

St. Nikolai Orthodox Church, Divine Liturgy, 9:30 / Saturday Vespers, 5 pm.
Book study/Christian Education following Vespers
Parish Council meetings 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7pm (open to parishioners)
9837 State Street, Louisville , Ohio 44641
Right Rev. Bishop Alexander, Bishop of Toledo, Orthodox Church in America
Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (OCA)
April 10, 2016: 4 Sunday of Lent: St John of the Ladder (Climacus)
Website: <http://www.stnikolaiorthodoxmission.com>
Facebook page: "<http://www.facebook.com/SaintNikolaiOrthodoxMission> of Alliance

Welcome to Visitors. Thank you for coming and praying with us today. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Communion is reserved only for Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and confession during the Church fasting seasons. We invite you to introduce yourself to Father Joe and Deacon James at the end of the Liturgy and receive a piece of the blessed bread and join us for fellowship and Christian education. We look forward to seeing you again and encourage you to learn more about the Orthodox Faith.

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women Disciples of the Lord learned from the Angel the joyous message of the Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the Apostles:
“Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen, // granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 1 Troparion (for St John Climacus)

O 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!

Tone 4 Troparion (St. Nikolai)

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you.
Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

Tone 4 Kontakion (for St John Climacus)

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.

Tone 4 Prokeimenon

O Lord, how manifold are Your works; in wisdom have You made them all.
v: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, You are very great!

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Tone 4 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

v: Go forth, prosper and reign, for the sake of meekness, righteousness and truth!
v: For You love righteousness, and hate iniquity.

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

(Instead of “It is truly meet ...,” we sing the following hymn to the Theotokos)

All of creation rejoices in you, 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 your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens.
All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. Glory to you!

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not fear evil tidings. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

The Ladder of Divine Ascent is an ascetical treatise on avoiding vice and practicing virtue so that at the end, salvation can be obtained. Written by Saint John Climacus initially for monastics, it has become one of the most highly influential and important works used by the Church as far as guiding the faithful to a God-centered life, second only to Holy Scripture.

There is also a related icon known by the same title. It depicts many people climbing a ladder; at the top is Jesus Christ, prepared to receive the climbers into Heaven. Also shown are angels helping the climbers, and demons attempting to shoot with arrows or drag down the climbers, no matter how high up the ladder they may be. Most versions of the icon show at least one person falling.

History of The Ladder

John, while a hermit living at the Sinai Peninsula, was recognized for his humility, obedience, wisdom (which was attained through spiritual experience), and discernment. He already had a reputation for being extremely knowledgeable about how to practice a holy life. St.

John, Igumen of the Raithu Monastery, one day asked St. John Climacus (also known as John of Sinai) to write down his wisdom in a book. At first hesitant to take on such a task, John of Sinai eventually honored the request, and he proceeded to write *The Ladder*. St. John Climacus received his name "Climacus" ("of the Ladder") because of this work, and his writing *The Ladder* (later called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*) has been compared to the Holy Prophet and God-seer Moses receiving the Law.

This work was initially used by monastics. In fact it is read by monastics to this day during the Great Fast. It is also suggested as Lenten reading for those who are still "of this world"; yet this should be done with caution and under the guidance of a spiritual father. This work has made its mark on the lives of innumerable saints, including St. Theodore the Studite, St. Sergius of Radonezh, St. Joseph of Volokolamsk, St. Peter of Damascus, and St. Theophan the Recluse, amongst many others.

Structure and purpose

The aim of the treatise is to be a guide for practicing a life completely and wholly devoted to God. The ladder metaphor—not dissimilar to the vision that Jacob received—is used to describe how one may ascend into heaven by first renouncing the world and finally ending up in heaven with God. There are thirty chapters; each covers a particular vice or virtue. They are referred to as "steps." The sayings are not so much rules and regulations, as with the Law that Moses received at Sinai, but rather observations about what is being practiced. Metaphorical language is employed frequently to better illustrate the nature of virtue and vice. Overall, the treatise does follow a progression that transitions from start (renunciation of the world) to finish (a life lived in love).

