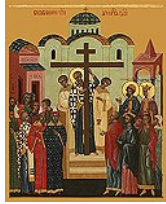


✠Bulletin✠

Week of March 22nd to March 28th



Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT — Tone 8

St. John Climacus (of *The Ladder*)

Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra (362). Virgin-Martyr Drosis of Antioch, daughter of Emperor Trajan and with her five virgin-martyrs (104-117). Ven. Isaac, the Confessor, Founder of the Dalmatian Monastery at Constantinople (383). New Monastic Martyr Euthymius of Demitsana (Mt. Athos—1814).

Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

Sunday March 21, 2026

9:15 am - Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Tuesday March 24th

5:30 pm - Vesperal Liturgy **Feast of the Annunciation**

Lenten Meal to follow

Saturday March 28th

9:30 am – Baptisms and Chrismations

Weekly Schedule

Sunday March 21th

- Short Choir Practice following Divine Liturgy
- Inquirers & Catechism Class

An Explanation of the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian: On Humility

St. Luke Archbishop of Crimea

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

*But give rather the spirit of chastity, *humility*, patience, and love to Thy servant.*

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

This prayer penetrates the heart like none other, mysteriously acts upon it, and you feel a special, exceptional divine power in it. Why is that so? Because it was poured from a heart that was perfectly purified and holy, and from a mind that was enlightened by divine grace and had become a participant in the mind of Christ. It is short, but it nevertheless contains an enormous wealth of thoughts and feelings. Extraordinarily important is the very fact that St. Ephraim asks God to deliver him from everything unholy and repugnant to Him, and to vouchsafe him great virtues. Why does he ask for this?

There are people who rely entirely upon themselves and think that everything is achievable through the powers of their minds and feelings. They do not understand that many things, in fact the most important, precious and cherished things, are not accessible to our minds and feelings. Whoever understands this understands what the apostle Paul said: *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.* (Rom. 7:15).

Thus spoke the greatest and chief apostle, recognizing his powerlessness to walk the path of goodness, profoundly understanding that his flesh, which drags him down and hinders his heart's ascent on high to God, has enormous power over him. He pined and suffered because he did not do the good that his soul desired, but did the evil that he did not want.

Deeply aware of this, St. Ephraim the Syrian prayed to God that He would deliver himself from wickedness, that He would give himself the strength to do good. The strength to do good works, like the strength to be freed from vices, is something we receive only from God. The soul of every Christian is vaguely aware of this, and that is why the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian so touches it.

Every man has his own spirit—in his soul are the traces left by those vices in which he sins, as well as by the good that he does. It is much easier to be freed from individual vices than from the spirit of these vices. **The latter is possible only gradually, with God's help.**

And so, St. Ephraim the Syrian asks God not only to give him the spirit of virtues and deliver him from the spirit of his faults, but he asks that his soul would become fragrant with Christ.

Humility is the Root of Everything: The commandment of humility is the first commandment of the Beatitudes, and that means it is the most important one. Remember the word of God pronounced by the prophet Isaiah: *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones* (Is. 57:15).

Don't you want God to live with you? He Himself says that He lives in the hearts of the humble and revives them; and we so badly need our hearts to be revived! God looks down on the humble of heart. Remember the words of the holy apostle James: *Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6). Don't you want to receive grace? And if you want it, then remember what humility is, that it is a sacred virtue very pleasing to God, and for which God lives with us and looks down upon us. **Humility is the opposite of pride.**

The humble are the poor in spirit, who while remembering their failings turn their gaze to the depths of their hearts, constantly watching after every movement of the heart, watching every impurity that has penetrated it. The saints, who always fulfilled the commandments of Christ, before whose mental gaze the Lord always stood, constantly remembered humility and prayed for it.

Christ says, *Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart* (Matt. 11:29). **The Lord commands us to learn humility from Him**, and humility was shown through His entire earthly life. Human lips dare not speak of the humility that He manifested at the trial against Him, and later when He was led to Golgotha and crucified on the Cross—so great it was. This is the humility of the Savior.

Humility is a quality of the human soul that the proud stigmatize contemptuously, for such people do not believe in Christ and have chosen

other ideals in life. They call humility slavery, and the humble—slaves; deprived of the most required and necessary quality: the spirit of protest, of forceful opposition to mankind's serious misfortunes. They contemptuously stigmatize humility and exalt the energy of rebellion and protest.

