

# St. Archangel Michael Serbian Orthodox Church

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## Church Website:

<http://www.saintarchangelmichael.org>

(Also find us on Facebook)

## Schedule of Services and Activities:

- **Today:** St. John of Ladder
- Martyr [Sabinas](#) of Hermopolis, Egypt (303).
- Martyr [Papas](#) of Lycaonia (305).
- **Divine Liturgies, Presanctified Liturgies, Vespers & Matins will be celebrated, but will not be open to the public until the “stay at home” is lifted. If you wish to receive Holy Communion at home, please contact Fr. Dean.**

## Special Prayers for:

- Floyd Gorman, Hannah, Joanne Lastavich, Tom, Vi Smilanich, Betty Perell, Mike Shipka, Georgia Hydukovich, Donna Thomas, Charlie Dunn, George Cicmil, Dino Youlos
- **Someone missing?** Write it down and give to Fr. Dean *Please remember to check the “Caring Board” in the hall and also to post notices for those who are in need of prayer or visitation.*

**Join us for coffee hour in the fellowship hall! Make yourself friendly to any new visitors!**

**Confessions:** Confessions can be done anytime, during some services, before or after services, or by appointment, feel free to ask even if I'm in the altar. - Fr. Dean

*While Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer, fasting, and recent confession; non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.*

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**The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent:**

**Venerable John Climacus, Troparion, Tone I —**

Thou didst prove to be a freeman of the desert, an angel in a body, and a wonder-worker, O our God - bearing Father John. By fasting, vigil and prayer thou didst obtain heavenly gifts, and thou healest the sick and the souls of those who have recourse to thee with faith. Glory to Him Who gave thee strength, glory to Him Who crowned thee, glory to Him Who works through thee healings for all.

**Kontakion, Tone I —**

Offering ever-blossoming fruits of learning from thy book, O wise one, thou delightest the hearts of those who study it seriously, O blessed one. For it is a ladder which leads up from the earth to the heavenly and abiding glory souls who with faith honour thee.

**Troparion of the Sunday, Tone VIII —**

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection: glory to Thee!

**Hymn to the Theotokos, Tone VIII —**

For our sake Thou wast born of the Virgin / and did endure crucifixion, O Good One, / destroying death by death. / Revealing the resurrection as God, / do not despise the work of Thy hand. / Reveal Thy love for man, O merciful One, / and accept the Theotokos praying for us, / and save Thy despairing people, O Savior.

**Kontakion of the Sunday, Tone VIII —**

By rising from the tomb, Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam. / Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O greatly Merciful One!

**Kontakion, Tone II "The steadfast" —**

O God-bearing Sabinas, / thou divine scion, unfading bloom, branch

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heavy-laden with fruit,/ with thy gladness fill them that with faith honor thy memory,// and pray thou unceasingly for us all.

**Epistle**  
**Hebrews 6:1-20**

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[Heb 6:13-20 RSV] 13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." 15 And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. 16 Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. 17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, 18 so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchiz'edek.

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**Gospel**  
**Mark 9:17-31**

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[Mar 9:17-31 RSV] 17 And one of the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; 18 and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." 19 And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." 20 And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." 23 And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the

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unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." 26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." 30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

### **The Monk John of the Ladder (Lestvichnik; Klimatikos; Climaticus)**

*Commemorated on the 4th Sunday of the Great Lent, 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 danger. 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 afront 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 utilising strength shalt delight of it" (Mt 11: 12).

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