

## 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)

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent has arrived. This Sunday is dedicated to St. John of the Ladder. St. John's book, The Ladder of Divine Ascent details the steps necessary for spiritual growth.

Great Lent is the time the Church calls believers to focus seriously on growth in the Lord Jesus Christ. Increased prayer and fasting are integral to Great Lent.

Today's Gospel of St. Mark is a lesson in the value of prayer and fasting. The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples explicitly that prayer and fasting were required to heal the condition of the afflicted boy that was brought to him.

Strong faith is central to healing as expressed in St. Mark's Gospel for today. Believers have the opportunity in Great Lent to increase their faith, prayer and fasting.

Taking Great Lent seriously and seeking to grow in Jesus Christ is an individual decision. God's Holy Church encourages all believers to join in the Lenten journey.

Believers are encouraged to be serious throughout Great Lent. New beginnings can take place at any time. Repentance is always possible while the mind functions and there is life in the body.

To experience the blessedness Jesus Christ describes in St. Matthew's Gospel for today, great faith, prayer and fasting are essential. Faithful participants in Great Lent reap benefits for themselves and countless others.

Joy permeates the lives of diligent participants in Great Lent. Disciplined believers come to know the joy in Christ when sin is actively battled and rejected and Jesus Christ is fully embraced.

The remaining time in Great Lent offers daily opportunities to embrace Jesus Christ and to reject sin. God's Holy Church offers daily nourishment for attentive and seeking believers.

The Holy Scriptures, the lives of the saints and martyrs and the Divine services of the Church lead the believer through Great Lent and toward the Paschal celebration.

Prayers to the Mother of God in the Church are constant throughout Great Lent as they are during the whole year. The Mother of God is ever-present to aid believers in prayer and in drawing closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hunger in the soul is readily nourished as believers partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ during Great Lent. Believers need look nowhere but to Jesus Christ in the Church for nourishment of the soul.

The Church provides all that is necessary for individuals seeking to grow in Christ. Attentive eyes and ears will see the presence of the Lord God during the course of each day in earthly life.

Talking to God throughout the day is the way to never be separated from God. God will protect and guard the faithful believer during the journey through life.

Thank God for the presence of Great Lent each year. Thank God for the Holy Gospel. Thank God for the wisdom of St. John of the Ladder. Today is the day to be grateful and to seek growth in Jesus Christ.

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The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. St. John Climacus. March 13/26, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic