

April 7, 2019: 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

Altar boys for this Sunday:

**Matthew Cotfasa
Alexandru Mustea**

Sunday Fellowship

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

**Sasu Liviu & Corina
Bob Marian & Maria
Pâslaru Ciprian & Gabriela**

Thank you all very much!

SPECIAL SERVICES DURING GREAT LENT:

Thursday at 7:00 PM: Bible Study.

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

Saturday at 5:00 PM: VESPERS.

CONFESSION WILL BE HEARD AFTER EACH OF THESE SERVICES.

Church Anniversary

Our Church Anniversary will be celebrated on May 26, 2019, in the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae, His Grace Bishop Ioan Casian and His Grace Bishop Ignatie of Husi. The stained glass windows will be blessed and our church will be elevated to the rank of Cathedral.

For tickets (\$75.00/person), contact Mariana Diaconu: 780-473-6711
or 780-660-4748 (texting only).

No refunds after May 12.
The number of seats is limited.

MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Directors extends a warm appeal to all supporters of our parish, asking them **to pay their membership until 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!

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Today, Christ Jesus, like David, we again ask you to forgive us all our sins, but especially those against the virtue of love. Forgive us for so often failing to love our neighbor, by disdainful our peers and resentfully resisting those who have any authority over us, by defaming our brothers and sisters as arrogant while elevating ourselves as models of humility, and by failing to love them and care for them while demanding unreasonable attentions for ourselves. Forgive us, O Lord, for our constant readiness to notice their every fault and failing while minimizing our own.

Pardon us all of these, O Christ, and the countless other ways we sin against love, ways we cannot even remember. During these lenten days, turn us around and make of us true lovers, lest we find ourselves rejected from the paschal banquet.

For you, O Christ, deserve all glory, honor, and worship, together with your eternal Father, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.