



**St George the Great Martyr  
Orthodox Church - Weekly Bulletin**

**Sunday, April 07 2019**

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**SUNDAY, APRIL 7 TONE 4 Fourth Sunday of Lent: St John of the Ladder (*Climacus*)**

**Tone 4 Troparion** (*Resurrection*)

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!”

**Tone 1 Troparion** (*for St John Climacus*)

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!

**Tone 4 Kontakion** (*Resurrection*)

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!

**Tone 4 Kontakion** (*for St John Climacus*)

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 teach-er John.

## Mark 9:17-31 (*Gospel*)

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.”

### St John and the Ladder of Divine Ascent

During Great Lent, we commemorate the great monastic saint and writer, John Climacus (of the Ladder). Saint John, who fell asleep in the Lord in the mid-seventh century, was the abbot of one of the most ancient monasteries in the Christian world, at the foot of Jebel Musa—Moses’ Mount—on the Sinai Peninsula. An austere ascetic, he wrote what may be the classic work of our spiritual tradition: *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

According to Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, “With the exception of the Bible and the service books, there is no work in Eastern Christendom that has been studied, copied and translated more than *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by Saint John Climacus.” It is a work, then, that has nurtured endless generations of Christian believers seeking to deepen their relationship with God in and through Christ.

Commemorating Saint John on the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent reminds us that a major component of our lenten effort is focused on being ascetical to some degree, and that any ascetical effort must be placed within a larger context of warfare against the passions and the attainment of those key virtues that mark the life of a committed Christian. Saint John provides an example and a body of teaching both through his mode of life and again, through his enduring spiritual classic, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*—something to keep in mind as our lenten efforts may be starting to sag at this point in the season.

There is no doubt, from the beginning of his work, that Saint John is writing as a monastic, for fellow monastics. But that hardly limits Saint John's scope of intended readers. To again turn to Metropolitan Kallistos, "Yet does it therefore follow that The Ladder is of no interest to those in the 'world'? Surely not. It has in fact been read with the utmost profit by many thousands of married Christians, and whatever the author's original intention, there is nothing surprising in that.... Whether monastic or married, all the baptized are responding to the same Gospel call; the outward conditions of their response may vary, but the path is essentially one."

There is a wonderful passage at the outset of The Ladder that clearly affirms the "universal" appeal of Saint John's teaching: "God is the life of all free beings. He is the salvation of believers and unbelievers, of the just or the unjust... of monks or those living in the world, of the educated or the illiterate, of the healthy or the sick, of the young or the very old. He is like the outpouring of light, the glimpse of the sun, or the changes of the weather, which are the same for everyone without exception. 'For God is no respecter of persons' [Romans 2:11]" (STEP 1).

And more specifically, with married persons in the world in mind, Saint John writes, "Do whatever good you may. Speak evil of not one. Rob no one. Tell no lie. Despise no one and carry no hate. Do not separate yourself from the church assemblies. Show compassion to the needy. Do not be a cause of scandal to anyone. Stay away from the bed of another.... If you do all of this, you will not be far from the kingdom of heaven" (STEP 1).

Therefore, Saint John's succinct definition of what it means to be a Christian embraces both those "in the world," and those who practice withdrawal "from the world." A Christian is "an imitator of Christ in thought, word and deed, as far as this is humanly possible, and he believes rightly and blamelessly in the Holy Trinity," Saint John continues (STEP 1).

Contrary to many "self-help" Christian writers today, who may prove to be less than insightful about the rebellion of our sinful minds and bodies, Saint John is very sober and realistic—we could say very "up front"—about the intense challenges that a life based on the precepts of the Gospel will be for the honest seeker: "Violence [cf. Matthew 11:12] and unending pain are the lot of those who aim to ascend to heaven with the body, and this especially at the early stages of the enterprise, when our pleasure-loving disposition and our unfeeling hearts must travel through overwhelming grief toward the love of God and holiness. It is hard, truly hard" (STEP 1).

A spiritual psychologist seemingly without peer, Saint John leads up The Ladder of Divine Ascent through victory over the passions and the acquisition of the virtues. On however a modest level, that is our goal during Great Lent—and throughout our entire lives, in fact. It is a blessing, indeed, to have as a guide such a master of the Christian life who can inspire us to rise above our fallen nature. Saint John closed his classic work of the spiritual life with the following exhortation: "Ascend... ascend eagerly. Let your hearts' resolve be to climb. Listen to the voice of the one who says, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of our God' [Isaiah 2:3], Who makes our feet to be like the feet of a deer, "Who sets us on the high places, that we may be triumphant on His road" [Hebrews 3:19]. Run, I beg you, run with him who said, 'Let us hurry until we arrive at the unity of faith and of the knowledge of God, at mature manhood, at the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness' [Ephesians 4:13]. Baptized in the thirtieth year of His earthly age, Christ attained the thirtieth step on the spiritual ladder, for God indeed is love, and to Him be praise dominion, power. In Him is the cause, past, present, and future, of all that is good forever and ever. Amen."

— Fr Stephen Kostoff, from *"The Ladder of Divine Ascent for Us Today"* at [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)

## Calendar of Events – Starting today: April 07

Sunday	04/07	<b>9:10am</b> - Hours; <b>9:30am</b> - Divine Liturgy <b>Saint George Myrrhbearers will meet during coffee hour today</b>
Monday	04/08	
Tuesday	04/09	
Wednesday	04/10	<b>6:00pm</b> - Presanctified Liturgy
Thursday	04/11	
Friday	04/12	<b>6:00pm</b> - Akathist
Saturday	04/13	<b>6:00pm</b> - Great Vespers and Confessions
Sunday	04/14	<b>9:10am</b> - Hours; <b>9:30am</b> - Divine Liturgy

### Weekly announcements, looking ahead:

- ◆ We are collecting money for **flowers** and for **baskets**.  
**PLEASE** consider **supporting** these two important efforts.
- ◆ Lenten evening services begin at **6pm**. Presanctified Gifts Liturgy is celebrated on **Wednesday evenings** and we sing an Akathist to The Mother of God, on **Friday evenings**. We share a small **potluck meal and friendship after Presanctified services** at the hall.
- ◆ Saint George Myrrhbearers will meet today during coffee hour. Please plan to attend as we will discuss flowers for Pascha, baskets for the Nuns, Pascha feast, egg hunt etc.
- ◆ There are NO Office Hours all through Lent. Please call Father to schedule an appointment as needed.
- ◆ **Holy week will arrive soon. Please plan to celebrate with us. Our sisters in Christ from St Barbara monastery will be with us on Good Friday, and Holy Saturday and Pascha. This is an opportunity for us to pray with them and a perfect time to bring your families.**
- ◆ We are selling beautiful handmade festal candles for this Lenten and Paschal season. Please see Marlene Shihab if you would like to make a purchase.

**Please** keep our brothers and sisters in your prayers this week:

**For good health and healing:** Peter(Ron), Peter, Debrutu, Mary, Gregory, Souraya, Alice, Basil, Christina, Eddie, Nicholas, Dragosh, Sonia, Doreen, Denise, Traci and the child to be born of her. Matushka Joan, Michaela, Marius, Jordan, Nelly-Mary, Jason, Jerry, Gloria, Anne and Fred

**Newly Departed:** Donald, Nun Olga, Leonard