



St. Vladimir Orthodox Church

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4TH SUNDAY OF LENT: ST. JOHN CLIMACUS (OF THE LADDER) MARCH 30, 2025

TROPARION, KONTAKION & PROKEIMENON

Troparion – Tone 7

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death. To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy, and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that Thou art risen,// granting the world great mercy.

Troparion – 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 grants healing to all!

Kontakion – Tone 7

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry: “The Savior has come to those in faith;// enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!”

Kontakion – 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.

Prokeimenon – Tone 7

The Lord shall give strength to His people. / The Lord shall bless His people with peace.
V. *Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!*

Prokeimenon – Tone 7

Let the saints exult in glory; / let them sing for joy on their couches!

LITURGICAL COMMEMORATION

4th Sunday of Great Lent: St. John Climacus (of the Ladder)

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John Klimakos, the author of The Ladder of Divine Ascent. In this book the Igoumen of Saint Katherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai bears witness to the great effort which is required for entry into God’s Kingdom (Matthew 10:12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is difficult since it is “not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of the present darkness ... the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places ...” (Ephesians 6:12). Saint John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, as the Lord has said, only “he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

Saint John was born around the year 525, the son of devout and wealthy parents. He received a very good education, but at the age of sixteen, he forsook the world and went to Mount Sinai, subjecting himself to the spiritual guidance of Elder Martyrios. When he was nineteen years of age,¹ his Elder reposed. Then Saint John entered the arena of hesychasm,

visiting the monastic communities of Skētē and Tabénnisē in Egypt. For another forty years, he lived in a cell at Thora in the Sinai Desert, which was a two hour (5 mile) walk from the Monastery of Saint Katherine.

Aflame with indescribable longing for God, he ate everything that was permitted by the monastic Rule, but only in very small quantities, and not unto satiety. By so doing, he overcame the vice of pride; and by eating just a little food, he humbled the stomach, which always wants more. He raised his body from death and paralysis by the remembrance of death, and he overcame the tyranny of anger with the sword of obedience.

Who can describe the fountain of his tears, which is now to be seen in very few individuals? He slept only as much as was necessary to prevent his mind from being distracted. Before going to sleep he prayed a great deal, and he also wrote books. This was how he subdued despondency. His entire life was spent in unceasing prayer, and incomparable love for God.

After writing The Ladder at the request of Igoumen John of Raithu Monastery, and leading a God-pleasing life, Saint John fell asleep in the Lord when he was about seventy-five years old (ca. 603). He is also commemorated on March 30.

The inscription on his icon is from Step 7:2. It reads: "Compunction is a perennial trial of the conscience, which brings about the cooling of the fire of the heart through mental confession. And confession is a forgetfulness of nature, since someone because of this forgot to eat his bread."²

¹ This was his monastic age. He was, in fact, thirty-five years old.

² Psalm 101:5 (Septuagint) "Him that speaks privily against his neighbor, him have I driven from me; he that is proud in look and insatiable in heart - with him I have not eaten."

EPISTLE & GOSPEL READINGS

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

For 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 you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Epistle: Ephesians 5:9-19

(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 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 whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked

his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 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!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

Gospel: Matthew 4:25-5:12

Great multitudes followed Him – from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK, CAREGIVERS, AND DECEASED (To add a name, please email daricekeyes@gmail.com)

For the Sick / Caregiver

Carmine (3/9)
 Marianne (3/9)
 Desiderio (3/9)
 Michael (3/16)
 Charlotte (3/16)
 Subdeacon Sergius (3/16)
 Melody (3/16)

Liam (3/23)
 Kelly (3/23)
 Alexandra (3/23)
 Father Paul (3/23)
 Matushka Mary (3/23)
 Deborah (3/23)
 Anatole (3/30)
 Thomas (3/30)

For the Deceased

Kyra (3/9)
 Father Daniel (3/30)
 Nina (3/30)
 Ivan (3/30)

SERVICES

Service Schedule for the Week of March 30

Sunday March 30 – 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall
Wednesday April 2– 5:30 PM Confession, 6:30 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy followed by Confession
Thursday April 3 – 6:30 PM Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete
Friday April 4 – 8:30 AM Confession, 9:30 AM Pre-Sanctified Liturgy followed by Confession
Saturday April 5 – 5:00 PM Vespers followed by Confession and Catechumen Class in the church basement
Sunday April 6 – 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Lecture during Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

DONATIONS

Weekly Giving

March 23 – 117 adults, 21 youth, \$2,711

ORTHODOXY 101

Pascha Tradition – Blessing of Basket

Outside of Liturgical observances, the traditional Pascha basket is at the center of the Slavic Pascha celebrations. In America, baskets differ among families, usually filled with the foods and treats that the family especially missed during

the fast. There are, however, specific items included in a traditional Pascha basket, each symbolic to the events of Holy Week, the Resurrection, and the Christian life. These foods are listed below. Each family will put together Pascha basket that is unique and special. The purpose of this guide is to share the contents of a traditional Pascha basket.

Pascha Bread

A tall bread with decorations on top, usually the symbol XB ("Christ is Risen"). Breads can be made using paper molds, as well as metal tins, such as coffee cans. Pascha Bread is a rich, sweet bread made with milk, butter, eggs, and yeast. The bread reminds us that Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35). The yeast is a symbol of the New Covenant; the Jews made unleavened bread, and since we are children under the New Covenant, we make leavened bread.

Pascha Cheese

This sweet cheese dessert is Pascha bread's paschal companion. When put in the Pascha basket, this treat is blessed by the priest and then enjoyed from Pascha up until Pentecost. Some enjoy a custard-like cheese that is sweet and mild, reminding us of the moderation we should have towards everything.

Red Eggs

Include some red eggs in your basket as a symbol of the resurrection. The red egg, which we crack, reminds us of the tomb from which Christ arose. This is because of the miracle of new life which comes from the egg, just as Christ miraculously came forth from the tomb, shattering the bonds of sin. Of course, red for His blood shed for us, and the miracle from St. Mary Magdalene when the egg in her hand miraculously turned red as she proclaimed "Christ is Risen" to the non-believing Emperor.

Butter

Traditionally, butter is often molded into the shape of a three-bar cross or a lamb, and reminds us of the goodness of Christ.

Salt

Reminds us that we are the salt of the earth referenced in Matthew 5:13-16 : "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." Salt is also necessary for flavor, and reminds the Christian of his duty to others. As salt preserves food, we are to be as salt in the world.

Candle

Pascha baskets may include a candle to be lit when the priest blesses the baskets. Using a decorated flameless candle could be a good way to adorn your basket, as well as a good way to include children in the Holy Week services without worry. During the eating of the Paschal food, this candle is placed in the middle of the table. Jesus is the true light who brightens the whole world through the radiance of His Holy Resurrection.

Basket Cover

White cloths traditionally adorn the basket when it is brought to Church to be blessed. The cloths can be embroidered or printed with paschal designs and embellishments. The cover reminds us of Christ's burial shroud. A traditional basket cover is made with a white cloth embroidered with the words, "Christ is Risen," but there are many beautiful designs available.

Wine

Reminds us that God takes ordinary food and uses it as an aid in making us holy. From Matthew 26:27-29 "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' "

Horseradish with Beets

In some traditions grated horseradish is mixed with grated red beets, which is symbolic of the Passion of Christ still in our minds, but sweetened with sugar because of the Resurrection. The bitter-sweet red mixture reminds us of the sufferings of Christ. Having a bitter herb also reminds us of the vinegar that was offered to Christ while he was on the cross.

Cured Meats: Sausage, Bacon, Ham

Typically the items below are included in a traditional Pascha Basket. The meat products symbolize the sacrificial animals of the Old Testament, foreshadowing the true sacrifice of our Savior, who became for us “the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world.” As we learn from the prayer of blessing, the meat products also symbolize the fattened calf prepared for the Prodigal Son on his return to his Heavenly Father:

Sausage - spicy, garlicky and scrumptious, they remind us of God’s favor and generosity.

Bacon - symbolizes the overabundance of God’s mercy.

Ham - is a symbol of the joy and abundance of Pascha!

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be no Sunday School for the older children today, but they are welcome to join the younger class. Thank you.

Next Sunday, April 6 Mother Abbess Christophora from the Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, PA will give a lecture during Coffee Hour. Please plan on staying for this lecture.

The Ladies Assumption Altar Society will be selling chances today and next Sunday for a handmade girl's Easter basket filled with Easter goodies! \$2 per chance, or 3 for \$5. The winner will be announced during Coffee Hour.

There are only three weeks of Lent left prior to Pascha. Please remember it is very important have Confession prior to Pascha. Contact Father Volodymyr if you need to set up an appointed time.

Choir Etiquette: Our choir works very hard learning music that is both beautiful and simple enough for the congregation to sing along. We practice on Sundays from 9:15 – 9:45, once a month on Saturdays from 3:30 – 4:45, and during Lent an extra practice every Saturday from 4:00 – 4:45. “Dropping in” to sing with the choir and hoping to follow along isn’t as easy as it sounds, and is strongly discouraged. If you can carry a tune and are committed to practicing, we welcome you to join us to “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.”

Catechumen classes will be held every Saturday after Vespers. Everyone is invited to attend the classes, but those who wish to convert to the Orthodox faith must attend.

BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK

Julie Stell – March 31

Mihai Plesa – April 2

Subdeacon Sergius Stavisky – April 3

Valentina DiDonato – April 3

Andrews Montiel – April 5

Have a blessed birthday and may God grant you many years!

COFFEE HOUR

**** If you are unable to accommodate your hosting date, please advise Darice as soon as possible so changes can be made.***

Hosts are responsible for providing and setting up the refreshments in Daria Hall at 9:00 AM and after Holy Communion, cleaning up after Coffee Hour including washing, drying and putting away dishes, taking out the trash, wiping down the tables, and cleaning up the Coffee Room including turning off and cleaning the coffee and tea pots. Hosts will be informed in advance if cream cheese, butter, or milk is needed. PLEASE NOTE: Your assigned Coffee Hour Support Person will provide guidance, however, the Support Person will leave Daria Hall at 9:55 AM to attend church services. If you have arrived late or are not finished, you will be provided the key to lock the Hall when you are leaving for church services. If you have any questions, please contact Alla Strauss.

SUGGESTED MENU:

Bagels / Breads

Donuts / Pastries

Desserts - let Alla know ahead of time if you will need desserts so they can be thawed on Saturday

Fruit

Salad

Tortilla Chips & Salsa
Hummus & Pita
Sugar-free dessert
Oreos (they are all non-dairy)

If serving pork, please provide an alternative for those who do not eat pork.

NOTE: Hosts may provide a luncheon for a specific event or holiday (Panikhida, birthday, anniversary, holiday) with advance notice to reserve the specific date to host the event. The hosts will be responsible for all food preparation for such a luncheon.

Mar. 30 **FAST** Herman & Francine Meyer, Madeleine Sekulich & Mark McDevitt
Apr. 6 **FAST** Christine Waite, Alla Strauss
Apr. 13 **FAST** Melody Stavisky and _____
Apr. 20 **PASCHA – No Coffee Hour**
Apr. 27 Alan & Mimi Berck, Isaiah Maldonado
May 4 **FOCA Club, Kielbasa & Pierogi luncheon fundraiser**
May 11 Nina Schmidt, Monia & Jim Pitra
May 18 Anne Cheslock, Darice Keyes
May 25 Inna Lebedeva, Mihaela & Tiberiu Milosav
June 1 Blake & Jessica Kilgore, Alex & Rebeca Medina
June 8 Alex Godun, Virgiliu & Gabriela Plesa
June 15 Sami Bachir, Tyler Burger
June 22 **FAST** Matthew Anderson, Ramazi & Kahtuna Shubitidze
June 29 Nancy Mitsos, Ekaterina & Stanislav Uritsky
July 6 Fiyori Habtesilasse, Lemlem Woldearegay
July 13 **St. Vladimir Feast Day Celebration**
July 20 Helene Hopkins, Mary Ellen Jones
July 27 Amber Touch, Eleni Athanatos & Tom Sowanick

Have a blessed Lenten journey to Pascha!