

# Sunday of St. John Climacus

Prepared by Fr. George Tsahakis

## OVERVIEW

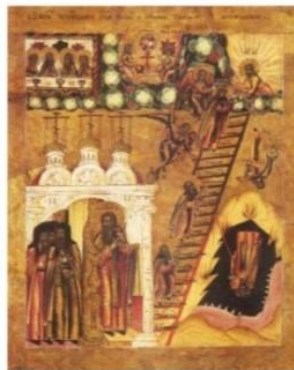
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### *St. John Climacus*

#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Gayle E. Woloschak, PhD

St. John Climacus (or St. John of the Ladder) was a monk of Mt. Sinai who lived and wrote in the seventh century. He is venerated in the Orthodox Church on the fourth Sunday of Great Lent because of his spiritual struggles and his authorship of the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, a book that describes the spiritual struggle to climb closer to God through acquiring ascetic virtues. There are 30 steps on the ladder that correspond to the 30 years of Christ's life, with the entire volume divided into three main sections: general virtues; instruction on overcoming vices and building up the corresponding virtues; and higher virtues that lead to the goals at which ascetic life aims, including prayer, stillness, dispassion, and finally love (*agape*).



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*We are invited to examine  
ourselves in order to learn  
our faults and purify.*

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*The Ladder* was originally written at the request of the abbot of a neighboring monastery, but now its use is widespread in the Church and even in the broader Christian community. Orthodox Christians are called upon to read this book during Lent, and monasteries in particular often read the entire text in the refectory during the Lenten season.

This book calls all to purification through a series of cleansing steps, including denial of self and caring for others. We are invited to examine

**Liturgical Guide for Sunday, March 26, 2023**



## GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

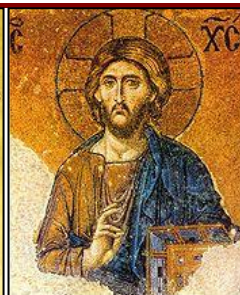
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: [www.patriarchate.org](http://www.patriarchate.org)

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Website: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta Website: [www.atlmetropolis.org](http://www.atlmetropolis.org)

St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church Website: [www.saintchristopherhoc.org](http://www.saintchristopherhoc.org)

### St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church



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Peachtree City, Georgia 30269

Very Rev. Fr. George J. Tsahakis, *Chancellor*

### Liturgical Guide for Sunday, March 26, 2023

ON THIS DAY, THE *FOURTH* SUNDAY OF LENT, WE COMMEMORATE OUR RIGHTEOUS FATHER JOHN OF THE LADDER (CLIMACUS), AUTHOR OF “THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT” (649 A.D.). (*SEE TRIODION INSERT ON NEXT PAGE*). WE ALSO COMMEMORATE the Synaxis in honor of the Archangel Gabriel; 26 Martyrs in Crimea; and Irenaeus the Hieromartyr of Hungary. *Through their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.*

### Welcome to our Parish

We welcome our parishioners who are attending services in person today and we also are grateful for those who are viewing our online video streaming at home. Parishioners and visitors who are sick are asked to remain at home to recover and rest. *Please consider that only baptized and chrismated*

*Orthodox Christians in canonical good standing may approach for Holy Communion. All are invited to partake of the Antidoron ("instead of the gifts") distributed at the conclusion of today's Divine Liturgy.*

### **TODAY's Spiritual Theme From the Triodion:**

On the *Fourth Sunday of Lent*, the Church commemorates the famous saint and ascetic *St. John of the Ladder* (*Climacus in Greek*), who was head of the monastery located on Mt. Sinai for much of his life. St. John got his name from a famous book of spiritual exercises which he wrote and entitled *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, and which he intended to serve as a means of climbing spiritually from earth to heaven. His book of spiritual directions is read in monasteries during Lenten periods and is available to us in English.