The steps are:

1. On renunciation of the world
2. On detachment
3. On exile or pilgrimage; concerning dreams that beginners have
4. On blessed and ever-memorable obedience (in addition to episodes involving many individuals)
5. On painstaking and true repentance which constitutes the life of the holy convicts; and about the Prison
6. On remembrance of death
7. On joy-making mourning
8. On freedom from anger and on meekness
9. On remembrance of wrongs
10. On slander or calumny
11. On talkativeness and silence
12. On lying
13. On despondency
14. On that clamorous mistress, the stomach
15. On incorruptible purity and chastity, to which the corruptible attain by toil and sweat
16. On love of money, or avarice
17. On non-possessiveness (that hastens one Heavenwards)
18. On insensibility, that is, deadening of the soul and the death of the mind before the death of the body
19. On sleep, prayer, and psalmody with the brotherhood
20. On bodily vigil and how to use it to attain spiritual vigil, and how to practise it
21. On unmanly and puerile cowardice
22. On the many forms of vainglory
23. On mad pride and (in the same Step) on unclean blasphemous thoughts; concerning unmentionable blasphemous thoughts
24. On meekness, simplicity, and guilelessness which come not from nature but from conscious effort, and about guile
25. On the destroyer of the passions, most sublime humility, which is rooted in spiritual perception

26. On discernment of thoughts, passions and virtues; on expert discernment; brief summary of all aforementioned
27. On holy stillness of body and soul; different aspects of stillness and how to distinguish them
28. On holy and blessed prayer, the mother of virtues, and on the attitude of mind and body in prayer
29. Concerning Heaven on earth, or Godlike dispassion and perfection, and the resurrection of the soul before the general resurrection
30. Concerning the linking together of the supreme trinity among the virtues; a brief exhortation summarizing all that has said at length in this book

Guide to reading The Ladder

Like with other ascetical and spiritual texts, this one should be read carefully. Since the original audience was those practicing the monastic life, the language is very strong when contrasting the life of the world and the life devoted to God. This is one of the reasons why this work should be read under the guidance of a spiritual father. This work can be read at once with careful attention and intense concentration, trying to replicate as much as possible the monastic life. Yet it can also be read in its individual steps as well. The bottom line is that a spiritual father should be there as a guiding hand with this work.

Confession Reminder: The participation in the Sacrament of Holy Penance (Confession) during Lent is an absolute necessity for every Orthodox Christian in Communion with the Church. Those who have not been to Confession by the end of Lent should not approach the Chalice for Holy Communion (note: Lent ends, Friday April 22, with Holy Week being the following week, April 25-30, leading up to Pascha). Please note that Father will not hear Confessions during Holy Week unless under extenuating circumstances. Confessions are regularly heard after Saturday Vespers and by appointment.

The sayings of the Desert Fathers. They asked Abba (Father) Sisoës, ‘If a brother sins, surely he must do penance for a year?’ He replied, ‘That is a hard saying.’ The visitors said, ‘For six months?’ He replied, ‘That is a great deal.’ They said, ‘For forty days?’ He said, ‘That is a great deal, too.’ They said to him, ‘What then? If a brother falls, and the agape is about to be offered, should he simply come to the agape, too?’ The old man said to them, ‘No, he needs to do penance for a few days. But I trust in God that if such a man does penance with his whole heart, God will receive him, even in three days.’

Thoughts by St. Nikolai:

A monk was lazy, careless and lacking in his prayer life; but throughout all of his life he did not judge anyone. When dying, he was happy. When the brethren asked him how it was that with so many sins he could die joyfully, he replied: ”I now see angels who are showing me a page containing my numerous sins, I said to them, “Our Lord said: “*Judge not, and you shall not be judged*” (Luke 6:37). I have never judged anyone, and I hope in the mercy of God that He will not judge me.” And the angels tore up the paper. Upon hearing this, the monks were astonished and learned from it.

