



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

March - April 2018

The Meaning of Annunciation.

The day Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary an ancient prediction by Isaiah was fulfilled that a Virgin would conceive in Her womb and give birth to a Son, Who would be given the name Emmanuel, meaning “God is with us” (Is. 7:14). That day God entered into the womb of the Virgin and became man, in order to set the world free from sin and the power of the devil. It is impossible to understand the miracle of conception of the eternal Infant; it is a *great mystery of godliness*, comprehensible only by faith (1 Tim. 3:16). In the appearance of Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary the Church sees the “**B**eginning of our salvation.” Annunciation is the first beam of the morning dawn after a long and tormenting night. That day our world brought its best fruit to God, the brightest, the purest fruit that it could create: the Most Pure Virgin Mary. The Lord accepted this gift of humankind and responded to it with a gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In this mysterious meeting of the fallen humankind with the most gracious God, which meeting took place in the pure heart of the Virgin Mary, one can hear the first unique joyful sound of that angelic song that, according to earth’s time, could be fully heard on earth only 9 months later: “*Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, good will in men.*” The Virgin Mary was carrying “Glory to God” in Her heart, and for that the Savior promised Her “peace on earth.”

In the caution shown by the Virgin Mary in response to the greeting and promise of Angel Gabriel, the Holy Fathers of the Church see a sign of great virtue known as “**d**iscernment.” They see the wise caution of the Virgin Mary as the opposite of the gullibility of Eve, who thoughtlessly heeded an advice of the devil in the form of a serpent and received grief instead of happiness.

The Angel’s appearance to the Virgin Mary is surrounded by two events: the conception of John the Baptist and the visit by the Most Holy Virgin Mary to the righteous Elisabeth. During this visit, St. John the Baptist, a not-yet-born six-month-old infant, was the first to greet the Most Holy Virgin with his movement in the womb of Elisabeth. At that moment righteous Elisabeth also received the Holy Spirit and exclaimed: “*Blessed are You among women and blessed is the fruit of Your womb.*” And then she added: “*How come that the Mother of my Lord came to me?*” (Lk. 1:43) Here righteous Elisabeth began her greeting with the same words that Archangel Gabriel finished his with. These words of greeting gave birth to that wonderful pray-

er we so often hear in church: “*Rejoice, Virgin Mary, birth-giver of God, full of grace, the Lord is with You. Blessed are You among women, and blessed is the Fruit of Your womb. For you gave birth to the Savior of our souls.*”

The state of that affection, that holy, heavenly joy in which the Virgin Mary was on the day of Annunciation, is reflected on the “Affection” Icon, where the Virgin is depicted without the Infant, Her hands placed on Her chest, a Halo around Her head with the words “*Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded.*” St. Seraphim of Sarov spent days and nights praying before that icon, and before it he died.

The first word of Archangel Gabriel’s greeting was **Rejoice**. And the feast of Annunciation is, first of all, a feast of quiet heavenly joy—joy over reconciliation with God, joy over the return of grace to earth. Annunciation is also a feast of triumph of **humility, purity and chastity**, a feast of unshakable faith in the Omnipotence of God and in His unlimited love toward perishing man.

This feast, the “chief of our salvation,” is a spring of “living waters,” which then turn into a broad river and, finally, a boundless sea of New Testament miracles, mysteries and the Grace of the Holy Spirit given to those thirsting for righteousness by God, who gives the Spirit without a measure. Annunciation is a feast of marriage between Heaven and earth, when the Heaven comes down to earth and unites with it. Annunciation is a “blue” feast. On this day everything turns blue in the eyes of a believer, everything becomes more pure and transparent. The sky becomes even more blue and deeper. Blue becomes the air and the waters reflecting clear cloudless skies; blue turn the first flowers, and stars at night. Blue also turn human souls, becoming capable of comprehending the heavenly music of this wonderful feast.

The saying that at the feast of Annunciation even a bird would not make a nest, figuratively calls upon us on this day to lay aside every day cares and to direct our thoughts toward the heavens, toward joyful communion with God. According to an ancient Russian custom, birds are released on this day as a sign of human soul being set free from sin.

