cyril the Deacon & Companions

**Thursday, 30 March:** 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; John Climacus; Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Caesar, & Epaphroditos, the Apostles of the 70

**Friday, 31 March:** Isaiah 45:11-17; Genesis 22:1-18; Proverbs 17:17-18:5  
Hieromartyr Hypatius; Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow

**Saturday, 1 April:** Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 1:39-49, 56  
5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn; Mary of Egypt; Martyrs Gerontius & Basilides



# Evangelion

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

26 March 2017

Archbishopric of Good Hope  
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

## Have Pity on Us and Help Us!

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 dishonesty, 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 the Presanctified Gifts

One of the characteristic services of Great Lent is the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts which is often held on Wednesdays and Fridays. The Divine Liturgy is not usually celebrated on weekdays during Lent, but in order that we may be sustained by the reception of Holy Communion during our Lenten efforts, the Church developed this service from very early times. It is not a Eucharistic Liturgy in the full sense as there is no consecration of the Holy Gifts, but is rather a service at which we may receive Holy Communion from the Gifts that were consecrated at a previous Liturgy.



The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is combined with the solemn service of Vespers, and is thus an evening service although it is sometimes anticipated in the morning. During the psalms of Vespers the Presanctified Gifts are prepared for Holy Communion. After the Entrance and the evening hymn, the Old Testament readings from Genesis and Proverbs are read, between which the priest blesses the people with a lighted candle and the words: "The Light of Christ illumines all," indicating that the Old Testament prophecies have reached their fulfilment in Jesus Christ. After this, verses from Psalm 141 are sung, together with the offering of incense, leading in to the second part of the service.

After the Litany of the Catechumens, the service continues with the solemn transferring of the Holy Gifts to the altar. Externally this resembles the Great Entrance during the Divine Liturgy, but its significance is different. We are not offering the Gifts to be consecrated, as we do in the Eucharistic Liturgy, but rather recognising and receiving Christ's presence in the already consecrated Gifts that are brought forth in procession. As the priest prays just before the Entrance with the Holy Gifts:

*For behold, His most pure Body and His life-giving Blood,  
entering at this present hour,  
Are about to be spread forth upon this mystical altar,  
Invisibly escorted by a great multitude of the heavenly host.  
Enable us to partake of them in blamelessness,  
That the eyes of our understanding being enlightened thereby,  
We may become children of the light and of the day  
Through the gift of Thy Christ...*

After the Holy Gifts are placed on the altar there are more litanies and prayers and the Our Father is sung before the faithful receive Holy Communion to the chanting of "O taste and see how good is the Lord. Alleluia." The service concludes with a prayer that sums up the meaning of the service and its role in our Lenten struggle:

*O Almighty Lord, who has made all created things in Wisdom, and by Thine inexpressible Providence and great goodness has brought us to these all-holy days for the purification of body and soul, for the controlling of carnal passions, and for the hope of the Resurrection; who during the forty days didst give into the hand of Thy servant Moses the Tables of the Law ... enable us also, O Good One, to fight the good fight, to accomplish the course of the Fast, to preserve inviolate the faith, to crush underfoot the heads of invisible serpents, to be accounted victors over sin and to attain uncondemned and adore the Holy Resurrection.*

# The Sunday of Saint John Climacus

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."



**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

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