

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

Mark 9:17-31

And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. (KJV)

St. John Climacus

Matthew 4:25-5:12

And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, his disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (KJV)

Today the Holy Orthodox Church arrives at the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. The journey to Pascha is well underway. The events of Great and Holy Week and Pascha are beginning to appear on the horizon.

St. Mark's Gospel for today speaks of Jesus' arrest, death and resurrection. Believers actively participating in the journey to Pascha cherish the Gospel readings.

Jesus' power to heal the afflicted son is clearly described in St. Mark's Gospel. The value of strong belief, prayer and fasting are credited as necessary for healing to occur.

Active participants in the journey to Pascha experience the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Participating in Great Lent by increased prayer and fasting with firm belief results in changes to the believer.

Christ increases in lives of believers participating in the Divine services of Great Lent. Strong faith, prayer and fasting facilitate the transformation in Christ. Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ makes a difference in the believer.

The journey to Pascha is a journey of joy. The pain of the Cross and the suffering of Christ are always in the serious believer's mind. Christ's voluntary suffering and death made possible the unforgettable Resurrection joy.

Grateful believers regularly express gratitude to the Crucified and Risen Lord. Gratitude takes many different forms. Demonstrating love, forgiveness and compassion in daily relationships are the best forms of gratitude toward God.

Being humble and gracious in personal relationships and caring for the soul are ways to show appreciation to the Lord. Ardently following the Lord's commandments reflect deep love for the Lord.

Daily life entails a constant internal battle with evil arising in the heart, mind and soul. This Fourth Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated to St. John Climacus. St. John Climacus is known for defining steps for growth in Jesus Christ.

The journey to Pascha intends growth in Jesus Christ for each participant. All believers in the Church are called to participate in the journey unified in faith and love for the Lord.

Believers around the world and through the centuries unite in the journey to Pascha. Christ's betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection are in believers' hearts, minds and souls of every century.

This Fourth Sunday of Great Lent challenges believers to push forward in the journey to Pascha. The Lord provides daily strength for the journey. Jesus Christ did not shy away from the tragedy of His Death.

Jesus Christ did not withdraw from being arrested and tortured. Christ faced His accusers. Christ defeated death and resurrected. The journey to Pascha is a timeless lesson for believers bringing newness to life each year.

God's Holy Church in wisdom provides Great Lent, Holy Week and Pascha. The Church provides nourishment each day in the journey to Pascha. The Lord God always provides for the faithful.

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. St. John Climacus. Holy Hieromartyr Mark, Bishop of Arethusa. March 29/April 11, 2021. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic