

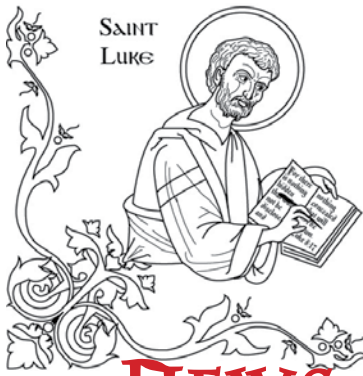
SAINTS OF THE DAY

**Sunday, March 22nd, 2026 • 4th Sunday of Lent
Sunday of St. John of the Ladder**

Virgin-confessor Drosida of Antioch, daughter of Emperor Trajan, and with her five Virgin-martyrs (104-117); Martyrs Kalliniki and Vasilissa of Rome (252); Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra, Priest of Ancyra (362); **Saint Isaac the Confessor, founder of the Dalmatian Monastery at Constantinople (383)**; Saint Epaphroditus, by tradition the first Bishop of Terracina in Italy (1st century); Saint Paul, Bishop of Narbonne, Brittany (3rd century); Saint Lea of Rome, an aristocrat in Rome who on the death of her husband entered the convent of St Marcella (384); Saint Deogratius, Bishop of Carthage in North Africa (457); Saint Octavian and Companions, Archdeacon of the Church in Carthage in North Africa, martyred with several thousand companions under the Arian Vandal King Hunneric (484); Saint Saturninus and Companions, a group of ten martyrs in North Africa; Saint Trien, a disciple of St Patrick and Abbot of Killelga in Ireland (5th century); Saint Darerca of Ireland, sister of St Patrick of Ireland (5th century); Saint Fáilbe mac Pípaín, the eighth Abbot of Iona in Scotland (680); Martyr Basil of Mangazea in Siberia, Wonderworker (1602); New Monk-martyr Euthymius of Dimitsana and Mt. Athos, at Constantinople (1814); Hieromartyr Basil (Zelentsov), Bishop of Prilutsk, Vicar of Poltava (1930); New Confessor Schema-abbess Sophia (Grineva) of Kiev (1941), and her priest Demetrius Ivanov (1934); “The Izborsk” Icon of the Mother of God (1657).



A detailed description of the cover icon can be found on our website,
www.stlukeanniston.org



ST. LUKE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America

1415 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, AL 36207

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NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **We welcome our visitors.** Please join us for a potluck meal after Liturgy so you can get to know us. Communion is for Orthodox Christians who have fasted before Liturgy but everyone is welcome to the blessed bread an Altar Server will offer.
- Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things to all Thy servants who are celebrating birthdays, namesdays and anniversaries, and preserve them for **MANY YEARS!**
- Divine Liturgy for the **Annunciation** will be on Wednesday at 11 a.m. preceded by Great Vespers on Tuesday at 4 p.m.
- We will baptize **Michaela** and **Gabriela**, **Beth** and **Richard** on Saturday at 3 p.m.
- The **schedule** for **Holy Week** is on the back of the bulletin.
- Next Sunday we will have a **pannikhida** for the anniversary of **Paul Goldman's** repose.
- Please look over the **sign-up sheets** in the dining room for Pascha and Holy Week preparations.

This Week's Fasting, Services and Scripture Readings

Mon., 3/23	Tues., 3/24	Wed., 3/25	Thurs., 3/26	Fri., 3/27	Sat., 3/28	Sun., 3/29
<i>Great Lent</i>						
		Divine Liturgy, 11 a.m.			Holy Baptism 3 p.m.	Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.
	Great Vespers, 4 p.m.	Feast of the Annunciation			NO VESPERS	Brunch & Fellowship
Gen. 13:12-18	Gen. 15:1-15	Gen. 17:1-9	Gen. 18:20-33	Gen. 22:1-18	Heb. 9:24-28	Gal. 3:23-29
Prov. 14:27-15:4	Prov. 15:7-19	Prov. 15:20-16:9	Prov. 16:17-17:17	Prov. 17:17-18:5	Mark 8:27-31	Luke 7:36-50
Isaiah 37:33-38:6	Isaiah 40:18-31	Isaiah 41:4-14	Isaiah 42:5-16	Isaiah 45:11-17	Hebrews 9:1-7	Gal. 3:23-29
					Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28	Matt. 4:25-5:12

Service times are subject to change. Any questions, text Subdeacon Nicholas @ (256) 343-1141 or nmbailey@me.com. You can also visit stlukeanniston.org for the latest schedule.

