



## Weekly Bulletin

# Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

### ***The Sunday of St. John Climacus***

#### ***Troparion of the Resurrec- tion, Tone 4***

When the women disciples 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.

#### ***Troparion of Annuncia- tion, 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 Cli- macus, Tone 1***

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 Fourth Sunday of Great Lent Tone 4, April 14th, Mk. 8:34-9:1***

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."

## **Announcements and Activities**

**Canon of St. Andrew of Crete**— sung in its entirety at 6PM on Wednesday. Those that can come, should do so. It is, of course, possible to come for part of the service. Catechumens should make an effort to come.

**Presanctified Liturgy**— **Thursday**, at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should say Pre-Communion prayers and fast from food and drink from the time after their lunchtime meal to the reception of Holy Communion at the Presanctified Liturgy.

**Akathist to the Theotokos**— This beautiful, poetic composition is sung on the fifth Saturday of Lent.

**Many thanks and Many Years**— to all those who helped make Verenniki yesterday.

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

**Divine Liturgy**— Sunday, at 10AM.

**Coffee Hour**— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Matushka and Elise. Next week's Coffee Hour will be our bagels and coffee week.. Until PASCHA, on May 5th, no meat, eggs or dairy may be served at Coffee Hours. Keep in mind that that includes byproducts: no MILK chocolate, no sour CREAM, no regular Mayo, etc. There are, of course, vegan substitutes for many of these items, and these are fine. Fish (with a backbone) is permitted twice in Lent: on March 25th, our feast day, and on Palm Sunday (April 28th). Shrimp, clams and other shellfish are permitted to be served, but should be prepared in a vegan manner.

**Church School/Adult Ed**— next Sunday, April 21st, at 9AM.

**Parish Council**— will meet today, after Divine Liturgy and Coffee Hour.

**Landscaping Project**— Landscaping crew, Mike Meko will be in touch with you this week. We will likely get plants and plant them on Thursday, of the coming week. We're on the home stretch, let's get out and finish the job with the planting of our flowers in the beds that we composed.

**Pray for...** Sarah, the daughter of Fr. Lawrence's godfather, health issues. **Youseff and Jimmy—who are ill.** **Archpriest Lawrence**, from Canada, progressive eye disease. **Priscilla and Departed, George.** **Luci F. bad knee.** **Newly- Departed Marylyn; ill, Diane, ill, Colin. John Truman**—lightheadedness and a recent fall. , Tom and Amy, who lost their son. **Nicholas, the father of a friend. Rose Marie**— Rachel's mother, cancer. **Barbara H.**—recovering from a fall. **Claude (Moses)**- in need of housing. **Eleni**—aftermath of a stroke. **Sharon. Baby Archie. Phil**— covid. **Reposed Makhoul. Marius and Lucia.** (aka **Darrell and Laura Beth**) health issues. **Todd**, cancer and wife Anna.

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 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 for the third Sunday of Lent, the Cross*)

### **From the Lives of the Saints... SAINT MARTIN THE CONFESSOR, POPE OF ROME**

Martin became pope on July 5, 649 A.D., at the time of the furious debates between the Orthodox and the Monothelite heretics, who held to the belief in a single will in Christ. Reigning at that time was Constans II, the grandson of Heraclius. The Patriarch of Constantinople was Paul. In order to establish peace in the Church, the emperor compiled a small volume entitled the "Typos," which was very favorable to the heretics. Pope Martin convoked a Council of 105 bishops (in the Church of the Holy Savior in the Lateran Palace in October), which condemned this book of the emperor. At the same time, the pope wrote a letter to Patriarch Paul, imploring him to adhere to the purity of the Orthodox Faith and to counsel the emperor to renounce this heretical sophistry. This letter angered both the emperor and the patriarch. The emperor dispatched Olympius, one of his commanders, to Rome to bring the pope to Constantinople in bonds. The commander did not dare to bind the pope, but bribed a soldier to slay him in church with a sword. When the soldier entered the church with the concealed sword, he was instantly blinded. Thus, by the providence of God, Martin escaped death. At that time the Saracens attacked Sicily, and Olympius was ordered to Sicily, where he died. Then, through the intrigues of the heretical Patriarch Paul, the emperor dispatched Theodore, another commander, to bind the pope and bring him to Constantinople, under the accusation that he, Pope Martin, was in collaboration with the Saracens and did not honor the All-pure Mother of God. When the commander arrived in Rome and read the accusation against Pope Martin, the latter responded that this was slanderous and that he had no association with the Saracens, the adversaries of Christianity: "And as regards the All-pure Mother of God, if one does not honor her and does not confess her and does not reverence her, let him be cursed in this world and in the next." However, this did not alter the decision of the commander. Pope Martin was bound and brought to Constantinople, where he lay for a long time in prison, painfully ill, suffering from grief and hunger, until he was finally sentenced to exile to Cherson. Pope Martin lived for two years in exile. He died in the year 655 A.D., offering his soul to the Lord, for Whom he had suffered much. Two years prior to Pope Martin's death, the repentant Paul died. When the emperor visited him before his death, Paul turned his face toward the wall and wept, confessing that he had greatly sinned against Pope Martin, and begged the emperor to release Martin.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, Compiled and written 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)*