

MARCH 30, 2014: THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (Of St. John of the Ladder)

Epistle: Hebrew 6:13-20:

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel: Mark 9:17-32:



Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the

spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

It is impossible to read or hear this biblical passage and not feel compassion for the father of this young man who was severely demon-possessed. It is clear from the description of the symptoms of this case that the evil spirits, intent on inflicting the greatest damage and suffering on people, would not spare anybody, including children. It is difficult enough when one of the spouses suffers with any illness; but the suffering is so much more amplified when children have to go through such a predicament. The parents, who are supposed to care and help their children feel hopeless and the level of their anguish grows with each day. They look everywhere for help and are willing to do anything to alleviate the suffering of their child. With each unsuccessful attempt they become more desperate and their faith and hope become casualties of the unfortunate situation. That's why the father of the young man asked first the disciples for help: *I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.*

The failure of the apostles diminished the faith of the father. So, when he came to Christ, doubt had already crept in his mind and heart: *But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*

The Lord is quick to restore the faith of the distraught parent by assuring him that *all things are possible to him who believes*. This causes the wonderful reply of the father who says: *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"*

The gospel reading continues by clarifying our dilemma, as to why the apostles failed to heal the young man and, at the same time, to teach us the importance of fasting and prayer in the spiritual warfare we all face: *"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."*

May the good and loving Lord give us faith and strength so that we may finish our spiritual journey in fasting and prayer!

Fr. George Bazgan

CHURCH SERVICES DURING GREAT LENT:

Fridays at 7:00 PM: AKATHIST TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

Saturdays at 5:00 PM: VESPERS.

CONFESSION WILL BE HEARD AFTER EACH OF THESE SERVICES.

Sundays at 10:00 AM: DIVINE LITURGY.

Sunday Fellowship

The following families are scheduled to look after this Sunday's fellowship:

**Bazgan Maria & Fr. George
Bazgan Valeria & Napolion
Bidea Ana & Ioan**

Thank you all very much!

Note: We kindly ask all participants in this program to bring cooked food only, which can be warmed up using the stove in the small fellowship hall.

Thank you!

FISH DINNER

On April 13, 2014 (PALM SUNDAY), following the Divine Liturgy, the traditional FISH DINNER will be held in the main Hall.

The admission fee has been set at the bear minimum of \$15/person (\$5 for children 7-14 years). Voluntary donations will be very much appreciated.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Directors extends a warm appeal to all supporters of our parish, asking them to pay their membership before Easter.

This way we can ensure that we have the necessary funds to fulfill our financial obligations during the Summer months and for the rest of the year as well.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Food Collection

Once again, a food drive is under way in our parish.

Please bring nonperishable foods and deposit them at the entrance of the church.

"Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on earth" (Psalm 41:1-2).

THANK YOU!

On Mixed Marriages

Living in a pluralistic society, such as ours, has its share of advantages and challenges as well, especially for the young people.

When it comes to mixed marriages, the Orthodox parents and their children need to know what the position of the Church is. Based on the teaching of the Orthodox Church, mixed marriages must meet the following conditions:

1. The non-Orthodox party must be a Christian. This means that that person must have been or must be baptized (before the wedding service) in one of the other two Christian denominations: Catholic or Protestant. Of course, it would be ideally that such a person be baptized in the Orthodox Church.

Therefore, an Orthodox person cannot marry a non-Christian in the Orthodox Church.

2. The wedding service must take place in an Orthodox Church and be officiated by an Orthodox priest. Just because the wedding takes place in an Orthodox church does not mean that the non-Orthodox party becomes Orthodox. This is done only as a favor to the Orthodox party.

3. The children resulted from this union must be baptized and raised/educated in the Orthodox Church.

Should an Orthodox person enter a marriage union with a non-Christian, such a person must understand that by so doing they have forfeited their right/possibility to receive Communion and be a Godparent at a Christening or a Wedding.

For further details, please talk to the priest.

Fr. George Bazgan