Divine Liturgy

of St. Basil the Great

Troparia/Kontakia

REFER TO PAGE 6 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 8)

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! * Thou didst accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings! ** O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Troparion to St. Luke the Evangelist (Tone 5)

The Holy Apostle, the all-hymned Luke, * who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ * as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles * and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ, * let us praise with sacred hymns * as a Physician who healeth the infirmities of man * and the ailments of nature, * who cleanseth spiritual wounds *** and prayeth unceasingly for our souls.

Troparion for St. John of the Ladder (Tone 1)

Dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body, * you were a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John. * You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil and prayer, * healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith. * Glory to Him Who gave you strength! * Glory to Him Who granted you a crown! ** Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

Kontakion to St. Luke the Evangelist (Tone 2)

Thou becamest a disciple of God the Word, * with Paul thou didst enlighten all the world, * casting out its darkness *** by composing the Holy Gospel of Christ.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

Kontakion for St. John of the Ladder (Tone 4)

The Lord truly set you on the heights of abstinence, * to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, ** O our father and teacher John.

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion for our Steadfast Protectress (Tone 6)

Steadfast Protectress of Christians, * constant Advocate before the Creator; * despise not the entreating cries of us sinners, * but in thy goodness come speedily to help us who call on thee in faith. * Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, ** O Theotokos, for thou dost always protect those who honor thee!



Scripture Readings

REFER TO PAGES 7-9 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

Prokeimenon

Tone 8

(for the Resurrection)

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God!

V. In Judah God is known; His Name is great in Israel.

Tone 7

(for St. John of the Ladder)

V. Let the saints exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches!

The Epistle Reading

Hebrews 6:13-20

(for the Resurrection)

Brethren, when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Ephesians 5:9-19

(for St. John of the Ladder)

Brethren, walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Alleluia

Tone 4

(for the Resurrection)

V. Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!

V. Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!

Tone 4

(for St. John of the Ladder)

vs: They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

The Gospel Reading

Mark 9:17-31

(for the Resurrection)

At that time: a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, “How long has he had this?” And he said, “From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again.” And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.” They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise.”

Matthew 4:25-5:12

(for St. John of the Ladder)

At that time: great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decap’olis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to 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 those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 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 sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.”

Theotokion

(for the Liturgy of St. Basil)

REFER TO PAGES 21-22 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

*All of creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace:
the assembly of Angels and the race of men.
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,
the glory of virgins,
from whom God was incarnate and became a Child:*

*our God before the ages.
He made thy body into a throne,
and thy womb He made more spacious than the heavens.
All of creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace.//
Glory to thee!*

Only by Prayer and Fasting

Mark 9:17-31

From *The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew*
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

14-18. And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him, saluted Him. And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh hold of him, it teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and wasteth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they could not.

When He came to His disciples, that is, to the nine that had not gone up onto the mountain with Him, He saw that they were being questioned by the Pharisees. For the Pharisees had seized the opportunity of Jesus absence to attempt to turn the disciples away from the Lord. The multitude, however, suddenly caught sight of Him, and greeted Him. They had been longing to see Him, and now they caught sight of Him and greeted Him as if He had just returned from a long journey. Some say that even His appearance had become more beautiful from the light of the Transfiguration which drew the multitude towards Him to greet Him. A man in the crowd spoke in answer to the Lords question. This man was weak in faith, as even the Lord attests when He says, *O faithless generation*, and again, *all things are possible to him that believeth*. The man himself attests to his unbelief when he says, *Help Thou mine unbelief*. His complaints against the disciples clearly shows his unbelief. For he ought not to have accused them in front of everyone, but privately.

19-27. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me. And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tore 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, Since 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 unclean 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 tore him much, 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.

The man who approached the Lord accused the disciples of not having the power to heal. But the Lord turns the blame onto him, all but saying, "It is your unbelief which is the cause of your sons not being healed." The Lord does not address only this man, but He directs this saying to all, reproaching all the Jews for their unbelief. For it is likely that many of the bystanders were also scandalized by the disciples inability to heal. The Lord shows that He welcomes death, when He says, *How long shall I be with you?* meaning, it is a torment to Me to live with you and your unbelief. But though He reproaches them, He grants the healing as well. He does not desire to heal the son as a show of His power, but rather He proceeds with great humility. See how He does not attribute the healing to His own power, but to the mans faith, when He says, *All things are possible to him that believeth*. As soon as He saw a crowd beginning to gather around, He rebuked the spirit, not wanting to heal in front of the multitude as though for show. When He rebuked the spirit and said, *Come out of him, and enter no more into him*, this suggests that because of the mans unbelief, the demon

