



St. Vladimir Orthodox Church

812 Grand Street, Trenton, NJ 08610

(609) 393-1234 website: <http://saintvladimir.org/>

4th Sunday of Great Lent: St. John Climacus (of the Ladder) and St. Tikhon the Patriarch of Moscow, and Enlightener of North America April 7, 2019

Troparion – Tone 4

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of thy Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: “Death is overthrown! Christ God is 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 you a crown! // Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

Kontakion – Tone 4

My Savior and Redeemer as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains. He has shattered the gates of hell, and as Master, // He has risen on the third day!

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 4

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all.

v: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, Thou art very great!

Prokeimenon – Tone 7

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

St. John Climacus (of the Ladder)

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, The Ladder of Divine Ascent. The abbot of Saint Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God’s Kingdom (Mt.10: 12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, “not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of the present darkness ... the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places ...” (Eph 6:12). Saint John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only “he who endures to the end will be saved” (Mt.24:13).

St. Tikhon the Patriarch of Moscow, and Enlightener of North America

Saint Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Apostle to America was born as Vasily Ivanovich Belavin on January 19, 1865 into the family of Ioann Belavin, a rural priest of the Toropetz district of the Pskov diocese. His childhood and adolescence were spent

in the village in direct contact with peasants and their labor. From his early years he displayed a particular religious disposition, love for the Church as well as rare meekness and humility.

When Vasily was still a boy, his father had a revelation about each of his children. One night, when he and his three sons slept in the hayloft, he suddenly woke up and roused them. He had seen his dead mother in a dream, who foretold to him his imminent death, and the fate of his three sons. She said that one would be unfortunate throughout his entire life, another would die young, while the third, Vasily, would be a great man. The prophecy of the dead woman proved to be entirely accurate in regard to all three brothers.

From 1878 to 1883, Vasily studied at the Pskov Theological Seminary. The modest seminarian was tender and affectionate by nature. He was fair-haired and tall of stature. His fellow students liked and respected him for his piety, brilliant progress in studies, and constant readiness to help comrades, who often turned to him for explanations of lessons, especially for help in drawing up and correcting numerous compositions. Vasily was called "bishop" and "patriarch" by his classmates.

In 1888, at the age of 23, Vasily Belavin graduated from the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy as a layman, and returned to the Pskov Seminary as an instructor of Moral and Dogmatic Theology. The whole seminary and the town of Pskov became very fond of him. He led an austere and chaste life, and in 1891, when he turned 26, he took monastic vows. Nearly the whole town gathered for the ceremony. He embarked on this new way of life consciously and deliberately, desiring to dedicate himself entirely to the service of the Church. The meek and humble young man was given the name Tikhon in honor of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk.

He was transferred from the Pskov Seminary to the Kholm Theological Seminary in 1892, and was raised to the rank of archimandrite. Archimandrite Tikhon was consecrated Bishop of Lublin on October 19, 1897, and returned to Kholm for a year as Vicar Bishop of the Kholm Diocese. Bishop Tikhon zealously devoted his energy to the establishment of the new vicariate. His attractive moral make-up won the general affection, of not only the Russian population, but also of the Lithuanians and Poles. On September 14, 1898, Bishop Tikhon was made Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska. As head of the Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Tikhon was a zealous laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

He did much to promote the spread of Orthodoxy, and to improve his vast diocese. He reorganized the diocesan structure, and changed its name from "Diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska" to "Diocese of the Aleutians and North America" in 1900. Both clergy and laity loved their archpastor, and held him in such esteem that the Americans made Archbishop Tikhon an honorary citizen of the United States.

On May 22, 1901, he blessed the cornerstone for Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York, and was also involved in establishing other churches. On November 9, 1902, he consecrated the church of Saint Nicholas in Brooklyn for the Syrian Orthodox immigrants. Two weeks later, he consecrated Saint Nicholas Cathedral in NY.

In 1905, the American Mission was made an Archdiocese, and Saint Tikhon was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He had two vicar bishops: Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) in Alaska, and Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny) in Brooklyn to assist him in administering his large, ethnically diverse diocese. In June of 1905, Saint Tikhon gave his blessing for the establishment of Saint Tikhon's Monastery.