However, the humble are not slaves submitting to force, but spiritual victors over evil. Only they lead a true struggle with evil, for they uproot the very sources of it in their own hearts and the hearts of others. They do not believe that the cause of evil lies solely in the imperfection of social relationships. The humble man is a true warrior of Christ, and not a slave. But truly humble people are very hard to find these days—**no one thinks about humility; it is practically forgotten.**

Proud and arrogant people judge and discuss everything without giving it a thought, even what is most lofty and sacred; while the humble are bereft of all arrogance; they are modest and quiet. There are many examples to prove this in the Holy Scriptures and the Lives of the Saints. Righteous Abraham was great before God, he heard the great commandments and was called a friend of God, but he never ceased to call himself dust and ashes; the prophet and king David sincerely said of himself, *I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men* (Ps. 21:7); the apostle Paul called himself the chief among sinners, was alien to arrogance and self-aggrandizement, and was not afraid to admit his weaknesses: *I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling* (1 Cor. 2:3). Such profound humility is an example to all of us, who are infinitely far from it.

We need to think all the time about it and ardently ask God about it. We cannot acquire this virtue through any of our own efforts. Humility is a great gift of God. And every step along the path of Christ brings us closer to it. When a man's heart is humble, the Holy Spirit comes to abide in it. What great happiness it is to be humble, and how difficult this is.

The Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* (Matt. 23:11-12). How often these words of Christ's come true! How many proud people there have been who try to be above everyone else later fall lower than everyone; and how many humble, insignificant, poverty-born people who began their lives in hardships and suffering, who later became great people. This is the story of many saints.

The Lord says: *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.* (Matt. 19:30). That is how it is in life, and that is how it will be at the Last Judgment: The first proud and impudent will be the last, while the last—the insignificant and despised—will be the first.

We should remember the words of the holy apostle Peter: Likewise, *ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* (1 Pet. 5:5). God gives grace to the humble. We have to strive towards humility and constantly ask God for it.

O Lord and Master of my life, give me Thy servant the spirit of humble-mindedness! If a person will continually have these holy words in his memory, he will receive from God the profound virtue of humility.

Inquirers & Catechism Class

Classes will be on Sundays following Divine Liturgy. For those new to understanding Orthodoxy or for those who want to expand your foundation, please join us for our classes. Please check the schedule for changes.

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Prayer Requests

Heather (Helen) Auld
Anne and Scott Peatross
Nicholas Kowalski
Robert Kozera
Megan – David & Phyllis Bartos’ daughter
Rosemary – Friend of David & Phyllis Bartos

Please pray for our families in Ukraine

Leonid, Nadiia, Andrii, Halyna,
Volodymyr, Maryna, Dmytro, Bohdan,
Nadiia, Oleksandr, Tetiana,
Roman, Mykola
Anatoly, Olga, Maria, Andrei

Please let us know of anyone you would like to add to the Prayer Lists.

Schedule of Weekly Services

Wednesday April 1st

5:30 pm - Presanctified Liturgy

Lenten Meal to follow

Saturday April 4th

Lazarus Saturday

8:45 am - Hours

9:00 am - Divine Liturgy

Sunday April 5th

Palm Sunday

9:15 am – Hours

Blessing of Palms

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Holy Monday – April 6th

5:30 pm - Bridegroom Matins

Holy Tuesday – April 7th

5:30 pm - Presanctified Liturgy

Lenten Meal to follow

Holy Thursday – April 9th

3:00 pm - Mystical Supper Vespereal Liturgy

Good Friday – April 10th

3:00 pm - **Great & Holy Friday**

Burial of Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ

Holy Saturday – April 11th

9:00 am Holy Saturday Vespereal Liturgy

HOLY PASCHA Sunday – April 12th

***Tentative: 8:00 am**

MATINS & RESURRECTION LITURGY

***Blessing of Baskets & Egg Hunt**

Bright Wednesday April 15th

8:45 am - Paschal Hours

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy

Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Variable Hymns and Readings

Tone 8 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One!
Thou didst accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//
O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Tone 1 Troparion *(St. John Climacus)*

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body,
you were a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John.
You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil and prayer,
healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith.
Glory to Him Who gave you strength!
Glory to Him Who granted you a crown!//
Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

Tone 4 Kontakion *(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 teacher John.

Tone 8 Prokeimenon *(Resurrection)*

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God! *(Ps. 75:12a)*

V. In Judah God is known; His Name is great in Israel. (Ps. 75:1)

Tone 7 Prokeimenon *(St. John Climacus)*

Let the saints exult in glory; / let them sing for joy on their couches!
(Ps. 149:5)

Tone 6 *(Steadfast Protectress....)*

Steadfast Protectress of Christians,
constant Advocate before the Creator:
do not despise the cry of us sinners,
but in your goodness come speedily to help us
who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us,
O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you.

Hebrews 6:13-20 (Epistle)

Brethren: 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.

Ephesians 5:9-19 (Epistle, St. John Climacus)

Brethren: (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.

Tone 8

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior! (Ps. 94:1)

V. Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise! (Ps. 94:2)

Tone 4

V. They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. (Ps. 91:14)

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."

Matthew 4:25-5:12 (Gospel, St. John Climacus)

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.

Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading Mark 9:17-31

By Blessed Theophylact

Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

17-18. 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."

This man was weak in faith, as even the Lord attests when He says, O faithless generation, and again, all things are possible to him that believeth. The man himself attests to his unbelief when he says, Help Thou my unbelief. His complaints against the disciples clearly shows his unbelief. For he ought not to have accused them in front of everyone, but privately.

19-27. 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.

The man who approached the Lord accused the disciples of not having the power to heal. But the Lord turns the blame onto him, all but saying, "It is your unbelief which is the cause of your son not being healed." The Lord does not address only this man, but He directs this saying to all, reproaching all the Jews for their unbelief. For it is likely that many of the bystanders were also scandalized by the disciples inability to heal. The Lord shows that He welcomes death, when He says, "How long shall I be with you?" meaning, it is a torment to Me to live with you and your unbelief. But He does not just

reproach them, He grants the healing as well. He does not desire to heal the son as a show of His power, but rather He proceeds with great humility. See how He does not attribute the healing to His own power, but to the man's faith, when He says, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Furthermore, as He saw a crowd beginning to gather around, He rebuked the spirit, not wanting to heal in front of the crowd as though for show. When He rebuked the spirit and said, "Come out of him, and enter no more into him", this suggests that because of the man's unbelief, the demon would have again entered into him if it had not been prevented by the Lord's command. The Lord permits the spirit to rend the son, so that all might recognize the attack of the demon and understand that it would have killed the man if it had not been held in check by the hand of God. A man is thrown by a demon into the fire of anger and desire, and into water, meaning, into the pounding surf of worldly cares. This demon is both mute and deaf. It is deaf, not wanting to hear the words of God; and it is mute, not able to teach others what ought to be taught. But if Jesus, Who is the Word of the Gospel, should take him by the hand, that is, strengthen his power to act, then that man will be freed from the demon. See how God first helps us, and then we ourselves are required to work. For the Evangelist says that "Jesus *lifted him up*" — this is the divine help, "*and he arose*" — this is the effort of the man himself to do good.

28-29. 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." The disciples were afraid they had lost the grace which the Lord had given them, and this was why they had not been able to cast out the demon. See that out of respect they approached the Lord privately. "This kind" — what kind? The kind which may make their abode in lunatics, or, in general, the whole race of demons, does not come out except through prayer and fasting. Both the one suffering, and the one about to heal, must fast. Both are necessary. Good sense dictates that the one suffering must fast. He must not only fast but also pray; and he must not only pray, but also fast, for true prayer is rendered when it is yoked to fasting. When the one who prays is not weighed down by the effects of food, his prayer is not burdened and ascends easily.

30-31. 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." Whenever the Lord spoke of His passion on the cross, He would precede and follow His words with miracles, so that no one could think that He would suffer because He was powerless. And when He spoke sad words, such as, "they shall kill Him", He would add words of joy, "He shall rise the third day", teaching us that gladness always follows after grief, and that we should not anguish needlessly in our sorrows, but should hope for better things.

(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 Hymn

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. 111:6b-7a)*
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!