



Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

The 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 of the Archangel Gabriel, Tone 4

Gabriel, Commander of the heavenly hosts, we who are unworthy beseech thee: by thy prayers encompass us beneath the wings of thine immaterial glory, and faithfully preserve us who fall down and cry out to thee:// "Deliver us from all harm, for thou art the Commander of the Powers on high!"

The 4th Sunday of Great Lent, Tone 8, March 26th, Mark 9:17-31

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

Announcements and Activities

Canon of St. Andrew— We have reached the day when we read the whole of the Canon that we divided during the first week. The service offers a unique opportunity in our Liturgical cycle. Those who have made this Liturgical/ascetical offering are most certainly greatly rewarded and are deeply graced by its depths. You may, of course, come for a portion of the service, as well.

Presanctified Liturgy— **THURSDAY, not Wednesday**, at 6PM, as we dedicated Wednesday to the Canon. The Presanctified Liturgy is the Church's magnificent way of composing a Lenten service, with a Lenten feel, while giving us Holy Communion to aid us in our Lenten efforts. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their noon meal. A Lenten meal will follow the service, in the Social Hall.

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

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Church School/Adult Ed.— April 9th, at 9AM.

Coffee Hours— This week's Coffee Hour is our monthly, potluck. Next week's Coffee Hour will be sponsored by Jason and Madeline and Darryl and Laura Beth. From now until PASCHA, on April 16th, we do not allow meat, dairy, eggs or fish at coffee hour, or anything with dairy or meat byproducts: such as chicken stock, sour cream, chocolate, etc. While shellfish is allowed — shrimp, oysters, clams, etc.— fish with a backbone is allowed on March 25 (our feast) and on Palm Sunday (April 9th). If you have any questions beyond these instructions, you may speak to Fr. Lawrence.

Pray for... Sarah, the daughter of Fr. Lawrence's godfather, health issues. **Youseff and Jimmy**— who are ill. **Matushka Ann Hopko**, reposed. **Jonathan**— ill. **Reposed Barbara Ranjo**. Fr. And Matushka's Granddaughter Annabella is past her illness, but still needs prayer for the return all body parts to normal. **Laure-battling Cancer**. **Paul**— ill **Ralph**—ill **Archpriest Lawrence**, from Canada, progressive eye disease. **Tsige Roman**— our beloved Tsige reposed on December 3rd. Please keep praying for her homeland of Ethiopia. **Brian**— ill. **Jonathan**— ill. **Katia**— sister of Shkbarra's Grace, Heather's goddaughter. **Reposed Priest, James**. **Reposed Hierarch Tikhon**. **Diane**— surgery. **Rufin**— soldier in Ukraine. **Elise**, ill. **Sally**, surgery

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 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 recovery 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 Lent)

From the Lives of the Saints THE HOLY ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

Gabriel is the herald of the Incarnation of the Son of God. He is one of the seven archangels who stand before the throne of God. He appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth of the Forerunner. Gabriel said of himself: I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). His name Gabriel means "man-God." The Holy Fathers, in speaking about the Annunciation, comment that an archangel with such a name was sent to signify Who He was, and what He would be like, Who would be born of the All-pure One. He would be the God-man, the mighty and powerful God. Some of the Fathers understood that this same Gabriel appeared to Joachim and Anna concerning the birth of the Virgin Mary, and that Gabriel instructed Moses in the wilderness to write the Book of Genesis. The Holy Fathers say that Gabriel belongs to the first and greatest order of heavenly powers, that is, the Seraphim, since the Seraphim stand closest to God. He is, therefore, one of the seven Seraphim closest to God. The names of the seven are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salathiel, Jegudiel, and Barachiel. To this number some add Jeremiel. Each one has his own particular service and all are equal in honor. Why did God not send Michael? Because Michael's service is to suppress the enemies of the Faith of God, wh

Taken from The Prologue of Ochrid, by St. Nikolai

"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)