would have again entered into him if it had not been prevented by the Lord's command. The Lord permits the spirit to rend the son, so that all might recognize the attack of the demon, and understand that it would have killed the man if it had not been held in check by the hand of God. A man is thrown by a demon into the fire of anger and desire, and into water, meaning, into the pounding surf of worldly cares. This demon is both mute and deaf. It is deaf, not wanting to hear the words of God; and it is mute, not able to teach others what ought to be taught. But if Jesus, Who is the Word of the Gospel, should take him by the hand, that is, strengthen his power to act, then that man will be freed from the demon. See how God first helps us, and then we ourselves are required to work. For the Evangelist says that *Jesus lifted him up*—this is the divine help, *and he arose*—this is the effort of the man himself to do good.

28-29. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast it out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

The disciples were afraid they had lost the grace which the Lord had given them, and this was why they had not been able to cast out the demon. See that out of respect they approached the Lord privately. *This kind*—what kind? The kind which may make their abode in lunatics, or, in general, the whole race of demons, does not come out except through prayer and fasting. Both the one suffering, and the one about to heal, must fast. Both are necessary. Good sense dictates that the one suffering must fast. He must not only fast, but also pray; and he must not only pray, but also fast, for true prayer is rendered when it is yoked to fasting. When the one who prays is not weighed down by the effects of food, his prayer is not burdened and ascends easily.

30-31. 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 He is killed, He shall rise the third day.

Whenever the Lord spoke of His passion on the cross, He would precede and follow His words with miracles, so that no one could think that He would suffer because He was powerless. And when He spoke sad words, such as, *they shall kill Him*, He would add words of joy, *He shall rise the third day*, teaching us that gladness always follows after grief, and that we should not anguish needlessly in our sorrows, but should hope for better things



God's Unchangeable Oath

Hebrews 6:13-20

From *The Explanation of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews*
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

6:13-14. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. There are many who have inherited the promises by faith, but Paul passes over them for now and saves them for later. He only mentions *Abraham* because he is such a revered figure and he more than any other had promises made to him and obtained them. Paul shows that the Hebrews must not lose heart, but wait on God, for God does not usually fulfill his promises quickly, but only after much time has passed. When did God *swear by himself*? Either in the same passage where he says, *I have sworn by myself*, (GEN 22:16) or perhaps one might take the word *surely* as an indication of God's *swearing by himself*. *Surely* [ē mēn] means the same as "indeed" [ontōs mēn] nothing less than confirmation of the truth, and what else is the truth but God himself? That is why the Lord makes the same oath in the Gospels when he says, *amen, amen* [amēn] I say unto you. *He can swear*

by no greater, so he swears by himself, just as his Father does, Others think that it was the Son himself who spoke to Abraham of old, since the Scripture says: *the angel (angelos) of the Lord called Abraham.* (GEN 22; I 5) “The Father could not plausibly be an angel; the Son is the *Messenger (angelos) of great counsel?*” (ISA 9:6)

415. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. Why does Paul say at the end of this epistle, “*these all received not the promise, but saw it from afar and hailed it,*” (HEB 11:39) but here he says that Abraham *obtained the promise?* He is not talking about the same people: this passage is about the promise of blessings in this life, which Abraham eventually *obtained*, and the other passage is about heavenly blessings, which they have not yet *obtained*. Both Abraham, who *obtained* them, and those have not yet *obtained* them, are meant to encourage the feeble spirits; on the one hand, we too shall *obtain* the *promise* if we *patiently endure*, and on the other hand, if he did not achieve the blessings even after so many years of maturity, we are fools to be frustrated if we have not yet achieved them. Note how Paul says that, *after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise*, in order to show how great the power of *patient endurance* is; the *promise* alone did not do all the work, but only together with endurance. At the same time, Paul also cautions them by implying the opposite, that the *promise* can be revoked if we lose faith. The same thing happened to the people in the wilderness long ago who lost faith and did not obtain the promise at all. But someone might protest: “Why did the saints not *obtain the promise after patiently enduring*, as Paul says at the end of the letter?” One day, they will *obtain* it. But the people who grumbled neither *obtained* it then, nor will they ever *obtain* it.

6:16. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. That means, “*An oath* settles all *strife* beyond any doubt.” People make many claims, and they are contested on both sides, but ultimately they make an *oath* to *confirm* it, which settles any disputes.



