



Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

April 3rd , Tone 8, Mk. 9:17-31

**Sunday of St.
John Climacus**

**Troparion of the Resurrec-
tion, Tone 8**

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!

**Troparion of Annunciation,
Tone 4**

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

**Troparion for St. John
Climacus Tone 1**

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body! You were a wonder-worker, 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 through you grants healing to all!

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 Sabbaite in the wilderness of Gouda where he had with him his disciple Stephen the Cappadocian. When the Sabbaite 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.

At the request of Abba John, abbot of Raitho near the shore of the Red Sea, our venerable

Announcements and Activities

Canon of St. Andrew— will be prayed in its entirety on Wednesday, at 7PM.

Presanctified Liturgy— Thursday, April 7th, at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their lunchtime meal. A light, Lenten supper will be served after the Liturgy.

Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God— Friday, at 5:30PM.

Saturday Great Vespers— on Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Sunday Divine Liturgy— 10AM.

Parish Council—will meet next Sunday.

Church School/Adult Ed.— will next meet on Sunday, April 10th, at 9AM .

Coffee Hours— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Aaron and the church youth. Next week's Coffee Hour will be our bagels and coffee week. Remember: No Meat, eggs, dairy or things with dairy in them (sour CREAM, MILK chocolate, etc) may be served at coffee hours until Pascha on April 24th (fish may be served at Coffee Hour on Palm Sunday, April 17th.) A blessed lent to all.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)— battling cancer. Samir's friend, **Johnny**, who has been improving in the battle to save his sight. **Brian**, Sunday's brother. **George and Alex**, health problems. **All those who have lost their lives or are suffering as a result of the current Pandemic** . **Archimandrite Alexander**— Fr. Lawrence's long-time father confessor, who reposed. **Our Vladyka Benjamin**— battling on-set parkinsons. **Tsige Roman and Abraham**— I know we are always mindful of Tsige, but please continue to pray for the work and for Ethiopia, torn by civil war, with all the problems that go with a regional terror. **Reposed Jonathan T. George and Alesis**, Brother and Daughter of Peter and Irene S. **Matushka Ioanna R. reposed. Matushka Priscilla, ill. Anya J**— a longtime friend of the parish who is ill. **Stephen F.**— battling back pain. **John F.**— battling cancer. **Archpriest Anthony**— battling cancer. **Julie**— sister of Kathy M., battling health problems. **Rhoda's requests for Douglas and Kayana. Reposed Constance**— the mother of Andrew F. **Will**— reposed, Michael T.'s brother-inlaw. **Reposed Vadim. Christian** — undergoing some medical testing. **Stacy**— hand surgery. The reposed— **Novice Nonna, Robbie**— cancer. **Raphael**, cancer. Child **Aidan** — seizures. Child **Henry. Robbie** the cousin of Brian R., who reposed after a battle with cancer. **Louis Joseph M.**, had to be hospitalized for a gall bladder surgery. **Victor T.** underwent surgery and remains hospitalized.

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.

(taken from *The Synaxarion*, Fourth Sunday of Great Lent)

***From the Lives of the Saints...* SAINT NICETAS THE CONFESSOR**

Nicetas was born in Bithynia, in the city of Caesarea. His father, Philaret, was tonsured a monk after the death of his spouse, while Nicetas remained with his paternal grandmother. After reaching maturity and completing all of his studies, Nicetas entered the Monastery of Medikion, where the Abbot Nicephorus tonsured him a monk. After seven years of hardship and ascetic labors, Patriarch Tarasius ordained him a hieromonk (priest-monk). Following the deaths of Abbot Nicephorus and Athanasius (Nicetas's faithful companion), the monastic brotherhood elected Nicetas abbot, against his will. For many years St. Nicetas was an example to his brethren of asceticism and a holy life. When Leo V, the Armenian, was crowned emperor (after the pious Irene and the right-believing Emperors Nicephorus and Michael), the iconoclastic struggle was again inflamed. The emperor deposed Patriarch Nicephorus and sent him into exile and, in his place, elevated the heretic Theodotus Cassiteras, a man of impure life. Nicetas was also imprisoned and tortured, but he remained steadfast in his Orthodoxy. He was led from prison to prison, suffering from hunger, thirst, chills, oppressive heat and mockery. But he did not permit himself to waver. He was particularly bothered by the laughter and scorn of a certain Nicholas. One night, Nicholas's deceased father appeared to Nicholas in a dream and rebuked him, saying: "Leave that servant of God alone!" From that moment, Nicholas repented and not only did not annoy the saint anymore, but turned others away from annoying him also. When Leo the Armenian met with a wicked death, the rule of the empire was taken up by the Orthodox Emperor Michael Balbus (the "Stammerer") who liberated all the Orthodox sufferers. Nicetas then withdrew to an isolated place near Constantinople, where in prayer and thanksgiving to God for all things he spent the remaining days of his earthly life. During his lifetime he worked many miracles through prayer. When he died, his body was translated to his monastery. During the funeral procession, many of the sick reached out and touched his body, and were healed. His relics were placed next to the grave of Nicephorus, his spiritual father, and Athanasius, his companion. This great hierarch reposed in the year 824 A.D.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, by St. Nikolai Velimirovic)

"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)