

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)

God's Holy Church desires for believers to grow in Jesus Christ during Great Lent. The journey to Pascha is intended to foster repentance and renewal in Christ. The Church provides services focusing on sin and the value of repentance.

The Fourth Sunday is dedicated to St. John Climacus. St. John is also known as St. John of the Ladder, The book, The Ladder of Divine Ascent describes steps for growth in Jesus Christ.

Believers are challenged throughout life with confronting personal sin and seeking growth in Jesus Christ. The Heavenly Kingdom and Eternal Life are the intended goals of believers.

Today's Gospel of St. Mark proclaims Jesus' teaching on the value of strong belief. Jesus said to the father with the tormented son: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." (Mk. 9:23)

The believer's relationship with Jesus Christ determines the extent of personal belief. The contents of the heart, mind and soul reveal and serve as proof of the depth of belief.

Personal belief requires the necessary help of the Lord Jesus Christ for miracles to occur. The father in St. Mark's Gospel professed his belief and asked for Jesus to help him with his unbelief. (Mk/9:24)

Jesus healed the child. Jesus taught His disciples that prayer and fasting are required for healing to occur. The Church encourages believers to increase prayer and fasting to bring about personal renewal in Jesus Christ.

The journey to Pascha is moving with certainty toward conclusion. If personal growth is to occur, believers need to fully honor Great Lent in daily life. The remaining time of Great Lent is to be used wisely.

Participating in Great Lent is completely voluntary. Believers valuing their identity and life in Jesus Christ will make a serious effort to honor the fasting, prayer and almsgiving expectations of Great Lent.

Praying more, fasting seriously in thought, word and deed and being charitable are essential in the Lenten journey. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving bring joy throughout the journey to Pascha.

Being serious about the journey to Pascha will increase the joy on the Feast of Feasts, Pascha. Each day of Great Lent is an opportunity to invest in the Kingdom of God.

Great Lent is a time for repentance and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ with the heart, mind and soul. The joy in Christ exceeds all joys. Jesus' death on the Cross and Resurrection are definitive reasons to fast, pray and be charitable.

Personal examination and personal honesty with the self and with God are beneficial during Great Lent. A believer's conscience will tell him or her the depth of love for Christ and the degree of personal sin.

Confession and communion offer the opportunities for renewal in Christ and unity with Christ. The journey in life begun at Holy Baptism toward the Heavenly Kingdom and Eternal Life is renewed through confession and communion.

Christ's love is present and manifested in the Church. Believers are healed when being open to Jesus Christ. This Fourth Sunday of Great Lent is the ideal moment to repent and completely embrace Jesus Christ.

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. St. John Climacus. St James the Confessor, Bishop of Catana. March 21/April 3, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic