

April 11, 2021: 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!”*

There is some similarity between the father of this child and Thomas the Apostle who would voice his doubt about the Lord's resurrection. Then, when confronted with the Risen Lord, he said: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). To go even further, we can say that there is more than some similarity between these men and us. Most of us experience some level of uncertainty or even doubt, especially when our prayers are not answered right away. The good news is that our Lord and Savior is ready to extend His redeeming hand, lift us up (as He did to the demon-possessed child) and give us assurance, restoring our faith: *all things are possible to him who believes.*

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

Fr. George Bazgan

We are live streaming the Liturgy

As we continue to operate under these restrictions, we are live streaming the Divine Liturgy on You Tube. To access the Sunday Services, [click here](#).

Holy Liturgy on Saturdays

The Divine Liturgy will also be celebrated every Saturday until Easter. This, so that we don't exceed the allowable number of people in Church on Sundays. We ask those who have memorial services to limit the amount of food offered in memory of the departed and make donations to various charities: Hope Mission, Mustard Seed, etc.

Thank You!

Sunday Service Attendance

Due to the continuing State of Emergency, and the recent measures imposed by the provincial authorities, the maximum number of people attending Church services is 20.

In order to give more people a chance to attend, we ask those who attended last Sunday, to skip this upcoming Sunday, establishing some sort of a rotation system. Also, only one person from the same family, please!

We apologize for this inconvenience and hope that the restrictions will continue to be relaxed in the near future.

Those who attend, are kindly asked to observe the recommendations of the experts, such as: wearing a mask, washing hands, social distancing, etc.

Thank you all and may God keep us safe!

SPECIAL SERVICES DURING GREAT LENT:

Friday at 6:00 PM: AKATHIST TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

Saturday at 5:00 PM: VESPERS.

CONFESSION WILL BE HEARD AFTER EACH OF THESE SERVICES.

Prayer at the time of pandemic

O Lord, our God, who are rich in mercy and, with Your wise care, guard our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, stop this pandemic, as You have ceased the punishment of the people in the days of King David. You who are the Physician of our souls and our bodies, give healing to those contaminated with this disease, hastily raising them from their bed of suffering, to glorify You, the Most Merciful Savior, and protect those who are healthy from any disease.

Bless, strengthen and shield, O Lord, with Your grace, all those who, with love of people and sacrifice, care for the sick at their homes or in hospitals. Remove all disease and suffering from the people and teach us to value life and health as gifts coming from You.

Grant us, O God, Your peace, and fill our hearts with unwavering faith in Your protection, with hope in Your help, and with love towards You and our neighbor.

For Yours is to show mercy and to save us, O our God, and to You we give glory: Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!

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!

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

St. Mina, St. Ephrem the New and St. Gerasim of Kefalonia, Blainville, QC



Founder Pillar of the Church:
\$5000 and more

Founder: \$1000 - \$4999.

Donor: up to \$999.

The founders remain forever in the records of the church; they are commemorated in the Divine Liturgy and, during the Proskomedia, a particle is taken out for them.

Project: **Buying the**

CHURCH where we perform Holy Services regularly, located at: **3550 Montée Gagnon, Blainville, QC J7E 4H5.**

We invite you to join those who support us in carrying out the project **by making donations to the account Romanian Orthodox Parish ST. MINA, TD Canada Trust (004) 4383- 5026649 (bank transfer; Pay-Pal; cash; send checks to the office of St. Mina Parish: 573 Rue Des Asters, St.- Eustache, Qc., J7P 5W4)**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Contact: Priest Olimpiu Marginean, 450-821-9157, pr.olimpiu_marginean@yahoo.fr Romanian Orthodox Parish St. MINA <http://www.misiuneasfintulmina.com/>

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

REAL FASTING

I speak not of such a fast as most persons keep, but of real fasting; not merely abstinence from most meats, but from sins as well. For the nature of a fast is such that it does not suffice to deliver those who practice it unless it is done according to a suitable law. So that when we have gone through the labor of fasting we do not lose the crown of fasting, we must understand how and in what manner it is necessary to conduct the business since the Pharisee also fasted, but afterward went away empty and destitute of the fruits of fasting. The Publican did not fast, and yet he was accepted in preference to him who had fasted in order that you may learn that fasting is unprofitable unless all other duties accompany it.

Fasting is a medicine. But like all medicines, though it be very profitable to the person who knows how to use it, it frequently becomes useless (and even harmful) in the hands of him who is unskillful in its use.

I have said these things not that we may disparage fasting, but that we may honor fasting. For the honor of fasting consists not in abstinence from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices, since he who limits his fasting only to abstinence from meats is one who especially disparages fasting

THE PROOF OF FASTING

Do you fast?

Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see a poor man, take pity on him.

If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of your bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice.

Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful...

Let the ear fast... by not listening to evil talk and gossip...

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism.

For what good it is if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?