

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church  
4419 Leonardtown Road  
Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor  
(703) 532-8017

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy of  
Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

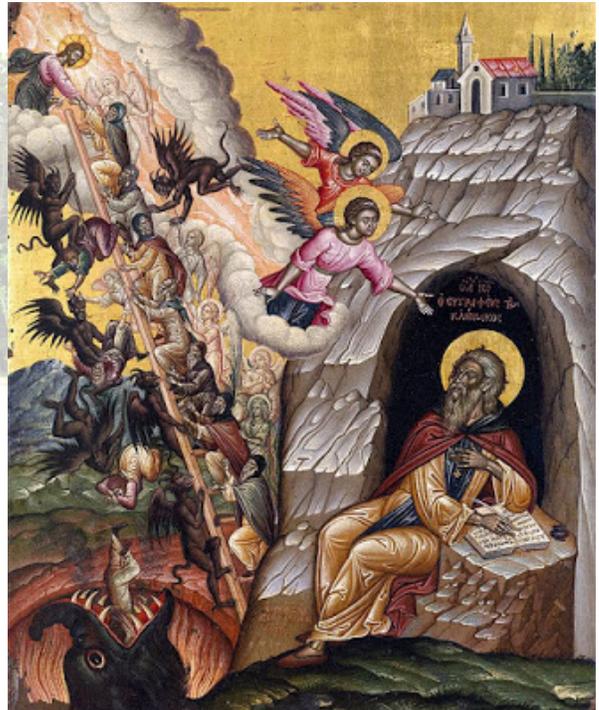
**Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM**

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**



## April 7, 2019 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Great Lent (St. John Climacus) St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow & Enlightener of N. America

Saint Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Apostle to America was born as Vasily Ivanovich Belavin on January 19, 1865 into the family of Ioann Belavin, a rural priest of the Toropetz district of the Pskov diocese. His childhood and adolescence were spent in the village in direct contact with peasants and their labor. From his early years he displayed a particular religious disposition, love for the Church as well as rare meekness and humility. When Vasily was still a boy, his father had a revelation about each of his children. One night, when he and his three sons slept in the hayloft, he suddenly woke up and roused them. He had seen his dead mother in a dream, who foretold to him his imminent death, and the fate of his three sons. She said that one would be unfortunate throughout his entire life, another would die young, while the third, Vasily, would be a great man. The prophecy of the dead woman proved to be entirely accurate in regard to all three brothers. From 1878 to 1883, Vasily studied at the Pskov Theological Seminary. The modest seminarian was tender and affectionate by nature. He was fair-haired and tall of stature. His fellow students liked and respected him for his piety, brilliant progress in studies, and constant readiness to help com-rades, who often

turned to him for explanations of lessons, especially for help in drawing up and correcting numerous compositions. Vasily was called “bishop” and “patriarch” by his classmates.

In 1888, at the age of 23, Vasily Belavin graduated from the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy as a layman, and returned to the Pskov Seminary as an instructor of Moral and Dogmatic Theology. The whole seminary and the town of Pskov became very fond of him. He led an austere and chaste life, and in 1891, when he turned 26, he took monastic vows. Nearly the whole town gathered for the ceremony. He embarked on this new way of life consciously and deliberately, desiring to dedicate himself entirely to the service of the Church. The meek and humble young man was given the name Tikhon in honor of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk.

He was transferred from the Pskov Seminary to the Kholm Theological Seminary in 1892, and was raised to the rank of archimandrite. Archimandrite Tikhon was consecrated Bishop of Lublin on October 19, 1897, and returned to Kholm for a year as Vicar Bishop of the Kholm Diocese. Bishop Tikhon zealously devoted his energy to the establishment of the new vicariate. His attractive moral make-up won the general affection, of not only the Russian population, but also of the Lithuanians and Poles. On September 14, 1898, Bishop Tikhon was made Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska. As head of the Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Tikhon was a zealous laborer in the Lord’s vineyard.