Having released a bird, Pushkin (a Russian poet) says, “I have attained solace; why would I grumble against God, when I could give freedom to at least one creature!” Another Russian poet, Tumanski, watching a newly released bird, writes, “She disappeared in the blue shining sky, singing as if praying for me.”

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, under the omophorion of Met. HILARION of Eastern America & New York. The parish newsletter is published bi-monthly under the direction of the Rev. Michael Crowley. In order to ensure timely delivery to our far-flung parish, please submit all notices by the 15th of the month prior to publication to Father Michael at frmichael@stxenia.org. Thank you.

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Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment.

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Trapeza Schedule

* = strict fast

If you cannot be at church on your assigned Sunday, please contact someone directly to switch. If you are not on this list and would like to help, please add your name on the hard copy posted in the church hall and you will be added for the next round. If you have any questions, contact Judy Engalichev -- dujykot@comcast.net.

Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare, anything is appreciated. **Note: If you are preparing anything containing nuts or other allergens, please put a small label to that effect in front of your dish. Nut allergies are especially fatal to small children.**

A note about Trapeza etiquette: Standing, even for short periods of time, is often extremely difficult for older people and expectant mothers. It would be an act of Christian charity to allow them to collect their meal first and to be seated. It should go without saying that this courtesy should also be extended to visiting clergy.

March

4* Alexandra Gonzalez, Anna Kekis, Marina Pavlova
11* Engalichev, Lynch, Schidlovsky
18* Chaplin Family, Meghan Nettleton, Ann McKearin
25* Matushka Helena, Marianne Dimatteo, Tanya Nikshych

April

1* PALM SUNDAY - Potluck
8 PASCHA - Potluck
15 Suzie Soloviev, Olga McLellen, Lexie Lehmkuhl
22 Men's Trapeza – Sunday of the Myrrh Bearing Women
29 Pekar Family, Ailena Kazlouski, Anna Radovic

Sisterhood News

During this Lenten period, the Sisterhood will be conducting a non-perishable food drive. Please consider bringing in items during the month of March so we may provide support to the surrounding community.



Please Remember in Your Prayers

Athanasia Tamvlakis, Peter Danas, Dimitry Emelianoff, Dimitri Nikshych, Masha Harris, and Laryssa Doohovskoy.

Also, please be sure to inform the Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home.

Congratulations

~ To the newly-illuminated Ann McKearin who was received into the Church on January 20th.

~ To Mike Dolan and Ann McKearin who were married on January 28th.

~ To Sonya and Walter Carrascal on the birth of their daughter Victoria on Feb 6th.

~To Alex and Sasha (Reilly) Prokopienko on the birth of their baby Theodore (Theo) George on Feb 27th. Theo was named after both grandfathers!

We ask God's Blessing and many years to all!

St. John of Damascus Church School News

The Last day of Sunday School will be **June 3rd**. We will have a festive day with some class presentations.

Vacation Church School will be July 9th and 10th with Vigil on the 11th and Liturgy for Sts. Peter and Paul on the 12th.

Please contact Matushka Nancy for more information or go to: <https://www.stxenia.org/churchschool.html>

Choir News

If you have a private service - wedding, baptism, funeral, etc. – and would like to have choir singers, please contact Laryssa directly at stxeniachoir@gmail.com.

If you are interested in singing in the choir, please see Laryssa Doohovskoy.

Parish News

~ The entire St. Xenia's Parish extends its heartfelt thanks to Churchill's Garden Center in Exeter, NH for their donation of the greenery used to decorate our church for this Nativity season.

On March 10th, 17th and 24th at 3:30pm, Fr. Michael will lead classes and discussion on the Acts of the Apostles. Some of the older girls have volunteered to watch younger children during the classes to allow parents to attend.

Archbishop Averky's "Commentary of the Acts of the Apostles" will be used as a text. It is available in our bookstore, or from the Jordanville bookstore.

