



WEEKLY BULLETIN

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

The 4th Sunday of Great Lent,
April 11th, Tone 3, Mark 9:17-31

Sunday of St. John Climacus

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 3

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the firstborn of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world great mercy!

Troparion Sunday of St. John, Tone 4

The Lord truly set you on the heights of abstinence, to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, O our Father and Teacher John.

The Lenten Fast

The Lenten season is inaugurated in the Church with the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:15-17). The message is proclaimed in the midst of the congregation: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord".

On this day, the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate our venerable Father among the saints, St. John of Sinai, the author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. No one knows the birthplace or parentage of our venerable Father John of Sinai. In his youth, at the age of sixteen, he came to the wilderness of Sinai and dwelt under the guidance of Abba Martyrius. When Abba Martyrius tonsured our venerable Father John at the age of twenty, he took him and went to that pillar of the wilderness, Abba John the Sabbaites in the wilderness of Gouda where he had with him his disciple Stephen the Cappadocian. When the Sabbaites elder saw them, he arose and took water, poured it into a small basin, washed the feet of the disciple (the young John) and kissed his hand; but did not wash the feet of Abba Martyrius his superior. Abba Stephen was scandalized by the situation. After the departure of Abba Martyrius and his disciple, Abba John noticed that his own disciple was greatly perplexed and said to him, "Why are you so troubled? Believe me, I do not know who the boy is, but today I received the abbot of Sinai and washed his feet." After forty years, he did indeed become the abbot according to the prophecy of the elder.

After the passing of his spiritual father, St. John continued alone in the wilderness in a cave in the Wadi Thola. He traveled from time to time, going at least once as far as Alexandria. He records in *The Ladder* his visit to a large monastic community there and marvels of repentance, obedience, and humility which he observed. In his humility, he counted our venerable George the Wonderworker of Arselaou as his master. In all, he spent some forty years in solitude and stillness. He guided the monks who dwelt in that desert since he was a most excellent and nurturing spiritual father - for in those days there were innumerable ascetics living in cells all through the mountains and valleys of Sinai. From time to time, he received visitors from farther away. At one point, some other monks, prompted to jealousy by the adversary who hates all good, complained of St. John's fame and teaching. In response, he humbly kept strict silence for over a year, until the same fathers who had complained came, asking him to speak again for the benefit of all.

After he had spent forty years in the wilderness, the monks of Sinai asked him to become abbot of the great monastery built by the emperor Justinian beside the Burning Bush of Moses, the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine. In obedience to the fathers, he left his blessed solitude to take up the responsibilities of abbot. It is told that on the very day on which he assumed the office abbot, there came a group of about six hundred pilgrims. When they were seated, our venerable Father John saw someone in the crowd with short hair and wearing a Jewish tunic. This person was going about like someone with authority, directing the cooks, the stewards, the storekeepers, and other workers. After the people left, when the servers all sat down to eat, they sought everywhere for the one who had been going about supervising, but did not find him. Then the servant of God, our venerable Father John, said, "Let him go. The lord Moses did nothing strange in this same place where he served before and which belongs to him." O, the wonder! It had been the Holy Prophet and Lawgiver Moses who had served the guests.

Announcements and Activities

Lenten Vespers— Tuesday, at 6PM.

Presanctified Liturgy- will be served on Wednesday, April 14th at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their noon meal.

Matins with the Full Canon of St. Andrew— Thursday at 6PM.

Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God Friday, at 6PM.

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hours— as you know, the Archbishop blessed us to have social hour outside— weather permitting. Please check the Coffee Hour list for your name and day. Here's mine and council's recommendation for the time being: let's make it simple— bagels, with margarine or jams and coffee. You may add a soup, or another one-pot type of dish, but it should be served by the person hosting. I say this because we are still serving and pouring with gloves and masks and it just makes it easy to set out one bowl and some bread on a plate and to grab a cup of coffee. It also happens to fit with the Lenten rules. Remember, no meat, eggs, or dairy may be served at Coffee Hour until PASCHA on May 2nd. That includes such byproducts as whipped cream, milk chocolate, sour cream, etc. The simpler the fare, the easier will be the service.

Parish Council— will meet today, after the Coffee Hour.

John D. Memorial: today, marks 5 years since Linda D.'s husband, John passed. Memory Eternal.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)—battling cancer. **Natalia**—Olga's friend. Sunday's broth-

At the request of Abba John, abbot of Raitho near the shore of the Red Sea, our venerable father wrote his wonderful book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, in which he sets out the whole of Christian life as a divine ascent of thirty rungs to Christ. This book has been a treasure, a pearl beyond price, to this day. It is useful not only to monastic but to all devout Christians....St. John was true physician of souls and had great spiritual insight into men's behavior. He made detailed observations of the symptoms of men's sin-sick souls, diagnosed their spiritual diseases, and prescribed the appropriate medicine for their recover and salvation. He showed how one can ascend the "ladder of the virtues" step by step and reach the Promised Land, fleeing the Egypt of the passions. Yet, his success was due only to his own life of constant watchfulness, fasting, vigils, and prayers.

The monastic community he shepherded continues to this day beside the Burning Bush, and his teachings guide and direct monastics throughout the world. During Great Lent, *The Ladder* is read aloud in monasteries during meals so the monastics may receive his edifying spiritual counsels for their soul's sustenance, as they simultaneously receive physical nourishment for their bodies.

Today the cave in which he dwelt in the wilderness of Sinai can still be seen, but his resting place is unknown except to the angels. He fell asleep in the Lord in the seventh century. St. John is also commemorated on March 30, the day of his repose.

(Synaxarion for the 4th Sunday of Lent)

From the Lives of the Saints... THE HIEROMARTYR [PRIESTLY-MARTYR] ANTIPAS, BISHOP OF PERGAMUM IN ASIA MINOR

Antipas is mentioned in the Book of Revelation as, Antipas, my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth (Revelation 2:13), that is, in the city of Pergamum. The inhabitants of this city lived in the darkness of idolatry and in extreme impurity. They were slaves to passions. They were slanderers, tyrants and incestuous people. In other words, they were the servants of Satan. Here among them lived Antipas, "as a light in the midst of darkness, as a rose among thorns and as gold in the mire." In this city, he who captured and killed a Christian was deemed good and just. The totality of their pagan belief consisted of soothsaying, interpretation of dreams, serving demons and extreme perversion. Being frightened of Antipas as of fire, the demons appeared to the soothsayers in a dream and confessed how afraid they were of Antipas--and how, because of him, they had to depart from the city. The pagan priests assembled a large number of people against Antipas and interrogated him, trying to force him to deny Christ and worship idols. Antipas said to them: "When your so-called gods, lords of the universe, are frightened of me, a mortal man, and must flee from this city, do you not recognize by this that your faith is a delusion?" The saint spoke to them further about the Christian Faith as the One, True, Saving Faith. They became enraged as wild beasts and dragged the aged Antipas to the temple of Artemis, before which stood an ox cast in bronze. They heated the bronze ox and hurled the servant of God inside. From within the fiery ox, St. Antipas glorified God with thanksgiving, like Jonah in the belly of the whale or the Three Youths in the fiery furnace. Antipas prayed for his flock and for the entire world, until his soul parted from his weakened body and ascended among the angels into the Kingdom of Christ. He died in torments and was crowned with unfading glory in the year 92 A.D.. Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)