6:17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That means, “Therefore, because an *oath* engenders the most confidence in men, God swore an *oath*.” Or else, *wherein* could mean, “*in* swearing the *oath* by himself, God showed us abundantly that he will certainly and *immutably* do what he promised.” God must be believed even when he does not swear an *oath*, but he condescends to us, and does not consider his own dignity, but only how he might persuade us, even tolerating unworthy things to be said of him. We the faithful are the *heirs of the promise*, who receive the blessing in his seed, which is Christ. (Cf. GAL 3:16) Observe how according to Paul even back then the Son was already the mediator between God and men, for it was through the Word that God the Father swore that oath.

6:18. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie. What *two things?* Merely saying and promising something on the one hand, and adding an oath to the promise on the other. God included the oath, because it lends the promise credibility among men. *In which* means, “based on *which*,” these *two things*, God demonstrates that his promise is perfectly reliable and it is *impossible* for him to lie. You should think of God swearing an oath for our benefit, even though it was beneath his dignity, the same way Paul says that Christ, *learned obedience by the things which he suffered*. People consider *learning* by experience more credible. **We might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.** That means, “a great encouragement and exhortation.” God’s promise was not so much given for Abraham’s sake as for ours, for we have *fled* to him *for refuge*, meaning, “put our hope in him.” What are we exhorted to do? *To lay hold upon the hope set before us*, meaning, “the promises made to Abraham and fulfilled

in our days, and not to doubt the heavenly blessings to come, in which we have put our hope, but *to lay hold upon the hope* and never let it go.” For the promise to Abraham is a promise to us as well, and especially to us who have faith in Christ, as Paul said earlier.

6:19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast. The *hope we have* is like an *anchor*. Just as an *anchor* holds the ship fast when the sea churns, so too *hope* makes fast and immovable those who are tossed by tribulations. Paul does not only call *hope* an *anchor*, but a *sure and stedfast* anchor, for when the *anchor* is rotten or flimsy, it cannot keep the boat from rocking. He is right to call it an *anchor*, not a foundation, because a foundation implies well-grounded and philosophical people, while an anchor is for those caught in rough seas, being tossed by waves of tribulation like the Hebrews were. **And which entereth into that within the veil.** Paul said earlier: “Just wait, and what you hope for shall come to pass.” Here he gives the fuller picture: “We already have it through our hope. For hope has *entered into* heaven and set us among the promises, even though we are still here below and have not yet claimed them. Hope is strong enough to make men of earth into men of heaven. Just as in the Old Testament the veil separated the holy place from the rest of the tabernacle, so too heaven is a veil for us, separating the things of earth from the divine, celestial realities.”

6:20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus. Paul confirms what he said about hope *entering* into heaven, correlating it with what actually happened. “Christ did in fact *enter* in, and not only that, he entered as a *forerunner*, showing that we too must *enter* as well. A person is only a *forerunner* if there are those who follow, and the space between the *forerunner* and the followers is not all too great, as with John the Baptist and Christ. So do not dismay, even though we have not yet *entered whither the forerunner is for us entered.*” Paul does not merely say forerunner, but further reassures his listeners by saying *for us*, as if to say: “He himself had no need to *enter* there—how could he? He is God!—but just as he took on flesh for our sake, so too he entered into *that within* the heavens to open a way for us. Therefore we shall certainly *enter* in ourselves.” Or else, *for us* could mean, “to intercede for us with the Father, just as the high priest entered into the holy place once a year to make atonement for the people.” **Made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.** This too is great comfort, for our *high priest* is in heaven, and is far better than the *high priest* of the Jews. He is better in kind, for he is not of their order, but *after the order of Melchisedec*. He is better in place, for he is in heaven above, not in the tabernacle. He is better in covenant, for his covenant is permanent, and it embraces greater and more perfect things—his covenant is everlasting, not temporary. He is better in person, for he is the Son of God. So do not fret. I have been saying all these things as pertains to his incarnation, for it is in the flesh that he became *high priest.*”

Our Divine Ascent, A Journey Full of Hope

People try to find happiness all the time. It is a part of our nature to look for it. In the Gospel, the Lord promises His apostles, and by extension to all of us, “Your sorrows will turn into everlasting joy.” Too often, however, people find that their happiness does not last, and their solace and comfort are only an illusion. Frustrated, they continue to look elsewhere, but the more they search, the more they lose their peace and comfort. Their lives become a bottomless void they do not know how to fill. The everlasting joy that the Lord promises to all His children is out of their reach.

As we celebrate the Sunday of Saint John Climacus four weeks into the Great Lent, the Church invites us to

examine if we are looking for the promised joy in the right place. Are we giving too much weight to material things? Are we letting our sinful passions take us prisoner? It reminds us to turn our eyes to God, feel His presence in us, and pray that our relationship with Him lasts and deepens.