He did much to promote the spread of Orthodoxy, and to improve his vast diocese. He reorganized the diocesan structure, and changed its name from “Diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska” to “Diocese of the Aleutians and North America” in 1900. Both clergy and laity loved their archpastor, and held him in such esteem that the Americans made Archbishop Tikhon an honorary citizen of the United States. On May 22, 1901, he blessed the cornerstone for Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York, and was also involved in establishing other churches. On November 9, 1902, he consecrated the church of Saint Nicholas in Brooklyn for the Syrian Orthodox immigrants. Two weeks later, he consecrated Saint Nicholas Cathedral in NY. In 1905, the American Mission was made an Archdiocese, and Saint Tikhon was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He had two vicar bishops: Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) in Alaska, and Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny) in Brooklyn to assist him in administering his large, ethnically diverse diocese. In June of 1905, Saint Tikhon gave his blessing for the establishment of Saint Tikhon’s Monastery.

In 1907, he returned to Russia, and was appointed to Yaroslavl, where he quickly won the affection of his flock. They came to love him as a friendly, communicative, and wise archpastor. He spoke simply to his subordinates, never

resorting to a peremptory or overbearing tone. When he had to reprimand someone, he did so in a good-natured, sometimes joking manner, which encouraged the person to correct his mistakes.

When Saint Tikhon was transferred to Lithuania on December 22, 1913, the people of Yaroslavl voted him an honorary citizen of their town. After his transfer to Vilna, he did much in terms of material support for various charitable institutions. There too, his generous soul and love of people clearly manifested themselves. World War I broke out when His Eminence was in Vilna. He spared no effort to help the poor residents of the Vilna region who were left without a roof over their heads or means of subsistence as a result of the war with the Germans, and who flocked to their archpastor in droves. After the February Revolution and formation of a new Synod, Saint Tikhon became one of its members. On June 21, 1917, the Moscow Diocesan Congress of clergy and laity elected him as their ruling bishop. He was a zealous and educated archpastor, widely known even outside his country.

On August 15, 1917, a local council was opened in Moscow, and Archbishop Tikhon was raised to the dignity of Metropolitan, and then elected as chairman of the council. The council had as its aim to restore the life of Russian Orthodox Church on strictly canonical principles, and its primary concern was the restoration of the Patriarchate. All council members would select three candidates, and then a lot would reveal the will of God. The council members chose three candidates: Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, the wisest, Archbishop Arseny of Novgorod, the strictest, and Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow, the kindest of the Russian hierarchs.

On November 5, following the Divine Liturgy and a Molieben in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a monk removed one of the three ballots from the ballot box, which stood before the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God. Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev announced Metropolitan Tikhon as the newly elected Patriarch. Saint Tikhon did not change after becoming the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. In accepting the will of the council, Patriarch Tikhon referred to the scroll that the Prophet Ezekiel had to eat, on which was written, "Lamentations, mourning, and woe." He foresaw that his ministry would be filled with affliction and tears, but through all his suffering, he remained the same accessible, unassuming, and kindly person.

All who met Saint Tikhon were surprised by his accessibility, simplicity and modesty. His gentle disposition did not prevent him from showing firmness in Church matters, however, particularly when he had to defend the Church from her enemies. He bore a very heavy cross. He had to administer and direct the Church amidst wholesale church disorganization, without auxiliary administrative bodies,

in conditions of internal schisms and upheavals by various adherents of the Living Church, renovationists, and autocephalists.

The situation was complicated by external circumstances: the change of the political system, by the accession to power of the godless regime, by hunger, and civil war. This was a time when Church property was being confiscated, when clergy were subjected to court trials and persecutions, and Christ's Church endured repression. News of this came to the Patriarch from all ends of Russia. His exceptionally high moral and religious authority helped him to unite the scattered and enfeebled flock. At a crucial time for the church, his unblemished name was a bright beacon pointing the way to the truth of Orthodoxy. In his messages, he called on people to fulfill the commandments of Christ, and to attain spiritual rebirth through repentance. His irreproachable life was an example to all. In order to save thousands of lives and to improve the general position of the church, the Patriarch took measures to prevent clergy from making purely political statements. On September 25, 1919, when the civil war was at its height, he issued a message to the clergy urging them to stay away from political struggle.

