



# The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

Sun, April 11, 2021 : The Sunday of St. John of the Ladder • Saint for the day: Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum



## Hymns for Today's Service

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm. He has trampled down death by death. He has become the first born of the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world great mercy.

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body, thou wast a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John. Thou didst receive heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil, and prayer, healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to thee by faith. Glory to Him Who gave thee strength! Glory to Him Who granted you a crown! Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, leading us from the gates of death. On this day

Adam exults as Eve rejoices; with the Prophets and Patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

The Lord truly set thee on the heights of abstinence, to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, O our father and teacher John.

## Epistle Reading - Hebrews 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 Reading - Mark 9:17-31

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

**DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS:** A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting. If you have questions please let us know!

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.

---

## *This Week's Schedule*

### This Weekend

**SAT, April 10th:** 9 AM Divine Liturgy, 5 PM Great Vespers

**SUN, April 11th:** 8:40 AM Hours, 9 AM Divine Liturgy for St. John of the Ladder, Church School

+++

### This Week

#### **5th Week of Great Lent**

**TUES, April 13th @ 4 PM:** Lenten Bible Study

**WED, April 14th @ 11AM-1:30PM:** Church Open for Prayer  
6 PM: Presanctified Liturgy

**THURS, April 15th @ 6:30 PM:** Canon of Andrew of Crete

**FRI, April 16th @ 6:30 PM:** Akathist w/ Lity for Departed

**SAT, April 17th @ 9 AM:** Divine Liturgy,

**10:30 AM: Church Clean-up**

+++

### Next Weekend

**SAT, April 17th:** 9 AM Divine Liturgy, 5 PM Great Vespers

**SUN, April 18th:** 8:40 AM Hours, 9 AM Divine Liturgy for Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt, Church School, Parish Council Meeting

+++

### A NOTE ON RECEIVING COMMUNION AT EVENING SERVICES:

*Those who would like to receive Holy Communion at evening Liturgies should fast from food and drink from lunch until receiving communion. This excludes anyone who may need more frequent nourishment due to health conditions or the need to take medications. Do as best you can according to your strength and needs. If you have questions please speak with Fr. Innocent.*

### A NOTE ON CONFESSION DURING GREAT LENT

*Confession is available before and after services throughout Lent as time permits and also on Wednesdays during our time of silent prayer. Please come or set up an appointment for a specific time with Fr. Innocent.*

---

A 4 WEEK LENTEN BIBLE STUDY WITH FR. INNOCENT

JOURNEY THROUGH

OUR LORD'S PASSION AND RESURRECTION

Every Tues @ 4 PM Beginning Tuesday, March 30

Join us in person OR online • Link will be sent by email

---

## *Announcements & Meetings*

**Parish Council Meeting:** This month's Parish Council Meeting will be held Sunday, April 18th following Divine Liturgy.

**Bring in your Pussywillows:** Anyone willing to harvest pussywillows from your yard or area for our Paschal celebration can now bring them to the church. Spring weather is upon us and they will soon begin to flower. Thanks so much for your help!

**Wilkes University Food Drive:** We are collecting much needed items for students at Wilkes University. Items needed include: Non-perishable foods, soups, canned fruit, Chef Boyardee meals, personal care items, household items. **The drive ends Sunday, April 25th**

(Palm Sunday). If anyone needs their donations or a monetary donation picked up, please contact Colleen at 570-550-7288.

**Paschal Flower Donations in Memoriam and For the Health of Our Loved Ones:** Continuing our parish family tradition, we will adorn the grave of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Good Friday with fresh Spring flowers as a reflection of our love. These flowers will also adorn the Church on Holy Pascha and throughout Bright Week. On Saint Thomas Sunday, those who donated flowers will be welcome to bring these flowers home to loved ones and shut-ins to brighten their day. If you would like to honor a loved one by making a donation for Holy Pascha flowers "In Memory Of" or "For the Health Of" a loved one:

1. Please see the signup sheets in the Church Vestibule.
2. If able, you can mail your donations to the church OR drop it off in the rectory mailbox.
3. Contact Father Innocent with the details if you are unable to do any of the above.

The names of your loved ones will be listed in the Holy Pascha Church Bulletin and remembered in prayer. If you wish to have your offering listed in the Holy Pascha Bulletin, your loved ones name(s) and donation must be received by Palm Sunday.

**Church Cleanup for Pascha: Sat, April 17th** the Holy Trinity Community will come together to clean and prepare the church for Pascha. We could use help from any and all who are willing to offer a little time. Parish altar servers are needed to help prepare the altar by polishing the brass candle stands, removing wax from the carpets and general cleaning. Additionally, we are asking for help from youth and adults to help clean, dust, polish candles stands, etc. We also would like to clean the Pavillion as we may use it for some of our Paschal activities. The day will begin with Divine Liturgy at 9 AM, followed by coffee, light snacks and cleaning. With enough help we should only have to work for a couple hours. **A signup sheet will be on the podium in the Narthex/Vestibule. Please sign-up if you can attend or contact Fr. Innocent.**

**FREE COVID SHOTS AT THE VA:** If you are a veteran, spouse, or widow of a veteran you are eligible for a free COVID shot at the VA Walk-in clinic. They are open Mon-Fri 8AM to 1 PM.

