

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 anything, 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)

Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste

Matthew 20:1-16

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made the equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

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God's Holy Church has arrived at the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. The Lenten journey is well underway. Believer participation in the journey should be increasing with each day.

St. Mark's Gospel for today extols the virtues of prayer and fasting to deal with spirits that afflict a person. Jesus Christ mentioned the effectiveness of prayer and fasting. His words are recorded in the Gospel.

Every believer during earthly life will be confronted with spirits seeking to derail the person's journey to God's Kingdom and eternal life. Prayer and fasting are the antidote to combat attacking spirits.

Jesus Christ is ever-present for believers to turn to in prayer. Jesus Christ helps believers complete the Lenten journey in the most beneficial way. The Lenten journey intends the believer's increased unity with Jesus Christ.

All that is not of Christ is to be removed from believers' lives during Great Lent. Jesus Christ is to fill the heart, mind and soul each day. Growth in Christ is the prominent theme for the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent.

St. John Climacus' book, The Ladder of Divine Ascent, comes to mind on this Sunday. St. John identifies the steps to take for ascending to the heights of the life in Jesus Christ.

Great Lent is the time for deep personal reflection and analysis. Believers are encouraged to honestly measure their growth in Jesus Christ since exiting the Baptismal font.

Growth in Jesus Christ is always possible while the mind functions. Repentance is an essential and beneficial expectation during the Lenten journey.

Jesus' Death and Resurrection are mentioned in St. Mark's Gospel for today. Keeping Jesus' Death and Resurrection constantly in mind helps the believer to cherish each moment of life and Christ's love for each person.

Thank God for the present teaching on the value of prayer and fasting. Always remember and take to heart Jesus voluntarily ascending the Cross and rising from the Tomb.

Great Lent is a special time in the Church for all believers. Great Lent benefits each serious participant. Great Lent enriches each parish and the communities in which parishes are located.

In this world where violence is all too common, believers actively participating in Great Lent in their parishes stand against violence and for peace.

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. St. John Climacus. Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. March 9/22, 2026. Father Rodney Torbic