The summer of 1921 brought a severe famine to the Volga region. In August, Patriarch Tikhon issued a message to the Russian people and to the people of the world, calling them to help famine victims. He gave his blessing for voluntary donations of church valuables, which were not directly used in liturgical services. However, on February 23, 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee published a decree making all valuables subject to confiscation. According to the 73rd Apostolic Canon, such actions were regarded as sacrilege, and the Patriarch could not approve such total confiscation, especially since many doubted that the valuables would be used to combat famine. This forcible confiscation aroused popular indignation everywhere. Nearly two thousand trials were staged all over Russia, and more than ten thousand believers were shot. The Patriarch's message was viewed as sabotage, for which he was imprisoned from April 1922 until June 1923.

His Holiness, Patriarch Tikhon did much on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church during the crucial time of the so-called Renovationist schism. He showed himself to be a faithful servant and custodian of the undistorted precepts of the true Orthodox Church. He was the living embodiment of Orthodoxy, which was unconsciously recognized even by enemies of the church, who called its members "Tikhonites." When Renovationist priests and hierarchs repented and returned to the church, they were met with tenderness and love by Saint Tikhon. This, however, did not represent any deviation from his strictly Orthodox policy. "I ask you to believe me that I will not come to agreement or make concessions which

could lead to the loss of the purity and strength of Orthodoxy,” the Patriarch said in 1924.

Being a good pastor, who devoted himself entirely to the church’s cause, he called upon the clergy to do the same: “Devote all your energy to preaching the word of God and the truth of Christ, especially today, when unbelief and atheism are audaciously attacking the Church of Christ. May the God of peace and love be with all of you!” It was extremely painful and hard for the Patriarch’s loving, responsive heart to endure all the Church’s misfortunes. Upheavals in and outside the church, the Renovationist schism, his primatial labors, his concern for the organization and tranquility of Church life, sleepless nights and heavy thoughts, his confinement that lasted more than a year, the spiteful and wicked baiting of his enemies, and the unrelenting criticism sometimes even from the Orthodox, combined to undermine his strength and health.

In 1924, Patriarch Tikhon began to feel unwell. He checked into a hospital, but would leave it on Sundays and Feast Days in order to conduct services. On Sunday, April 5, 1925, he served his last Liturgy, and died two days later. On March 25/April 7, 1925 the Patriarch received Metropolitan Peter and had a long talk with him. In the evening, the Patriarch slept a little, then he woke up and asked what time it was. When he was told it was 11:45 P.M., he made the Sign of the Cross twice and said, “Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.” He did not have time to cross himself a third time. Almost a million people came to say farewell to the Patriarch. The large cathedral of the Donskoy Monastery in Moscow could not contain the crowd, which overflowed the monastery property into the square and adjacent streets. Saint Tikhon, the eleventh Patriarch of Moscow, was primate of the Russian Church for seven and a half years. On September 26/October 9, 1989, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church glorified Patriarch Tikhon and numbered him among the saints. For nearly seventy years, Saint Tikhon’s relics were believed lost, but in February 1992, they were discovered in a concealed place in the Donskoy Monastery.

It would be difficult to imagine the Russian Orthodox Church without Patriarch Tikhon during those years. He did so much for the Church and for the strengthening of the Faith itself during those difficult years of trial. Perhaps the saint’s own words can best sum up his life: “May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake.” (*from oca.org*)



### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20**

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 9:17-31**

At that time, one of the crowd said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

# CAMP NAZARETH SUMMER CAMP 2019

*The time for Summer Camp is Rapidly Approaching!!! The clock is ticking!!*

***REGISTER ONLINE STARTING MAR. 1, 2019!!!***

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Dates for the Summer Camping Program

**Week 1: July 14-20, 2019**

Pittsburgh, Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State and Washington D.C. Deaneries

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**Register Online Starting March 1, 2019**

**Register at – *campnazareth.org***

From the Home Page, From the 2019 Summer Camp Icon, or From the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Summer Camp Tab and look for Camper Registration.