In 1907, he returned to Russia, and was appointed to Yaroslavl, where he quickly won the affection of his flock. They came to love him as a friendly, communicative, and wise archpastor. He spoke simply to his subordinates, never resorting to a peremptory or overbearing tone. When he had to reprimand someone, he did so in a good-natured, sometimes joking manner, which encouraged the person to correct his mistakes.

When Saint Tikhon was transferred to Lithuania on December 22, 1913, the people of Yaroslavl voted him an honorary citizen of their town. After his transfer to Vilna, he did much in terms of material support for various charitable institutions. There too, his generous soul and love of people clearly manifested themselves. World War I broke out when His Eminence was in Vilna. He spared no effort to help the poor residents of the Vilna region who were left without a roof over their heads or means of subsistence as a result of the war with the Germans, and who flocked to their archpastor in droves.

After the February Revolution and formation of a new Synod, Saint Tikhon became one of its members. On June 21, 1917, the Moscow Diocesan Congress of clergy and laity elected him as their ruling bishop. He was a zealous and educated archpastor, widely known even outside his country.

On August 15, 1917, a local council was opened in Moscow, and Archbishop Tikhon was raised to the dignity of Metropolitan, and then elected as chairman of the council. The council had as its aim to restore the life of Russian Orthodox Church on strictly canonical principles, and its primary concern was the restoration of the Patriarchate. All council members would select three candidates, and then a lot would reveal the will of God. The council members chose three candidates: Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, the wisest, Archbishop Arseny of Novgorod, the strictest, and Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow, the kindest of the Russian hierarchs.

On November 5, following the Divine Liturgy and a Molieben in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a monk removed one of the three ballots from the ballot box, which stood before the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God. Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev announced Metropolitan Tikhon as the newly elected Patriarch. Saint Tikhon did not change after becoming the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. In accepting the will of the council, Patriarch Tikhon referred to the scroll that the Prophet Ezekiel had to eat, on which was written, "Lamentations, mourning, and woe." He foresaw that his ministry would be filled with affliction and tears, but through all his suffering, he remained the same accessible, unassuming, and kindly person.

All who met Saint Tikhon were surprised by his accessibility, simplicity and modesty. His gentle disposition did not prevent him from showing firmness in Church matters, however, particularly when he had to defend the Church from her enemies. He bore a very heavy cross. He had to administer and direct the Church amidst wholesale church disorganization, without auxiliary administrative bodies, in conditions of internal schisms and upheavals by various adherents of the Living Church, renovationists, and autocephalists.

The situation was complicated by external circumstances: the change of the political system, by the accession to power of the godless regime, by hunger, and civil war. This was a time when Church property was being confiscated, when clergy were subjected to court trials and persecutions, and Christ's Church endured repression. News of this came to the Patriarch from all ends of Russia. His exceptionally high moral and religious authority helped him to unite the scattered and enfeebled flock. At a crucial time for the church, his unblemished name was a bright beacon pointing the way to the truth of Orthodoxy. In his messages, he called on people to fulfill the commandments of Christ, and to attain spiritual rebirth through repentance. His irreproachable life was an example to all.

In order to save thousands of lives and to improve the general position of the church, the Patriarch took measures to prevent clergy from making purely political statements. On September 25, 1919, when the civil war was at its height, he issued a message to the clergy urging them to stay away from political struggle.

The summer of 1921 brought a severe famine to the Volga region. In August, Patriarch Tikhon issued a message to the Russian people and to the people of the world, calling them to help famine victims. He gave his blessing for voluntary donations of church valuables, which were not directly used in liturgical services. However, on February 23, 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee published a decree making all valuables subject to confiscation.

According to the 73rd Apostolic Canon, such actions were regarded as sacrilege, and the Patriarch could not approve such total confiscation, especially since many doubted that the valuables would be used to combat famine. This forcible confiscation aroused popular indignation everywhere. Nearly two thousand trials were staged all over Russia, and more than ten thousand believers were shot. The Patriarch's message was viewed as sabotage, for which he was imprisoned from April 1922 until June 1923.

