

the life of salvation. He is not writing a treatise to educate men about some future salvation, but to instruct them in the active life of the present, of *theosis* and transfiguration of the body—of the person—into that which is pure and divine.

Asceticism, in his understanding, is nothing more than the forceful training or conditioning of the human person into its natural state. It is the human (and here, again, we speak of ‘human’ as both body and soul) alignment with the will of God, such that our wilful opposition to His divine plan is removed, piece by piece, little by little, and true *theosis* can occur.

Thus can Klimakos’ speak of repentance in moving, driving, even harsh terms. The changing of the person seems, to him, analogous to a battle; for just as a soldier’s enemy has spent years in training to defeat him, so has an individual’s flesh spent a lifetime growing accustomed to its fallen and sinful state, and thus presents the repentant ascetic with a formidable foe... To defeat an enemy requires active combat, and this is precisely what is described in the *Ladder*...

There is a darkness to sin which the Saint readily admits, and this darkness is caused by a separation from ourselves and from God. If God is joy, then our distance from Him means our absence of participation in joy itself. And so, as we progress and ascend along the path of mournful repentance, and as we attain again to the natures which are properly ours, we begin to feel joy in new and powerful ways. This is not the joy that we have formerly known, brought on by the gratification of our fallen desires. It is, rather, a holy and spiritual joy, given of God Himself and wrought in the human person through the process of spiritual growth. It is ‘joyful sorrow’, stemming from our mourning and the grace of God.

As we ascend the ladder of ascetic struggle, and obtain an ever more intense and heartfelt repentance, we are pulled by God into the heart of true joy; and this is St John’s great promise to those in his spiritual care.

Excerpts from *John Klimakos: On Repentance That Leads to Joy*, M.C. Steenberg, www.monachos.net

St. Ignatios of Antioch Melkite Church

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4th Sunday of Lent

April 3, 2011

Tone: 4

Eothinon: 1



This Week

Today:

Sunday of our father John Climacus
 Commemoration of Nicetas the Confessor
 30 minute class on Baptism (DVD series, Fr. David Anderson)

Wed. 6:30 PM, Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts,
 Followed by potluck supper

Fri. 6:30 PM, Final Akathist

This Month

Tues., April 12 Parish Advisory Council, 6:30 PM

Sat., April 16 Lazaros Saturday, Divine Liturgy 10 AM

Sun., April 17 Palm Sunday

Holy Week services will be held every evening as usual.

Sun., April 24 Pascha

*Publicans’ Prayers on 2nd and 4th Fridays at **1:00 PM**
 at the Prides’ house, 2329 Norton Dr., 706-790-7575*

And on 1st Saturdays at 5:00 PM at the church

	<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Daily</u>
Orthros	9:15 AM	Vespers 5:30 PM
Divine Liturgy	10:00 AM	

This Sunday's Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

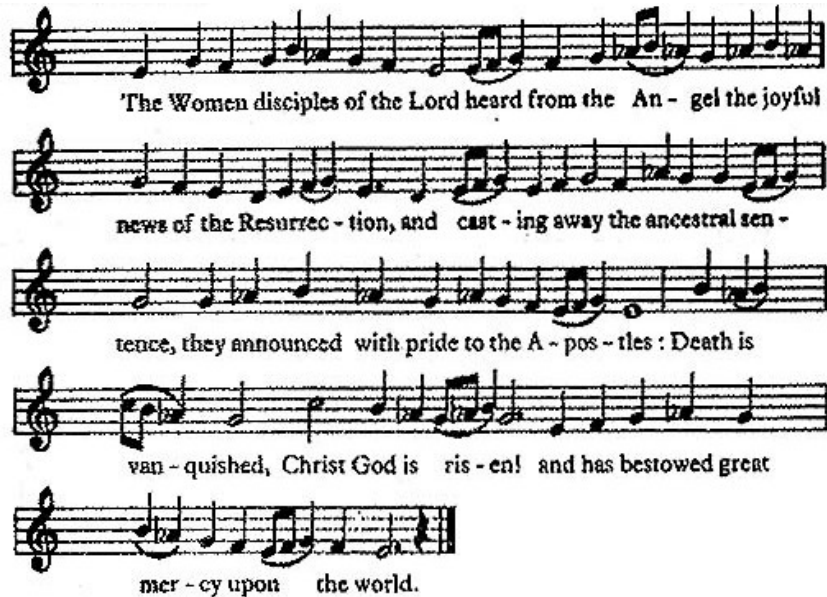
Antiphon Prayer (Said at the end of the Great Synapte)