If you are Clergy or a Volunteer go to the 2019 Summer Camp Icon on the Home Page or the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Summer Camp Tab and look for the paper forms under Clergy/Volunteers.

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**\$20 Early Bird Discount Per Child!!!!**

(one-time only, not per week)

**Register & pay by May 15, 2019!!!!**

**Online Registration MUST be complete AND payment must be submitted by May 15 in order to qualify for the Early Bird Discount.**

**Registrations after June 15 will incur an additional \$20 late fee.**

- When you register online please note that **you will still need to submit a paper copy of the Medical Examination Form (i.e. Camper Physical)** which must be filled out and signed by a licensed medical professional (licensed physician or physician's assistant). This form will be emailed to you after you complete the online registration process.
- **Payment by check, money order, or credit card is accepted.** Checks and Money Orders are to be made payable to *Camp Nazareth* and sent to *Camp Nazareth at 339 Pew Road, Mercer, PA 16137.*

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

I have spoken often to your charity about fasting and prayer, especially during these holy days. But so far I have imparted nothing to your devout ears and souls about the gifts with which they honor those who love them, and the many benefits they bring about for those who make use of them. These matters are confirmed above all by the Lord's words in today's Gospel. So what are these gifts? They are great, probably the greatest of all. Among other things, they can bestow authority against evil spirits, to cast them out and drive them away, and to free those possessed from their cruelty. When the disciples, referring to the deaf and dumb spirit, told the Lord that they could not cast him out, the Lord told them, "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Mat. 7.21).

Perhaps that was why, when the Lord descended after His prayer on the mountain with its accompanying manifestation of divine light, He immediately came to the place where the man possessed by that demon was (Mark 9.14-17). He had taken His chosen disciples, it says, "and went up into a mountain to pray, and he shone as the sun. And, behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him" (cf. Mat. 17.2-3 and Luke 9.28-30). These two men practiced prayer and fasting more than anyone else, and their appearance while the Lord was praying shows the harmony and concord between fasting and prayer. In their talking with the Lord, it was as if fasting were talking to prayer. As we learn from Moses, the Lord told Cain that the voice of the blood of smitten Abel cried to Him (Gen. 4.8-10). In the same way, all the parts and members of our body suffering hardship because of fasting cry unto the Lord and, joining their voice to the prayer of the faster, pray together with him. They make his prayer highly acceptable, and justify him for having voluntarily undergone the toil of fasting. So then, after having prayed and shone with the divine light, the Lord came down from the mountain and approached the crowd and His disciples, to whom the man with the demon had been brought. On the mountain He showed that the reward for fasting was not merely great but all-surpassing—for He revealed that their prize was divine radiance. Now that He had descended, He would prove that they also win power over demons.

Since it is customary on this Sunday of the fast to read about this miracle in church, let us start from the beginning and go through the whole of the Gospel passage which recounts it (Mark 9.17-31). When Jesus came to the disciples, and those with them, and asked what they were discussing, one of the multitude answered and said, "Master, I have brought to you my son, who has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he tears him: and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away" (Mark 9.17-18).

Why was he foaming at the mouth, gnashing his teeth and withering away? Of all the parts of the possessed man's body, his brain suffers first and foremost, since the demon uses the spirit of the soul within the brain as a vehicle, and from there, as from a citadel, exercises power over the whole body.... So the demon was foaming at the mouth and gnashing his teeth, clashing them together horribly and grinding them in a frenzy. The boy was withering away because of the demon's extreme violence....