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

**April Birthdays:** Miriam Clark (4/6), Marie Dutko (4/6), Pearl Tutko (4/8), Alec Breisch (4/9), Alex Holoviak (4/9), Vladimir Holoviak (4/19), Eli King (4/21), Jordan Dutko (4/23), Debbie Greenward  
**Anniversaries:** Fr. Innocent & Mat. Melanie Neal (4/22), Dave & Dolores Voda

**This Week's Birthdays:**

## Altar Server Schedule

**Sunday, April 11:** Vladimir H, Alex H, Andrew N, Tommy D, Andrew C

**Sunday, April 18:** Alec B, Kaleb D, Symeon C, Christopher D, Ephraim N

**Sunday, April 25:** Alec B, Kaleb D, Symeon C, Christopher D, Ephraim N

**HOLY PASCHA:** All servers welcome

**PARISH PRAYER LIST Living:** Cynthia Dulsky, Theodore & Elenor Sovryda, Nadine Breisch, Rosalie Bagenski, Sonja & Leanne Kay, Josie Bissett, Lisa & Scott Harvey, Daniel & Shannon Bissett, Delores Karas, Antonette Terry, Archpriest Daniel & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Violet Filipi, Catherine, Danny Gobish, Lorraine Pace, Camden Thomas, Peter Holoviak & Family, Marni Bachman & Family, Rose Marie, Helen Gudaitis, Mahaffey Family, George Scott, Evelyn Kosmiski, Joe Sloan, Louis Gianuzzi, Betty Serafin

**Newly Departed:** Archpriest Antonio Perdomo, Mitred Archpriest Basil Summer

## On the Church Calendar

### Week 6 of Great Lent

**SUN, April 18th** - Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt (5th Sun)

**TUES, April 20th @ 4 PM:** Lenten Bible Study

**WED, April 21st @ 11 AM-1:30 PM:** Church Open / Prayer

**WED, April 21st @ 6 PM:** Presanctified Liturgy

**FRI, April 23rd @ 6:30 PM:** Lazarus Sat. Great Vespers

**SAT, April 24th @ 9 AM:** Lazarus Sat. Divine Liturgy

**SAT, April 24th @ 5 PM:** Great Vespers for Palm Sunday

**SUN, April 25th @ 9 AM:** Palm Sunday

## Sunday of St. John of the Ladder

*from antiochian.org.au*

This Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, also known as the Sunday of Saint John of the Ladder (in reference to his most well-known work "The Ladder of Divine Ascent"). The Holy Church has allocated the fourth and fifth Sundays of lent to the Saints John Climacus and Mary of Egypt; two shining examples of the pillars of this holy season: fasting, prayer, and repentance.

The celebration of St John on this day arose from the custom prevalent in the honorable monasteries of starting Great Lent with the reading of his book. St John likens the method of elevating the soul to God to ascending a ladder. He teaches those who seek salvation how to lay a firm foundation for struggles, how to detect and fight every passion, how to avoid demonic snares, and how to rise from the rudimental virtues to the heights of Godlike love and humility.

The biblical reading on this Sunday is from Mark 9:17-31, and begins with a man approaching Jesus, prostrating and asking Him to heal his son, who has a "dumb spirit" within him. This father describes the symptoms that have plagued his son as the same of being possessed by Satan. To us, reading of these specific symptoms like "falling unconscious, foaming and grinding of teeth, and becoming stiff" it would be completely plausible to assume the boy was suffering from epilepsy or the results of a mental illness such as insanity. But according to Christ, there was no doubt that the son was possessed by an "unclean spirit". He was not in control of his body and its movements, but was subjected to external power, the power of the "evil one". This "dumb and deaf spirit", the enemy of "all that is good", was hurting the boy, "as it often threw him in the fire, and in the water to perish him."

This incident was evidence of Satan's existence. Satan or "evil spirit" are not just illusions or mere symbolic ideas, but a true being in existence. The Lord Jesus himself declared to the disciples: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

Jesus rebuked the "unclean spirit" within the boy, saying: "I command you to get out of him and not to interfere with him," proving His dominion over evil

spirits, which was one of the signs of the approaching Kingdom of Heaven.

The Gospel says that when Jesus asked his disciples to bring the boy to him, and when he saw Him "immediately the spirit overcame him, and he fell on the ground, wallowing and frothing". At that moment, the "wicked spirit" realised that he stood before the Lord of the Hosts with His glory and took to flopping; he realised that his end was close, and he acted as a predatory monster with a fatal injury, and by flopping about, he tried one final attempt to attack and hurt the boy.

It seems clear that lack of faith was the reason why the Disciples were unable to cast out this "unclean spirit." For this reason, the Lord Jesus tells the father of the boy, "If you can believe, everything is possible for the believer". The attitude of the father is one of the most beautiful examples of humility and faith. He answered Christ with warm tears: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief". With another word, he said: I believe, O Lord, but perhaps my faith has been shaken on some occasions by the horror of the trials and their difficulty, but thou strengthen my faith and shore it on the rock of confessing Thee.

The Disciples asked their Master, "why couldn't we get him out?" He said, "This kind can only come out with prayer and fasting." It appears from this teaching that prayer and fasting are necessary conditions for overcoming the war against Satan, they are essential in spiritual life and faith and not as superfluous or added value to our spiritual struggles. Fasting and praying are not exclusive to monks and nuns, but to everyone, even though the way and level of practice differ between laypeople and monks. The Lord Jesus Himself fasted forty days before His trials and it is stated in the Gospels that He was always parting from the Apostles to pray (Luke 22:39) and (Mark 1:35).

On the fourth Sunday of Great lent, having passed the halfway mark of this holy fast, the Church presents to us two powerful spiritual weapons to continue our journey towards perfection; namely fasting and prayer, also mentioned in the biblical reading. It also sets before us a role model and an example of virtue and asceticism to be emulated in our journey towards fulfillment in Christ, that is the commemoration of St. John of the Ladder.

Amen! + Metropolitan Basilios