~ **A Reminder from Fr. Michael (reprinted from 2003):**

BEHAVIOR IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

An Orthodox church is a special place of God's presence on earth. We must behave ourselves reverently in church, so as not to offend the dignity of the sacred place and not to call God's wrath on ourselves. We should come 5-10 minutes before the service begins. Coming into church we must make the sign of the cross and bow. On entering a church, men are to remove their headwear. Women should cover their heads, and dress according to their sex, there must be no lipstick left on their lips. We must be dressed appropriately and neatly. We should not speak loudly, keep our hand in pockets, or chew the gum in church. We should not wander around needlessly in church. We must put candles and venerate icons so that we do not interfere with other people praying in church. Any conversation should be restricted to the very minimum. You can greet your acquaintances briefly and postpone talking to them for a later time. Having come to church with children you must prevent them from running, misbehaving and laughing. A crying child who cannot be calmed down, should be taken

out of church by the parent. We can join the singing chorus very softly. If the entire parish is singing, we must prevent "loud cries." While in church one can be sitting only due to illness or extreme fatigue. One should not sit with his or her legs crossed. If all the praying people kneel, you should join them. It is prohibited to smoke on a church-porch. Animals or birds are not allowed in church. No walking or talking is allowed during Gospel reading or when the Cherubic hymn is sung, as well as while Eucharistic Canon (from "The Symbol of Creed" to "Our Father") is read. During that time it is also advised to refrain from putting candles and venerating icons. One can correct a fellow parishioner only in a soft and delicate manner. It would be better not to make any remarks unless a person behaves like an impertinent hooligan. Finally, we should stay in church till the end of service. You may leave earlier only due to bad health condition or if a very serious matter requires it.

Synod News

10th Pilgrimage to Holy Places of Russia on the 100th anniversary of the slaying of the Royal Family

~June 15-July 1, 2018~

Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York will lead a pilgrimage to Ekaterinburg and other holy sites of Russia on the 100th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Royal Family. Further information: http://www.synod.com/synod/pdf/12russia_pilgrimage18eng.pdf

MONK BENEDICT OF NURSIA (+ 543) (commemorated March 27/March 14) The Monk Benedict, founder of the western monastic order of the Benedictines, was born in the Italian city of Nursia in the year 480. At 14 years of age the saint was sent off by his parents for studies at Rome, but vexed at the immorality there surrounding him, he decided to devote himself to a different sort of life. At first Saint Benedict settled near the church of the holy Apostle Peter in the village of Effedum, but news about his ascetic life compelled him to go farther into the mountains. There he encountered the hermit Romanus, who tonsured him into monasticism and directed him to a remote cave for a domicile. From time to time the hermit would bring the saint food. For three years in total solitude the saint waged an harsh struggle with temptations and conquered them. People soon began to gather to him, thirsting to live under his guidance. The

number of disciples grew so much, that the saint divided them into twelve communities. Each community was comprised of twelve monks and was a separate skete-monastery. And to each skete the saint gave an hegumen-abbot from among his experienced disciples.

With the Monk Benedict remained only the new-made monks for instruction.

The strict monastic-rule, established by Saint Benedict for the monks, was not taken to heart by everyone, and the monk more than once became the victim of abuse and vexation.

Finally he settled in Campagna and on Mount Cassino he founded the Monte Cassino monastery, which for a long time was a centre of theological education for the Western Church. At the monastery was created a remarkable library. And at this monastery the Monk Benedict wrote his ustav-rule, based on the experience of life of the Eastern wilderness-dwellers and the precepts of the Monk John Cassian the Roman (Comm. 29 February). The monastic-rule was accepted afterwards by many of the Western monasteries (by the year 1595 it had come out in more than 100 editions). The rule prescribed for monks an absolute renunciation of personal possessions, unconditional obedience and constant work. It was considered the duty of older monks to teach children and to copy out ancient manuscripts. This helped to preserve many memorable writings, belonging to the first centuries of Christianity. Every new postulant was required to live as a novice-obedient over the course of a year, to learn the monastic rule and to become acclimated to monastic life. Every deed required a blessing. The head of this common-life monastery is the hegumen-abbot, having all the fulness of power. He discerns, teaches and explains. The hegumen solicits the advice of the elders and the experienced brethren, but he personally makes the decision. The fulfilling of the monastic-rule is strictly binding for everyone and is regarded as an important step, nigh to perfection.

Saint Benedict was vouchsafed of the Lord the gift of foresight and wonderworking. He healed many by his prayers. The monk foretold his end beforehand.