The father of the man with the demon went on to tell the Lord that he had asked His disciples to cast him out, but they could not (Mark 9.18). Then the Lord, addressing not just the man but everyone, said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" (Mark 9.19). I think it likely that the Jews who were present at the time had used the disciples' inability to cast out the demon as an excuse for a few blasphemous comments. They did not cease speaking blasphemy when miracles were performed, so what would they stop short of saying if they had an excuse? The Lord was aware of their murmuring and reproaches, and, from afar, proved them wrong and put them to shame, not just with hard-hitting words, but with both deeds and words full of love for mankind. He ordered that the possessed man be brought to Him, and they brought him. When the demon saw the Lord, he convulsed the man, who fell down and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. For He gave the demon leave to demonstrate his wickedness openly (Mk. 9.19-20).

Then the Lord asked the boy's father, "How long has it been since this came to Him?" (Mk. 9.21). The Lord asked this question out of charity, to lead the man towards believing and supplication with faith, since he was so far from believing that he did not even plead for his son to be saved. He had not entreated the disciples at all either. "I spoke," it says, "to them that they should cast him out" (Mk. 9.18). He had not fallen down at their feet or pleaded with them or besought them. Up until then he did not seem to have besought the Lord either. So the Lord left the boy lying wretchedly in front of Him, and addressed the father, asking how long he had been afflicted, and eliciting a request from him. He replied that he had him from childhood and that he had often cast him into fire and water to destroy him. Then he added, "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (Mk. 9.21-22).

You see how lacking in faith the man was. Anyone who says, "If you can," makes it obvious that he does not believe you can. The Lord replied, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mk. 9.23). He did not say this because He was unaware of the man's disbelief, but to lead him step by step towards faith and to show that his lack of faith was the cause of the disciples'

failure to cast out the demon. Observe carefully the evangelist's words. He does not say that the Lord said to the boy's father "If you can believe" just as He almost always demanded faith of those who asked for healing, but as the Master and Guardian of souls, He also strove to heal them through faith. When the boy's father heard that healing would follow upon his own faith, he said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mk. 9.24). See what excellent moral progress he had made! He not only believed that the boy could be healed, but also that the Lord could overcome his own lack of faith, if He was willing. At these words, the people came running together and the Lord rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him" (Mk. 9.25).

This demon seems to have been extraordinarily savage and defiant, as proved by the severity of the Lord's rebuke and His command that he should not return. Apparently, if it had not been for this order, he might have gone back again after having been cast out. He had a strong hold over the man and was difficult to detach. He was deaf and dumb as the man's nature was inadequate to minister to his excessive madness, and had been afflicted with almost total deprivation of the senses. "And the spirit cried," it says, "and rent him sorely, and came out of him: and the man was as one dead; insomuch as many said, he is dead" (Mark 9.26). The demon's cry does not contradict the fact that he was dumb. Speech means sounds which convey a meaning, whereas a cry is an unintelligible sound. The demon was allowed to convulse the man so severely as to make him like a corpse, so that all his wickedness could be openly seen. Nevertheless the Lord took the man by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose, showing in this way what great energy was His. Taking him by the hand was a manifestation of created energy like our own. Raising him up completely unharmed, however, demonstrated uncreated, divine, life-creating energy.

When the disciples asked Him privately, "Why could not we cast him out?", He told them that this particular demon "can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9.28-29). Some people say this must be the afflicted person's prayer and fasting, but it is not so. Anyone in whom an evil spirit is at work, especially one like this, is his tool and completely in his power. So how can he pray and fast for his own good?...