### **Liturgy of St. Basil Used Every Sunday during Great and Holy Lent:**

The Liturgy of St. Basil was, until the twelfth century, the chief Liturgy of Constantinople. Its 'Prayer of Consecration' or *Anaphora* is probably the most eloquent of all liturgies, east and west. Powerful in its unity of thought, theological depth and rich biblical imagery, it was celebrated every Sunday and Great Feast Days. Now it is used only ten times during the year: on the five Sundays of Great and Holy Lent; on the Vigils of Pascha, Christmas, and Epiphany; on Holy Thursday and on the Feast of St. Basil, January 1.

### **SPECIAL HYMNS SUNG BEFORE/AFTER SMALL ENTRANCE**

#### **1./2. Resurrectional Hymn (Plagal of the 4<sup>th</sup> Tone) – (Hymnal-pp. 126-7):**

It is sung *before* and *after* the Small Entrance: From on high You descended, O merciful Lord. You accepted the cross and three days in the tomb to free us from the bondage of sin, O our life and resurrection. Glory to You, O Lord.

### **3. Hymn Commemorating St. Christopher – (see music distributed):**

*It is sung after the Small Entrance:* Made comely with garments woven from your venerable blood, you stand before the Lord, the King of Heaven and earth, O famed Martyr Christopher. With the choirs of Angels and the Martyrs you chant, singing the thrice-holy hymn and most awesome praises. Thus, by your intercessions with God, save us, your servants.

### **4. Kontakion sung for Lenten Sundays – (Hymnal-pp. 268-271):**

*It is sung after the Small Entrance:* Victorious Lady, mighty champion, defending us, we your servants now inscribe to you this hymn of thanks, for you rescued us from suffering and tribulation. Theotokos, with your power that can never fail, keep us safe from every danger our whole life long that we may cry to you: Rejoice, O Bride unwedded.

### **5. Megalynarion (Hymn to the Theotokos) – (Hymnal-pp. 298-301)::**

*On the first five Sundays of Great Lent when we use the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, a different hymn is sung instead of “Axion Estin” or “Truly it is proper to call you blessed...”:* In you, O woman full of grace, all creation rejoices, the orders of angels and the race of mankind. O hallowed temple and spiritual paradise, glory of virginal souls, from you our God was incarnate and became a child, He who is God from all ages. By making your womb His throne He made you more spacious than all the heavens. In you, O woman full of grace all creation rejoices. Glory to you.

### **SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES FROM TODAY'S ORTHROS & DIVINE LITURGY**

The Scriptures were not given us for this only, that we might have them in books, but that we might engrave them on our hearts. – St. John Chrysostom
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### **Gospel Reading During Orthros Service (John 20:11-18)**

*“But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ When she had said this, she*

*turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to Me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God.' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that He had said these things to her."*

### **Epistle Reading (Hebrews 6:13-20)**

*When God made a promise to Abraham, because He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

### **Gospel Reading (Mark 9:17-31)**

*Someone from the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to Me." And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw Him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. It has*



often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if You are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!” After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. When He had entered the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “This kind can come out only through prayer.” They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for He was teaching His disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill Him, and three days after being killed, He will rise again.”

**MEMORY VERSE** *(TRY TO COMMIT TO MEMORY):*

“Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” *(Hebrews 12:14)*



**PASTORAL REFLECTION FROM**  
**FR. GEORGE:**

The following reflection is reprinted from ***The Ladder of Divine Ascent by St. John Climacus, whom we remember today.*** (from Patristic Publishing, compiled from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 2017). **+Fr. George Tsahakis**

**Step 9 - On the Remembrance of Injuries**

The blessed virtues are like Jacob's ladder, and the profane vices are like the manacles that fell off the chief of the apostles, Peter. The virtues lead from one to the next and carry up the one who chooses them to Heaven. The vices, by contrast, by their very character both bring forth and choke each other. Since we have just spoken about how absurd anger names "remembrance of injuries" its child, it is fitting that we should speak about this topic here.

The remembrance of injuries is the completion of anger, the custodian of sins, enmity of uprightness, destruction of virtues, venom for the soul, worm in the mind, disgrace of prayer, ceasing of entreaty, lack of love, a pin fastened in the soul, joyless feeling beloved in the tenderness of bitterness, unceasing sin, vigilant iniquity, constant ill-will.