The sister of Saint Benedict, Saint Scholastica, likewise became famed for her strict ascetic life and was enumerated to the ranks of the Saints.

MONK JOSEPH, WRITER OF CHURCH-SONG (+ 863) (commemorated April 17/April 4) The Monk Joseph, Writer of Church-Song, was born in Cilicia in a pious Christian family. His parents, Plotinos and Agatheia, resettled into the Peloponnesus to save themselves from barbarian invasions. At age 15, Saint Joseph departed for Thessalonika and entered a monastery. He distinguished himself by his piety, his love for work, his meekness, and he gained the good-will of all the brethren of the monastery. The monk was later ordained to the dignity of presbyter.

The Monk Gregory Dekapolites (Comm. 20 November) visited the monastery and took notice of the young monk, taking him along to Constantinople, where they settled together near the church of the holy Martyrs Sergios and Bakkhos. This was during the reign of the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820) -- a time of fierce iconoclast persecutions. The Monks Gregory and Joseph fearlessly defended the veneration of holy icons. They preached in the squares of the city and visited in the homes of the Orthodox, encouraging them against the heretics. The position of the Constantinople Church was grievous to the extreme: not only the emperor, but also the patriarch -- both were iconoclast heretics.

During these times the Roman bishops were in communion with the Ecumenical Church, and Pope Leo III -- not being under the dominion of the Byzantine emperor, was able to render great help to the Orthodox. The Orthodox monks chose the Monk Joseph as a steadfast and quite eloquent messenger to the Pope. The Monk Gregory blessed him to journey to Rome and to report about the position of the Constantinople Church, and about the dangers threatening Orthodoxy.

During the journey, the Monk Joseph was captured by Arab brigands which had been bribed by the iconoclasts. They took him off to the island of Crete, where they handed him over to the iconoclasts. The Monk Joseph was locked up in prison. Bravely enduring all the deprivations, he encouraged also the other prisoners. Through the prayers of the monk, a certain Orthodox bishop who had begun to waver was strengthened in spirit and courageously accepted a martyr's death.

The Monk Joseph spent six years in prison. On the night of the Nativity of Christ in 820 he was granted a vision of Sainted Nicholas of Myra, who informed him about the death of the iconoclast-oppressor Leo the Armenian, and also the cessation of the persecution over holy icons. Saint Nicholas gave the monk a scroll of paper and said: "Take this scroll and eat it". On the scroll was written: "Hasten, O Gracious One, and attend to our aid in as Thou art the Merciful One, as may be possible and as Thou dost will". The monk read the scroll, ate it and said: How sweet to my throat art these words (Ps. 118 [119]: 103). Saint Nicholas bid him to sing forth these words. After this the fetters of themselves fell off from the monk, the doors of the prison opened up, and he freely emerged from it and was transported in the air and placed down on a large avenue near Constantinople, leading into the city. At Constantinople the Monk Joseph found that the Monk Gregory Dekapolites was no longer among the living, rather only his disciple Blessed John (Comm. 18 April), who likewise soon died. The Monk Joseph built a church in the name of Saint Nicholas and transferred there the relics of the Monks Gregory and John. And nearby the church was founded a monastery.

The Monk Joseph received also part of the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew from a certain virtuous man. He built a church in the name of the holy apostle and wanted to solemnly honour his memory, but he was dis-

tressed that there was no laudatory canon of song glorifying the memory of the holy apostle, and he himself did not dare to compile it. For forty days the Monk Joseph prayed with tears, preparing for the feastday in memory of the holy apostle. On the eve of the feast the Apostle Bartholomew appeared to him in the altar, put the holy Gospel to his bosom and blessed him to write church canonical song with the words: "May the right hand of the All-Powerful God bless thee, that thy tongue pour forth waters of Heavenly Wisdom, that thy heart be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and thy church-song be sweet with rejoicing". After this miraculous appearance, the Monk Joseph compiled a canon to the Apostle Bartholomew, and from that time he began to compose canonical song in honour of the Mother of God, of the holy saints and in their midst -- in honour of Saint Nicholas, his liberator from prison.