Driving away demons, however, is not required of us, and even if we were able to drive them away it would be of no advantage to us if we lived carelessly. "Many", it says, "will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you workers of iniquity" (Mat. 7.22-23). It is

much more profitable to us to strive to banish the passions of fornication, anger, hatred and pride than to cast out demons. Being delivered from bodily sins is not enough; we must also cleanse the inner energy which dwells in our soul. For out of the heart “proceeds evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness” (Mark 7.21) and so on—these are what motivate people. Also, “Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat. 5.28). Even when your body does nothing, sin can be active in your mind. When your soul inwardly repulses the evil one’s attack by means of prayer, attention, remembrance of death, godly sorrow and mourning, the body, too, takes its share of holiness, having acquired freedom from evil actions. This is what the Lord meant by saying that someone who cleans the outside of a cup has not cleansed it inside, but clean the inside, and the whole cup will be clean (Mat. 23.25-26). “Strive as hard as you can to ensure that your inner labour is according to God’s will, and you will conquer the outward passions” (Abba Arsenios). If the root is holy, so are the branches (John 15.5). If the yeast is holy, so is the dough (Gal. 5.9). “Walk in the spirit”, says Paul, “and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5.16).

Christ did not abolish the Jewish circumcision, but fulfilled it. He Himself says, “I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it” (Matthew 5.17). How did He do this? It was a seal, a sign and a symbolic way of teaching about cutting off evil thoughts in the heart, something the Jews were not very zealous about. They were reproached by the prophets for being uncircum-cised in their hearts (cf. Jer. 9.26 and Rom. 2.25), they were hated by Him who could look into hearts, and in the end they became outcasts. Man looks at the outward person, but God regards the heart, and if it is full of foul or evil thoughts, that man deserved to have God turn away from him. That is why the apostle exhorts us to pray without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2.8).

To teach us to strive for the spiritual circumcision of our hearts, the Lord pronounces the pure in heart and the poor in spirit blessed. He stresses that the reward for this purity of heart is seeing God, and He promises the kingdom of heaven to the poor (Mat. 5.8, 3). By the poor He means those who live frugally and in need. But it is not only such people whom He calls blessed, but also those who are like them in spirit, those who, because of their inner humility of heart and their good purpose, have arranged their outward life accordingly. He forbids not just murder but anger, and commands us to forgive from our hearts those who sin against us. Nor will He accept the gift we offer unless we are first reconciled with one another and let go of anger (Mat. 5.21-24).

His teaching is the same in respect of the passion of fornication, since He declares that an idle look and the resultant desire in the heart is adultery (Mat. 5.27-28). Looking at the subject as a whole He says, “If the light that is in you,” namely, the mind and the reason, “be darkness,” full of the unenlightened assaults of the rulers of darkness, “how much greater is that darkness,” of the body and the senses, which of themselves do not possess the noetic radiance that gives birth to both truth and dispassion? If the light within you is clear, unobscured by fleshly ways of thinking, your soul will be completely radiant, as though a lamp were illuminating you with its light (cf. Mat. 6.22-23 and Luke 11.34). Such is the spiritual circumcision of the heart through which the Lord fulfilled the circumcision of the flesh according to the law, given to the Jews as a sign and a guide towards it (Rom. 2.28-29). As they made no effort to acquire this spiritual circumcision, their own circumcision, as Paul says, “is made uncircumcision” (Rom. 2.25), and they have been estranged from God who does not regard the person (Gal. 2.6, Mat. 22.16, Mk. 12.14, Lk. 20.21), that is, the outward signs of righteousness in the flesh, but looks into the heart, at the invisible movements of our thoughts within us.

May we too, brethren, be on our guard, and let us cleanse our heart from all defilement, lest we be drawn in the wrong direction with the condemned. If the law spoken by Moses “was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect our own salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit” (Heb. 2.2-4). Let us fear Him who examines hearts and minds. Let us appease the Lord of vengeance. Let us make ourselves the dwelling of peace, sanctification, and contrite prayer, without which no one will see God (Heb. 12.14). Let us long with the full assurance of faith for that vision promised to the pure in heart, and may we do everything to attain it, for it is accompanied by eternal life, unfading goodness, inexhaustible riches, unchanging and unending delight, glory and kingdom.