This gloomy and malevolent passion, I mean remembrance of injuries, is one of those that is begotten, but has no children. For this reason, we do not have much to say about it.

The one who has ceased from anger has killed remembrance of injuries, because childbearing only occurs while the father lives.

The one who has achieved love has cast out revenge, but the one who nourishes a feeling of ill-will amasses never-ending misery for himself.

A feast of love destroys hatred, and true gifts calm the soul. However, a feast that is poorly governed is the mother of audacity, and by the window of love gluttony jumps in.

I have seen ill-will shatter the chains of persistent sexual immorality, and afterwards remembrance of injuries, in an incredible manner, did not permit the broken union to be restored. What an amazing spectacle, a demon saving a demon! However, it is perhaps the work of Divine Providence, and not that of demons.

Remembrance of wrongs is far removed from natural, healthy love, but sexual immorality with ease draws close to it, just as at times lice can be observed on a bird.

Be hateful and bitter towards demons and be always at odds with your body. Your carnal nature is a self-willed and deceitful companion. The more you have concern for it, the more it harms you.

Remembrance of injuries an excellent interpreter of Scripture-the sort that adapts the words of the Spirit to its own interpretation. Let it be disgraced by the Jesus Prayer (" Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner") which cannot be recited with it.

After much toiling, when you still cannot take out this thorn, you should make amends with your enemy, even if it is only with your speech. Then it may be that you will be embarrassed by your persistent hypocrisy towards him, and with your conscience biting at you like a fire, you will perhaps feel a genuine love for him.

You will recognize that you have destroyed this vice, not only when you pray on behalf of your enemy, nor when you exchange presents with him, nor when you summon him to dine with you, but only at the point when you learn that he has suffered a spiritual or bodily mishap and you grieve and shed tears for him as if for yourself.

A spiteful hermit is a serpent hidden in a burrow, which contains a deadly venom.

The remembrance of Jesus' afflictions will cure the remembrance of injuries which is embarrassed by his long-suffering.

Worms fester in a rotting tree, and ill-will finds a home in fake humility and quiet people. The one who has expelled it has discovered forgiveness, but the one who abides with it is deprived of grace.

Some for the hope of obtaining forgiveness, take up various labors and toils. But the one who forgets injuries surpasses them. If you are able to quickly forgive, then you be forgiven lavishly.

A sure sign of repentance is the forgetting of injuries. However, the one that abides with them and supposes that he is repenting is like a man who, when asleep, considers himself running.

I have observed people full of resentment suggest that others forgive. Yes, and being embarrassed by their own words, they expelled this passion.

Let no one look upon hateful malice as an innocuous passion, for it is able to reach even spiritual people.



*Step number nine. Let the one who has obtained it courageously entreat the Savior, Jesus, to deliver him from his future sins.*



## *Family Connections*



*Family Activities for the  
Sundays of Great Lent*



## *Family Connections* *Sunday of St. John Climacus*

### *Jacob's Ladder*

Read the OT story of Jacob's Ladder, which is found in Genesis 28:10-17. Discuss how Jesus came down the ladder in order to show us how to ascend it to heaven. Talk about things that help us climb up the ladder and things that make us slide down. The game Chutes and Ladders can be helpful in illustrating this point.





Let us support one another  
during our Lenten Journey...



## Christopher Church Egg Decorating Class (Pysanky)



Sunday, April 2, 1:30 p.m.

at Holly & Jeff's Freebird Farm

Click on the QR code below to register yourself and members of your family who are old enough to complete the 2.5 - 3.0 hour class with other parishioners. The address is provided in the registration confirmation.

### Registration for St. Christopher Church Egg Decorating Class (Pysanky)



 ["Follow" & "Like" our Facebook page.](#) *Be sure to check our status for updates and photos.*

On this the 948<sup>th</sup> Sunday of our St. Christopher's parish community, we continue to thank each of you for your presence and support. Although it may seem like we are just a handful of men, women, and children, if we commit ourselves to serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will experience the miracle of growth as the Holy Spirit brings others into His service to help us build His new church in the Peachtree City, Georgia, area for the glory of God!