During the period of the renewal of the iconoclast heresy under the emperor Theophilus (829-842), the Monk Joseph suffered a second time from the heretics. He was sent off into exile to Chersun (Chersonesus) for 11 years. The Orthodox veneration of holy icons was restored under the holy empress Theodora (Comm. 11 February) in 842, and the Monk Joseph was made keeper of vessels at the Sophia cathedral in Constantinople. But because of his bold denunciation of the brother of the empress, Bardas, for unlawful co-habitation, the monk was again sent off into exile and returned only after the death of Bardas in 867.

Patriarch Photios (857-867, 877-886) restored him to his former position and appointed him father-confessor for all the Constantinople clergy.

Having reached old age, the Monk Joseph fell ill. Just before Pascha, on Great Friday, the Lord informed him in a dream vision about his approaching demise. The monk made an inventory of church articles in the Sophia cathedral, such things as were under his official care, and he sent it off to Patriarch Photios. For several days he prayed intensely, preparing for death. In his prayers the monk besought peace for the Church, and for his soul -- the mercy of God. Having communed the Holy Mysteries of Christ, the Monk Joseph gave blessing to all that came to him, and with joy he reposed to God (+ 863). The choirs of the angels and the saints, whom the Monk Joseph had glorified by his canonical song, in triumph carried up his soul to the Heavenly realm.

About the spirit and power of the canon-song of the Monk Joseph, his biographer the Constantinople Church deacon John wrote thus in about the year 890: "When he began to write verses, then the hearing was taken with a wondrous pleasantness of sound, and the heart was struck by the power of the thought... Those that strive for the life of perfection find here a respite... Writers, having left off with their other versification, from this one treasure-trove -- from the writings of Saint Joseph -- began to scoop out his treasure for their own songs, or better said, daily they scoop them out. And finally, all the people carry it over into their own language, so as to enlighten with song the darkness of night, or staving off sleep, to

continue with the vigil til sunrise... If anyone were peruse the life of a saint celebrated on whatever the day of the Church, they would see the worthiness of song of Saint Joseph and acknowledge his glorious life. Actually, since the life and deeds of almost every saint are adorned with praises, is not he worthy of immortal glory, that hath worthily and exquisitely known how to glorify them! And now let some other saints glorify his meekness, and others -- his wisdom, and others -- his works, and all together glorify the grace of the Holy Spirit, Which so abundantly and immeasurably hath bestown him his gifts”.

MONK JOHN OF THE LADDER (LESTVICHNIK; KLIMATIKOS; CLIMATICUS) (+ 649) (commemorated April 12/March 30) The Monk John of the Ladder (Lestvichnik; Klimatikos; Climaticus) is honoured by Holy Church as a great ascetic and author of the reknown spiritual work called “The Ladder”, whereby the monk likewise received the title “of-the-Ladder” [Lestvichnik (Slav.); Klimatikos (Grk.); Climaticus (Lat.)].

About the origins of the monk John there is almost no account preserved. Tradition suggests, that he was born about the year 570, and was the son of Saints Xenophones and Maria, -- whose is celebrated by the Church on 26 January. The sixteen-year old lad John arrived at the Sinai monastery. Abba Martyrios became instructor and guide of the monk. After four years of living on Sinai, Saint John Lestvichnik was vowed into monasticism. One of those present at the taking of vows, -- Abba Stratigios, predicted, that he was set to become a great luminary in the Church of Christ. Over the course of 19 years the monk John pursued asceticism in obedience to his spiritual father. After the death of Abba Martyrios the monk John chose an hermit's life, settling into a wild place called Tholos, where he spent 40 years in deeds of silence, fasting, prayer and tears of penitence. It is not by chance that in “The Ladder” the monk John speaks thus about tears of repentance: “Just as fire burns and destroys firewood, so thus do pure tears wash away all impurity, both outer and inner”. His holy prayer was strong and efficacious, as evidenced from an example from the life of the God-pleasing saint.