May we all attain to these things in Christ, the King of the ages, to whom alone belong all glory, honor and worship, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit unto endless ages. Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily on the Fourth Sunday in Lent*



## **The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent Before the 13<sup>th</sup> Century**

The Orthodox Church today commemorates Saint John Climacus on the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. However, his primary feast day is celebrated on March 30th. Saint John Climacus reposed in the seventh century, and the first time we hear of his feast celebrated on the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent is in a manuscript from Vatopaidi Monastery dating to the thirteenth century. It then began appearing in many manuscripts of the fourteenth century. This leaves us wondering what the primary focus of the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent was prior to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Saint Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) informs us of the following in his Twelfth Homily which was delivered on the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent: "Since it is customary on this Sunday of the fast to read about this miracle in church, let us start from the beginning and go through the whole of the Gospel passage which recounts it." The "miracle" referred to by Saint Gregory Palamas is the Healing of the Boy with a Demon from Luke 10:25-37. As it is referred to as the received liturgical custom of his day, this miracle must have been the primary focus of the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent for some time prior to the fourteenth century when this homily was delivered, and it certainly was up until the time it was eventually dedicated to Saint John Climacus (it remains until today the Gospel reading of the day). The oldest manuscripts however indicate that the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent was the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This reading was probably replaced by the Healing of the Boy with a Demon sometime between the sixth and fourteenth century. Indications of the Parable of the Good Samaritan can still be gleaned from the Matins Service for this day in the Canon to Saint John Climacus, where it speaks of "falling into the hands of thieves," and humanity traumatized by its sins is given healing by the Savior, who is in fact the Good Samaritan.

But why did the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent become dedicated to Saint John Climacus? There seems to be at least two possible reasons. First, since his feast falls on March 30th, and Canon Law forbids the celebration of saints during Great Lent on weekdays due to its penitent and solemn focus, major saint commemorations were transferred to the nearest Saturday or Sunday in order to be properly celebrated, since they have a resurrectional character. Second, Saint John Climacus authored a book titled *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which in many monasteries was and remains the primary reading material during Great Lent, especially while eating in the dining room. Given that the content of this book elucidates the goal of every monastic and Christian ) in general for Great Lent, a Sunday dedicated to celebrating him and his great contribution to the Church seemed most appropriate. His book perhaps better than any other is the ultimate

guide to help a Christian go through the praxis (actions) of Christian life in order to attain theoria (vision of God).  
– John Sanidopoulos

### Social Team for April 14

Team 6 is up next week – Tucker, Blaydoe M., Woods, Wright RC. Don't forget!

### Church Work Day Scheduled

We are planning to do some yard work, cleaning and organizing in the church and house on April 20 after Divine Liturgy. All are invited and welcome to join in on the fellowship.

### Patriarchal Pence – Support Patriarch Bartholomew



During this season of increased prayer, fasting, and charity all the parishes in our Diocese send a token of our affection to support the work of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. To this end we will take a special collection on Palm Sunday (April 21<sup>st</sup>). Please be generous! [Photo Credit: Nikolaos Manginas]

### April Anniversaries and Birthdays



#### Anniversaries:

Dennis & Phyllis Thomidis 24<sup>th</sup> | Slava & Tatyana Chumak 25<sup>th</sup>  
Richard & Carol Wright 26<sup>th</sup> | Andrew & Shannon McNeil 27<sup>th</sup>



#### Birthdays:

Ryan Harris 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Christos Kopan 5 <sup>th</sup>	Isabella Hampton 7 <sup>th</sup>
Joseph Karbowsky 17 <sup>th</sup>	Norman Harris 19 <sup>th</sup>	Ashley McNeil 19 <sup>th</sup>
Kyle Samson 19 <sup>th</sup>	Bernie Vallandingham 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Mary Diane David 24 <sup>th</sup>
Elizabeth Howl 25 <sup>th</sup>	Rachel Harris 26 <sup>th</sup>	

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***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)