## **COMMUNITY SCHEDULE** *(CHECK WEB CALENDAR FOR MORE...)*

Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great & Holy Lent.

**Sunday, March 26 (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of St. John Climacus):**

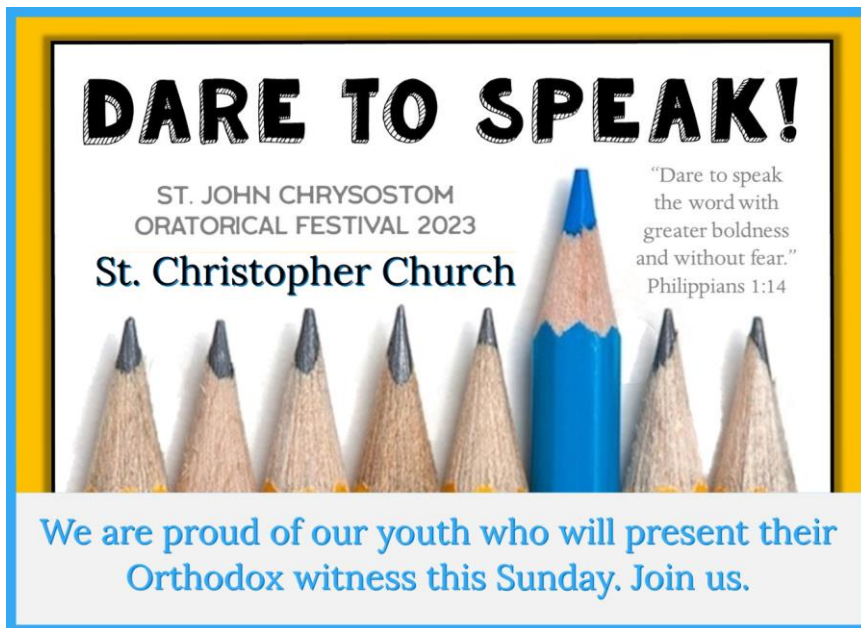
**7:30 a.m. Orthros Service**

**9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy, followed by Parish St. John Chrysostom  
Oratorical Festival**

**11:00 a.m. Religious Education Classes (*for all ages*)**

**11:45 a.m. Philoptochos General Meeting**

***Your continued support and mutual encouragement are essential and appreciated!***



**DARE TO SPEAK!**

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM  
ORATORICAL FESTIVAL 2023

**St. Christopher Church**

"Dare to speak  
the word with  
greater boldness  
and without fear."  
Philippians 1:14

**We are proud of our youth who will present their  
Orthodox witness this Sunday. Join us.**

ourselves in order to learn our faults and purify. Caring for others is a way of cleansing through decreasing our focus on the self. Ultimately, if one is able to follow St. John's steps, the final goal – the love of others – is accomplished. St. John's message is one of repentance, of changing around one's life. St. John wrote, "Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honor your patience. He who really keeps account of his actions considers as lost every day in which he does not mourn, whatever good he may have done in it."

### FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Read the reflection above with your family. To help you apply its message to your daily lives, discuss the following questions:*

1. Explain to your family why it is important to grow closer to God.
2. St. John Climacus authored the book, "Ladder of Divine Ascent" for monastics in the seventh century. Share lessons you remember if you read it. If you haven't, read a recent interpretation that applies its teachings. Share key insights with your family.
3. What virtues do you wish you could attain? What vices do you struggle with?

4. Share with your family your answers in question #3 and seek their support to help each other achieve their goals.
5. Christ taught us to love others... examine your conscience and pray for God's guidance to overcome any obstacles that prevent you from doing so.
6. Discuss with your family the meaning of the icon of the "Ladder of Divine Ascent."



### FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

*"Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honor your patience."*

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*Gayle Woloschak's message is reprinted from "Spiritual Reflections for Great Lent: Journey to Pascha" for IOCC. Discussion questions were developed by Fr. George Tsahakis for St. Christopher Church. Share this resource with your family and friends. Come and worship God with us often. Offer charity to those in need. Witness the power and presence of God to the world through your loving acts of mercy in His behalf. Commune with Him and His Holy Body as His Royal Priesthood. Amen.*