His Holiness, Patriarch Tikhon did much on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church during the crucial time of the so-called Renovationist schism. He showed himself to be a faithful servant and custodian of the undistorted precepts of the true Orthodox Church. He was the living embodiment of Orthodoxy, which was unconsciously recognized even by enemies of the church, who called its members "Tikhonites."

When Renovationist priests and hierarchs repented and returned to the church, they were met with tenderness and love by Saint Tikhon. This, however, did not represent any deviation from his strictly Orthodox policy. "I ask you to believe me that I will not come to agreement or make concessions which could lead to the loss of the purity and strength of Orthodoxy," the Patriarch said in 1924.

Being a good pastor, who devoted himself entirely to the church's cause, he called upon the clergy to do the same: "Devote all your energy to preaching the word of God and the truth of Christ, especially today, when unbelief and atheism are audaciously attacking the Church of Christ. May the God of peace and love be with all of you!"

It was extremely painful and hard for the Patriarch's loving, responsive heart to endure all the Church's misfortunes. Upheavals in and outside the church, the Renovatianist schism, his primatial labors, his concern for the organization and tranquility of Church life, sleepless nights and heavy thoughts, his confinement that lasted more than a year, the spiteful and wicked baiting of his enemies, and the unrelenting criticism sometimes even from the Orthodox, combined to undermine his strength and health.

In 1924, Patriarch Tikhon began to feel unwell. He checked into a hospital, but would leave it on Sundays and Feast Days in order to conduct services. On Sunday, April 5, 1925, he served his last Liturgy, and died two days later. On March 25/April 7, 1925 the Patriarch received Metropolitan Peter and had a long talk with him. In the evening, the Patriarch slept a little, then he woke up and asked what time it was. When he was told it was 11:45 P.M., he made the Sign of the Cross twice and said, "Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee." He did not have time to cross himself a third time.

Almost a million people came to say farewell to the Patriarch. The large cathedral of the Donskoy Monastery in Moscow could not contain the crowd, which overflowed the monastery property into the square and adjacent streets. Saint Tikhon, the eleventh Patriarch of Moscow, was primate of the Russian Church for seven and a half years.

On September 26/October 9, 1989, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church glorified Patriarch Tikhon and numbered him among the saints. For nearly seventy years, Saint Tikhon's relics were believed lost, but in February 1992, they were discovered in a concealed place in the Donskoy Monastery.

It would be difficult to imagine the Russian Orthodox Church without Patriarch Tikhon during those years. He did so much for the Church and for the strengthening of the Faith itself during those difficult years of trial. Perhaps the saint's own words can best sum up his life: "May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake."

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.

Service Schedule for the week of April 7

Today – 9:00 AM Sunday School, 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

Wednesday April 10 – 5:30 PM Confession, 6:30 PM Pre-Sanctified Liturgy followed by Confession

Thursday April 11 – 6:30 PM Matins with Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

Friday April 12 – 8:30 AM Confession, 9:30 AM Pre-Sanctified Liturgy followed by Confession

Saturday April 13 – 5:00 PM Vespers followed by Confession

Sunday April 14 – 9:00 AM Sunday School, 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

Weekly Giving

March 31 – 53 adults, 11 youth, \$4,040

Parish Announcements

Starting today, and for the next few weeks, Archbishop Michael has asked the parishes to collect donations for St. Andrews Camp in Jewell, NY. The funds will be used to construct a new Dining Hall at the camp as the previous structure is very old and outdated. A collection plate is on the small table behind the back pew. Please be generous! Thank you.

Starting in March and continuing through Pascha, Bible Study classes will be held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 PM in the church basement. The next class will be held on Tuesday April 16. Starting in May classes will revert to the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at 7:00 PM; the classes in May will be held on May 8 and May 22. All are welcome to attend.

The Ladies Altar Society will be selling homemade babkas next Saturday April 20 in Daria Hall after Divine Liturgy.

Church cleaning day is scheduled for Saturday April 20 at 11:00 AM after Divine Liturgy. Many hands are needed to remove wax from the carpets, clean the pews, sweep the floors, polish the brass, etc. Please mark the date on your calendar.

The annual Easter Egg Hunt will be held following Divine Liturgy on Palm Sunday, April 21. There are Church School classes on Palm Sunday but no Church School classes on Pascha, April 28. Church School will resume on May 5.