In his famous book, “The Ladder of Divine Ascent”, Saint John Climacus challenges us to step out of our comfort zone and depart on a spiritual journey. He dares us to rise above the sinfulness of the world. He portrays the journey before us in the image of a ladder of thirty steps.

Our ascent on the ladder is a lifetime project. Progress will be long and arduous, and temptations will be many. Yet it is still a journey of great hope because it leads us to the Lord and His Kingdom of Heaven. John Climacus’ ladder is similar to one that the prophet Jacob saw in his vision at Bethel: its top reaching heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. It is nothing like the mountain of the Greek athlete Sisyphus, condemned to rolling up a boulder for the rest of his life, only to see it tumble down from the top.

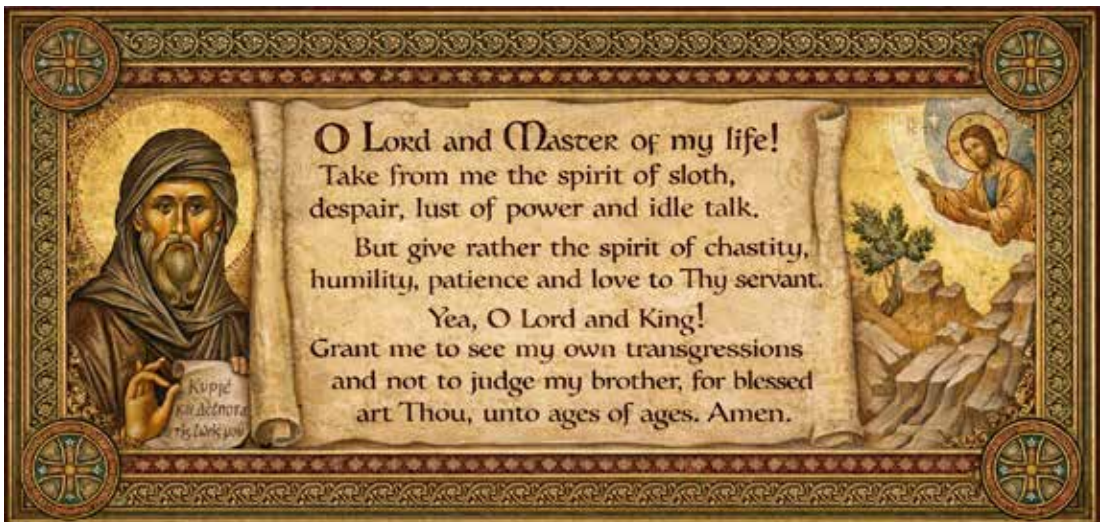


As shown in the icon of Saint John Climacus, many people are climbing the ladder toward Christ. We can see multiple shadowy figures pulling some of them off of the ladder, and these represent the demons and the demonic forces. Yet the Lord is waiting for them at the top. The holy angels are greeting them. Standing amid his brethren, St. John Climacus himself is praying for those on the ladder to persist in their divine ascent.

Each day in our continuing Lenten journey is like going up the ladder of Saint John Climacus. As we endure in our fasting, intensify our prayer life and engage in almsgiving, we come closer to our prize in heaven, The angels of God and all of the saints helping us do this spiritual work.

Hopefully, our spiritual journey up the ladder will become better and more Christ-like every day. Some days, we may find ourselves off track, distracted or maybe off the ladder. But the Lord always gives us a chance to do better. He sends us His grace to continue our ascent and welcome us into the Kingdom of Heaven..

<https://lobitel-minsk.org/en/sunday-of-john-climacus>



HOLY WEEK 2026

St. Luke Orthodox Church • Anniston, Alabama



LAZARUS SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH

Divine Liturgy 9 am

Great Vespers 4 pm

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 5TH

Divine Liturgy 10 am

HOLY MONDAY, APRIL 6TH

Bridegroom Matins 9 am

HOLY TUESDAY, APRIL 7TH

Bridegroom Matins 9 am

HOLY WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8TH

Bridegroom Matins 9 am

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 9TH

Vesperal Liturgy 8 AM

The Last Supper

12 Passion Gospels 4 PM

The Crucifixion

HOLY FRIDAY, APRIL 10TH

Royal Hours 8 am

Vespers w/Procession 3 pm

The Burial

Lamentations 4 pm

The Praises

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 11TH

Vesperal Liturgy 8 AM

Holy Pascha 11^{:30} PM

Nocturns, Matins & Divine Liturgy

followed by blessing of

Pascha Baskets & Feast

HOLY PASCHA, APRIL 12TH

NO MORNING LITURGY!

Agape Vespers 3 PM

followed by Picnic & Egg Hunt