O Lord, Lover of mankind, You saved the people of Niniva as they repented, fasting and weeping. Have mercy on us, for we fall short of any defense. And since You are compassionate, strengthen in our hearts our faith in your name and steady our footsteps in the way of your Commandments.

For You are good and forbearing, O our God, and to You we render glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever.

Hymns:

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 4



The Women disciples of the Lord heard from the An - gel the joyful
news of the Resurrec - tion, and cast - ing away the ancestral sen -
tence, they announced with pride to the A - pos - tles : Death is
van - quished, Christ God is ris - en! and has bestowed great
mer - cy upon the world.

Troparion of John Climacos, Tone 8

You are a true teacher for those in the monastic life, O holy John, setting out the steps of your lessons as a divine ladder leading us up through the purification of asceticism to the light of contemplation. O venerable father, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

the distance between us because our experience of being close to Him is so small, let us ask ourselves, "How far am I from the people who surround me? How little love, how little loyalty, how little gift of self, how little rejoicing in my neighbour there is in me. How much there is of judgement, of indifference, of coldness, of forgetfulness". And then we will be able to say, if I am like that it means that I am not God-centred, that God is *not* the King reigning supreme in my heart and mind and my whole being and life.

This is why St John Climacus calls us to give absolute centrality to the way in which we relate to God, because everything else will depend upon it. God is like the key of harmony that allows a tune to be read and sung. He is, as another writer says, the thin string that keeps together flowers which otherwise would fall apart - even flowers, even virtue, even beauty, even truth fall apart if there is not that wonderful love, exultation and joy which is given only by our communion with God, because He is love, He is life, He is truth, He is joy and light and exultation.

Let us therefore turn to repentance in the sense in which St John Climacus sees it: not an empty bewailing of our past, not a useless, barren regret at our not being what we wish we were, but a cry to God, "Come, Lord, and come soon!" And if we cry with all our heart, all our mind, all our *need*, then God will come, then we will find ourselves in communion with the Living God and all things will become beauty; we will have entered into the Kingdom of God. Amen

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

Ladder of Divine Ascent

Our acts of repentance and our life of asceticism are, to St John, our personal efforts at the transfiguration of our person. The fallen humanity which is our 'flesh', is trained and conditioned in the great athletic 'race' of life, that it might shed its fallen condition and return once again to be our healthy, divine body. In other words, the ascetic labours form, for John, our human contribution to the process of deification, which is the living focus of

which should indeed cause us sadness and more than sadness: a deep pain...

To sin means to turn away from One who loves us unto life and unto death; and it means by implication that His life and death are too little for us, too little for us to respond by love, to respond by faithfulness and loyalty. Indeed, this attitude results in our breaking in a multitude of ways those laws of life which are conducive to life eternal; those laws of life that would make us *truly*, perfectly human in the way in which Christ was perfectly human, in the total harmony between God and us.

But these concrete sins which we commit all the time, this coldness to one another, this indifference, the ease with which we judge and condemn, the way in which we turn away from the need of others, the way in which we care nothing for the love which is offered us: all that results from the coldness of our hearts.

It is not in vain that Christ says today in the Gospel, "This demon, this spirit is cast out only by prayer and by fasting": fasting, in the sense of turning away from all those things which are beguilement, which take us *away* from love, from loyalty, from faithfulness, from integrity, that destroy our wholeness; and prayer, as communion with the Living God, who is love, and in whom *alone* we can find the strength and power to love.

So it is not surprising that when the man who had brought his child, sick with epilepsy, to the disciples, turned to Christ saying "They were unable to heal him," He said, 'Bring him to Me!' Unless we are brought to Him, *all* other things are in vain...

We should be with regard to God in the condition of one who is in love, who at every moment, day and night, waking or sleeping, is aware that his heart is exulting and tremulous with a love that fills him to the brim, that is joy, that is exultation, that is peace and serenity, and strength, and courage, and a love that allows us to look around and see everyone in a new light, that allows us to see the image of God shining in each person whom we meet, rejoicing in it.

If we ask ourselves how far we are from God, and cannot measure

Troparion of St. Ignatios, Tone 4

Kontakion of the Annunciation, Tone 8

Tri-umphant Lea-der to you be-longs our
prize of vic-to-ry! And since you saved us
from ad-ver-si-ty we of-fer you our thanks
We are your peo-ple, O Mo-ther
of God! So as you have that in-vin-ci-
ble po-wer, con-ti-nue to de-li-ver us
from dan-ger that we may cry out to you
Hail, O Vir-gin and Bride e-ver pure

Epistle of the 4th Sunday of Lent, Hebrews 6:13-20

Prokimenon The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Stichon: Give to the Lord. You sons of God, give to the Lord glory and praise.

Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews

Brethren, when God made his promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, “*I will surely bless you, and will surely multiply you* Gn.22 : 14).” And so, after patient waiting, Abraham obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and an oath given as a guarantee is the final settlement of all their disagreements. Hence God, meaning to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the firmness of his will interposed an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to deceive, we may have the strongest comfort — we who have sought refuge in holding fast the hope set before us. This hope we have as a sure and firm anchor of the soul, reaching even behind the veil where our forerunner Jesus has entered for us, as he became a high priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek.

Alleluia (Tone 7)

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High!

Stichon: To proclaim your kindness at dawn and your faithfulness throughout the night.

Gospel of the 4th Sunday of Lent , Mark 9:17-31

(Healing of a possessed boy)

At that time one of the crowd came to Jesus and bowed to him saying: “Master, I have brought to you my son, who has a dumb spirit; and whenever it seizes him it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth; and he is wasting away. And I told your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” And he, answering him, said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought him to him; and the spirit, when it saw Jesus, immediately threw the boy in convulsions, and he fell down on the ground and rolled about foaming at the mouth. So he asked his father, “How long is it since this has come upon him?” And he said, “From his infancy. Oftentimes, it has thrown him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him. But if you can do anything have compassion on us and help us.” But Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to the man of faith.” At

once the father of the boy cried out and said with tears, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” Now when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, go out of him and enter him no more.” And crying out and violently convulsing him, it went out of him, and he became like one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him and he stood up. And when he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” And he said to them, “This kind can be cast out in no way except by prayer and fasting.” And leaving that place, they were passing through Galilee, and he did not wish anyone to know it. For he was teaching his disciples, and saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and having been killed, he will rise again on the third day.”

Hymn to the Theotokos:

In you, O Full of grace, all creation rejoices: the orders of angels, and the human race as well. O sanctified Temple, spiritual Paradise and glory of virgins, from whom our God who exists before all eternity, took flesh and became a little Child. He has taken your womb as his throne making it more spacious than the heavens! Therefore, O Full of grace, in you all creation rejoices. Glory to you!

4th Sunday of Great Lent—St. John of Climacus

St John Climacus, whose memory we keep today, says in one of his writings: “We shall not be judged, brothers, we shall not be condemned for not having worked miracles or spoken words of prophecy; but we *shall* be condemned for not having bewailed our sins throughout our life.

What is there in sin which should cause us such broken-heartedness that all our life should be – not darkened but inspired by this pain in our hearts? We tend to define sin as breaking of the moral law, or acting in a way which is contrary to our duty or to what is right, but there is something more fundamental in sin,