The Monk John had a student, the monk Moses. One time the instructor ordered his student to bring ground to the garden for bedding. Having fulfilled the obedience, the monk Moses lay down to rest under the shade of a large rock, because of the strong heat of summer. The monk John Lestvichnik was at this time in his cell resting after a prayerful labour. Suddenly a man of remarkable appearance appeared to him and, having roused the holy ascetic, said to him in reproach: “Why dost thou, John, rest peacefully here, when Moses is in danger?” The monk John immediately woke up and began to pray for his student. When his disciple returned in the evening, the monk asked, whether some sort of woe had befallen him. The monk answered: “No, but I was exposed to great dan-

ger. A large fragment of stone, having broken off from the rock under which I had fallen asleep at mid-day, just barely missed me. By luck, I had a dream that thou wast calling me, and I woke up and started to run off, and at that very moment the huge stone fell with a crash on that very spot, from which I had fled...”

About the manner of life of the monk John is known, that he nourished himself by such as what is not prohibited a fasting life by the *ustav*, but -- in moderation. He did not spend the night without sleep, although he slept not much, only as much as was necessary for keeping up his strength, so that by an unceasing vigilance he would not destroy the mind. “I do not fast excessively, -- said he about himself, -- nor do I give myself over to intense all-night vigil, nor lay upon the ground, but restrain myself..., and the Lord soon saved me”. The following example of humility of the monk John Lestvichnik is noteworthy. Gifted with a deeply penetrating mind, and having become wise by profound spiritual experience, he lovingly received all who came to him so as to guide them to salvation. But when there appeared some who through envy reproached him with loquacity, which they explained away as vanity, the monk John then gave himself over to silence so as not to give cause for blame, and he kept silence for the space of a year. The envious realised their error and they themselves returned to the ascetic with the request not to deprive them of the spiritual profit of his conversation.

Concealing his ascetic deeds from people, the monk John sometimes withdrew into a cave, but accounts of his holiness spread far beyond the locality: incessantly there came to him visitors from every rank and calling, wanting to hear his words of edification and salvation. At age 75, after forty years of ascetic striving in solitude, the monk was chosen as hegumen of the Sinai monastery. For about four years the monk John Lestvichnik governed the holy Sinai monastery. Towards the end of his life, the Lord granted the monk grace-bearing gifts of perspicacity and wonderworking.

During the time of his governing the monastery, -- at the request of the hegumen of the Raipha monastery Saint John (Comm. on Cheesefare Saturday), there was written for the monks the reknown “Ladder”, -- an instruction for rising to spiritual perfection. Knowing about the wisdom and spiritual gifts of the monk, the Raipha hegumen on behalf of all the monks of his monastery requested him to write down for them “a true instruction for those following after invariably, and as such would be a ladder of affirmation, which would lead those wishing it to the Heavenly gates...” The monk John, noted for his humble opinion about himself, was at first perplexed, but afterwards out of obedience he set about fulfilling the request of the Raipha monks. The monk thus also named his work -- “The Ladder”, and explained the title in the following manner: “I have constructed a ladder of ascent... from the earthly to the holy... in the form of the thirty years of age for the Lord's maturity, symbolically I have constructed a ladder of 30 steps, by which, having attained the Lord's age, we find ourselves with the righteous and

secure from falling down". The purpose of this work, is to teach -- that the reaching of salvation requires difficult self-denial and demanding ascetic deeds. "The Ladder" presupposes, first, a cleansing from the impurity of sin, the eradication of vices and passions in the old man; second, the restoration in man of the image of God. Although the book was written for monks, any Christian living in the world receives from it the hope of guidance for ascent to God, and a support for spiritual life. The Monks Theodore the Studite (Comm. 11 November and 26 January), Sergei of Radonezh (Comm. 25 September and 5 July), Joseph of Volokolamsk (Comm. 9 September and 18 October), and others -- in their instructions relied on "The Ladder" as an important book for salvific guidance.

