

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh
SAINT JOHN OF THE LADDER
9 April 1989

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

Lent is a time of repentance, a time when our heart of stone must be made by the power of God into a heart of flesh, from insensitive to become perceptive, from cold and hard to become warm and open to others, and indeed, to God Himself.

Lent is a time of renewal when like spring, everything become new again; when our life that had gone into a twilight becomes alive with all the intensity which God can communicate to us, humans, by making us partakers of His Holy Spirit, by making us partakers, through the Holy Sacraments and the direct gift of God, of the Divine nature.

It is a time of reconciliation, and reconciliation is a joy: it is God's joy, and it is our joy; it's a new beginning. Today is the day of Saint John of the Ladder, and I want to read to you a few phrases of his which are relevant to the particular time of the year in which we live:

“Repentance, that is our return to God is renewal of our baptism; it is our effort to renew our covenant with God, our promise to change our life. It is a time when we can acquire humility, that is peace; peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with all the created world. Repentance is born of hope and rejection of despair. And one who repents, is one who deserves condemnation - and yet, goes away from the tribunal without shame, because repentance is our peace with God. And this is achieved through a worthy life, alien to the sins we committed in the past. Repentance is cleansing of our conscience. Repentance implies carrying off all sadness and pain.”

And if we ask ourselves how we can achieve it, how we can come to this, how we can respond to God Who receives us as the father received the prodigal son, a God Who has waited for us, longingly, Who, rejected, never turned away from us - how can we respond to Him? Here is a short word about prayer :

“Don't use in prayer falsely wise words; because it is often the simple and uncomplicated whispering of children that rejoices our heavenly Father. Don't try to say much when you speak to God, because otherwise your mind in search of words will be lost in them. One word spoken by the publican brought Divine mercy upon him; one word filled with faith saved the thief on the cross. The use of the multiplicity of words when we pray disperses our mind and fill it with imaginations. One word spoken to God collects the mind in His presence. And if a word, in thy prayer, reaches you deeply, if you perceive it profoundly - dwell in it, dwell in it, because at such moments our Angel guardian prays with us because we are true to ourselves and to God”.

Let us remember what Saint John of the Ladder says, even if you forget the short comments (which I introduced) to make his text more readily understandable. Let us remember his words because he was a man who knew what it means to turn to God, to stay with God, to be God's joy and to rejoice in Him. He is offered us in this time, when we are ascending towards the days of the Passion, he is offered us as an example of what grace Divine can do to transform an ordinary, simple human being into a light to the world.

Let us learn from him, let us follow his example, let us rejoice in what God can do by His power in a human being, and let us confidently, with faith, with an exulting and yet serene joy follow the advice, listen to God begging us to find a way of life and telling us that with Him, in Him we will be alive, because He is the Truth but also the Way and also Life eternal. Amen.

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Bulletin for Sunday, March 30, 2014

Fourth Sunday of Lent • Tone 7

Hebrews 6:13-20, Mark 9:17-31

Commemorations: St. John Climacus (of The Ladder). Ven. John Climacus of Sinai, author of The Ladder (6th c.). St. Sophroný (Sophronius), Bishop of Irkutsk (1771). Prophet Joad (1 Kings 13:11–10th c. B.C.). Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Cæsar, and Epaphroditus, of the Seventy (1st c.). St. Eubula, mother of St. Panteleimon (ca. 303). Ven. John the Silent of St. Sabbas' Monastery (6th c.). St. Zosimas, Bishop of Syracuse (ca. 662).

Welcome to Our Visitors

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found at the candle desk. Please sign our guest book and join us for refreshments and fellowships downstairs after Liturgy.

Please pray for: Olga, Vera, Richard, Daria, Daria, Evelyn, Sarah, Nancy, Alla, June, Nina, Joan, Luke, Alex, Alan, Nadia, Glenn, Kathryn, Elizabeth, Helen, Mary, Elena, Ivan, Jevon, Kyra, and Roderick.

Many Years! to Alla Hamasevich and Jack Jankura on the occasion of their birthdays.

Upcoming Events

Monday, March 31st
Akathist for St Innocent at 9am
6th Hour at 12p

Tuesday, April 1st
1st Hour at 7am
Choir Rehearsal at 7pm

Wednesday, April 2nd
Soup Kitchen - Open Doors at 4:30p
Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts at 6:30p

Thursday, April 3rd
6th Hour at 12p
Great Canon and the Life of St Mary 6:30p

Friday, April 4th
Akathist to the Theotokos 6:30p

Saturday, April 5th
Great Vespers at 5:30p

Sunday, April 6th
Divine Liturgy at 9:30a
Service of Holy Unction at 4p - Three Saints Church, Ansonia

Announcements

Stasia PenkoffLidebeck has, once again, offered to hold a Pisanki-making Workshop on Lazarus Saturday, April 12th, from 1 to 4pm. You need to sign-up for the workshop by no later than Friday the 4th so that we know the necessary supplies to purchase. Please contact Stasia at penkoffledbeck@mac.com if you are interested. As is our custom, we will be having lunch at "Lenny and Joe's after Liturgy.

Holy Week will soon be upon us: please strive to complete your lenten effort by coming to confession before Lazarus Saturday.

We also need to begin thinking about the Agape Meal following the Pascha Services. Please let me know if you are interested in helping.

The Gospel for St John Climacus (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.

(Instead of "It is truly meet ...," we sing the following)

Hymn to the Theotokos

All of creation rejoices in you, 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 your body into a throne,
and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens.
All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace.
Glory to you!

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (Ps 148:1)
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not fear evil tidings. (Ps 111/112:6b-7a)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!