LENTEN SCHEDULE (*dates in bold are services at St. Nikolai Church*)

- > Wednesday, April 13, Pan-Orthodox Pre-sanctified Liturgy, 6:30 pm Holy Trinity Canton
- > **Friday, April 15**, Pre-sanctified Liturgy, 6:30 pm
- > Wednesday, April 20, Pan-Orthodox Pre-sanctified Liturgy, 6:30 pm St. George (Ant) Canton
- > **Saturday, April 23**, Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy, 9:30 am

There will be a full Holy Week schedule, April 25-29 (every evening at 6:30) as we celebrated last year..

Last call for updating prayer list. *If you wish to continue to list or add someone, you must advise Father this week.*

PRAYERS requested:

For The Health and Salvation of;

Andrea Bartol (Steve & Sandy Bozeka's daughter)

Letitia Bella (Lynette Baier's mother)

Olympia Tillman (Father David's mother)

Helen (Father David's aunt)

Carl (friend of Father David)

Lisa “

Kitty “

Father David and Family

Doreen Wishnok

Stefanie Waseman

The Knoll Family

Roland Augspurger

Leslie and Tim Kocevar

Beth Plocher

Renee Young

Larry Gainer

James Rickard and Family

Mary Lou Suitca

Ken Mabry

Malaik (Allison pre-school child)

Edward (Allison pre-school child)

Arika (missing person)

Gregory Cervo

Ann Cervo

For The Repose of the Souls of the newly departed Servants:

+Paul (friend of Fr. David)

+Bruce “ “ “

+Khouria Marguerite Shaheen

+Helen (Step-Mother of Fr. Bill Evansky)

Many Years!

George “Bobo” Blebea – April 14

Nolan Thomas Catania – April 15

Coffee Hour Today: Larry & Deanna Dordea, Sponsor needed for next Sunday, April 17; April 24 – Palm Sunday – Blebea & Washington Families.

If we do not have anyone signed up for coffee hour on any week, we will simply have coffee during fellowship.

IOCC: As part of our Lenten regiment, in accord with the Gospel, we are called to help needy and suffering people, in America and around the world. Please put aside money (that we are to save by curbing expenditures of unnecessary purchases, luxuries, entertainment and sumptuous food) and turn it in by Palm Sunday. In turn we will send one check to the International Orthodox Christian Charities, which was organized 25 years ago by the Orthodox Bishops of America. For every dollar we donate, IOCC is able to get an additional seven dollars from the government and foundations. 92% of the money donated goes directly to assisting people in need.

IOCC SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS FOR GREAT LENT

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - By: *Father Miles Zdinak, IOCC Frontliner*

The Fourth Sunday of the Holy and Great Fast commemorates St. John Climacus (Ladder). He is called Climacus because of his spiritual instruction to his fellow monastics on asceticism, the spiritual discipline which leads to Godliness. This spiritual writing is entitled, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Following *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* helps lead one to a deeper relationship with God and a deeper spiritual relationship with others on the path, which leads to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our own Lenten journey should utilize these same spiritual struggles written of by St. John.

This journey upon the ladder takes the climber from breaking free from the desires of this world to the union with God in stillness, prayer, dispassion, and above all, Love. The last rung of the ladder rests on the divine gifts of Faith, Hope and Love. These gifts open the eyes of the soul to recognize the face of God in others and in His creation. Enlivened by these gifts we become keenly aware of the needs of others. We become compelled by Love to do something to meet the basic wants of others, whether these needs be for food, drink, clothing, or comfort as spoken by our Lord in the writings of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew in the Gospel for Sunday of the Last Judgment.

The work of the Church through charitable ministries like missions and relief efforts brings to life the combination of Love for God and service to others. Nowhere else does the Church fulfill better the command of God to love others than in the ministry of service. By supporting IOCC through prayer, contributions, and participation, we become servants doing unto Christ as we do unto others. May you be blessed during the remainder of your Lenten Journey and Good Pascha to you.