The content of one of the steps of "The Ladder" (the 22nd) discusses the ascetic deed of the destruction of vainglory. The monk John writes: "Vanity springs out in front of each virtue. When, for example, I keep a fast -- I am given over to vanity, and when I in concealing the fasting from others permit myself food, I am again given over to vanity -- by my prudence. Dressing up in bright clothing, I am vanquished by love of honour and, having changed over into drab clothing -- I am overcome by vanity. If I stand up to speak -- I fall under the power of vanity. If I wish to keep silence, I am again given over to it. Wherever this thorn comes up, it everywhere stands with its points upwards. It is vainglorious..., on the surface to honour God, and in deed to strive to please people rather than God... People of lofty spirit bear insult placidly and willingly, but to hear praise and feel nothing of pleasure is possible only for the saints and for the unblameworthy... When thou hearest, that thy neighbour or friend either affront the eyes or behind the eyes slandereth thee, praise

and love him... Does this not shew humility, and who can reproach himself, and be intolerant with himself? But who, having been discredited by another, would not diminish in his love for him... Whoever is exalted by natural gifts -- a felicitous mind, a fine education, reading, pleasant elocution and other similar qualities, which are readily enough acquired, that person might yet never obtain to supernatural gifts. Wherefore whoever is not faithful in the small things, that one also is not faithful in the large, and is vainglorious. It often happens, that God Himself humbles the vainglorious, sending a sudden misfortune... If prayer does not destroy a proud thought, we bring to mind the leaving of the soul from this life. And if this does not help, we threaten it with the shame of the Last Judgement. "Rising up to humble oneself" even here, before the future age. When praisers, or better -- flatterers, start to praise us, immediately we betake ourselves to recollection of all our iniquities and we find, that we are not at all worth that which they impute to us".

This and other examples, located in "The Ladder", offer us an image of this saint's zealotry about his own salvation, which is necessary for each person who wishes to live piously. It is a written account of his thought, the collective fruit of many and also of his refined observation from his own soul and his own profound spiritual experience. It reveals itself as a guide and great help on the way to truth and good.

The steps of "The Ladder" -- this proceeding from strength to strength on the path of man's proclivity to perfection, is not something suddenly but rather gradually to be reached, as in the saying of the Saviour: "The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by strength, and those utilizing strength shalt delight of it" (Mt 11: 12).



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APRIL 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 (Mar 19) PALM SUNDAY 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	2 (Mar 20) Great & Holy Monday 6:30 Bridegroom Matins Fast	3 (Mar 21) Great & Holy Tuesday 6:30 Bridegroom Matins Fast	4 (Mar 22) Great & Holy Wednesday 5:00 PM Matins 6:30 Holy Unction Fast	5 (Mar 23) Great & Holy Thursday 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy 6:30 Matins w/12 Gospels Fast	6 (Mar 24) Great & Holy Friday 10:00 Royal Hours of Pascha 4:00 Vespers w/Taking Down from the Cross 6:30 Matins w/The Lamentations Fast	7 (Mar 25) ANNUNCIATION Great & Holy Saturday 9:00 Vespers Divine Liturgy of Feasts 10:00 Reading of Acts of the Apostles 11:30 Midnight Office Fast: fish, wine, & oil
8 (Mar 26) PASCHA 12 Midnight Procession, Matins and Divine Liturgy of Pascha 12 Noon Agape Vespers Fast free	9 (Mar 27) Bright Monday Second Day of Pascha 9:00 Matin & Divine Liturgy w/Procession Fast free	10 (Mar 28) Bright Tuesday Fast free	11 (Mar 29) Bright Wednesday Fast free	12 (Mar 30) Bright Thursday Fast free	13 (Mar 31) Bright Friday Fast free	14 (Apr 1) Bright Saturday 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast free
15 (Apr 2) 2nd Sunday of Pascha: Antipascha, St. Thomas Sunday 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy 1:00 Blessing of Graves in Cemetery	16 (Apr 3)	17 (Apr 4) Radonitsa 10:00 General Panihida in Cemetery	18 (Apr 5) Fast	19 (Apr 6)	20 (Apr 7) Fast	21 (Apr 8) 5:30 All-Night Vigil
22 (Apr 9) 3rd Sunday of Pascha: The Myrrh-bearing Women. Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	23 (Apr 10)	24 (Apr 11)	25 (Apr 12) Fast	26 (Apr 13)	27 (Apr 14) Fast	28 (Apr 15) 5:30 All-Night Vigil
29 (Apr 16) 4th Sunday of Pascha: The Paralyzed Man. Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	30 (Apr 17)	May 1 (Apr 18)	May 2 (Apr 19) Fast	May 3 (Apr 20)	May 4 (Apr 21)	May 5 (Apr 22) 5:30 All-Night Vigil