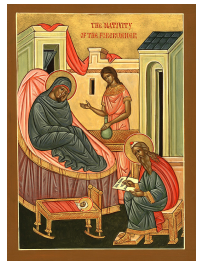


THE FORERUNNER
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
 420 Laura Street, Philipsburg, PA 16866
 V. Rev. Fr. C. Michael Simerick, Acting Rector
 Contact Fr. Michael directly at 814-375-1343
<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>



John Conkey-Council President; Tom Demchak-Vice-President; Judy Everly-Secretary; Mike Conkey-Treasurer
Members: Sonya Brennish, George Sura, Ivan Switala

APRIL 2019

Service & Activity Schedule

Wed., April 3 – Presanctified Liturgy- 6:00 p.m.
 Sat., April 6 – Akathist for Departed – 5:00 p.m.
 followed by Vespers
 Sun., April 7 – 4th Sunday of Lent–St. John Climacus
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – Fetcenko & Stine
 Wed., April 10 – Presanctified Liturgy- 6:00 p.m.
 Thurs, April 11 – Compline & Canon of St. Andrew
 Reading of life of St. Mary of Egypt – 6:00 p.m.
 Sat., April 13 – Akathist for Departed – 5:00 p.m.
 followed by Vespers
 Sun., April 14 – 5th Sunday of Lent-St. Mary of Egypt
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – Thompson & Conkey
 Parish Council Meeting
 Wed., April 17 – Presanctified Liturgy- 6:00 p.m.
 Sat., April 20 – Lazarus Saturday
 Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.
 Vespers of Palm Sunday – 5:00 p.m.
 Sun., April 21 – Palm Sunday
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Blessing of palms and pussy willows
 Fellowship Hour – Ammerman & Donovan
 Holy Wed., April 24 – Presanctified Lit.- 6:00 p.m.
 Holy Thursday, April 25
 Vespers of St. Basil – 10:00 a.m.
 Matins with Passion Gospels – 6:00 p.m.
 Holy Friday, April 26
 Royal Hours – 9:00 a.m. - Decorate tomb
 Vespers & placing of winding sheet – 3:00 p.m.
 Holy Saturday, April 27
 Vespers of St. Basil – 10:00 a.m.
 Nocturne – 11:30 p.m.
 Sun., April 28 – Holy Pascha
 Resurrection Matins – 12:00 a.m.
 With procession (weather permitting outside)
 Followed by Divine Liturgy
 Blessing of Paschal Foods
 Agape Vespers – ~~1:00 p.m.~~ **now 11:00 AM**

Readers:

Mark Ammerman, John Conkey,
 Mike Conkey, Tom Demchak,
 Doug Donovan, George Sura,
 Andrew Tocimak

Altar Servers:

Acolyte John Blake
 Ivan Switala

Reader's Schedule

	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Epistle</i>
4/7	Tom Demchak	Tom Demchak
4/14	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
4/21	John Conkey	John Conkey
4/28	Holy Pascha	

Notable Feasts/Services in April

4/20	Lazarus Saturday
4/21	Palm Sunday
4/24	Holy Wednesday
4/25	Holy Thursday
4/26	Holy Friday
4/27	Holy Saturday
4/28	Holy Pascha

Birthdays

Jack Foster	April 2
Elaine Chutko	April 5
Elaine Cardinal	April 24
Ivan Switala	April 24

Please contact Shirley Donovan (814-360-3615) or Mary Ann Conkey (814-867-2926) if there are changes with the Fellowship Hour. Cash donations go towards the purchase of coffee, cream, and sugar.

From the Desk of Father Michael

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - COMMEMORATION OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS - APRIL 7

The first half of our Lenten preparation focused on our need for spiritual cleansing. The salvation plan of God, as revealed in the scriptures read, centered on some individuals who were found to be righteous in the eyes of God but sinned and fell from grace. Many of them repented, and their relationship with God was restored. In the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, we are made aware of Old Testamental persons that simply rebelled against God and His divine ordinances all their lives and consequently died miserable, degraded deaths. Others we read about, who through sin were tending towards spiritual oblivion, found God, their lives were restored, and many became divine instruments for God's holy purpose.

All of these readings were made available to us that we might identify our own strengths and weaknesses in the light of the lives of these individuals. The intent of our holy Church during the first three weeks of Lent was that we would learn from their sinful mistakes and profit from their examples of repentance and virtuous living. If the first half of Lent sought from us introspection to perfect spiritual cleansing, the second half of Lent calls us to contemplate what God has accomplished for those found worthy of salvation.

On Sunday, April 7, we celebrate the memory of St. John Climacus (of the Ladder) one who taught not only the method of spiritual ascent but also the rewards of making the spiritual effort now, and those we will be afforded in the world to come. He taught us, as we make the attempt to climb the spiritual ladder to perfect our humanity, that each rung of the ladder helps us to see more clearly and vividly what God has revealed to us regarding our salvation. The Lord exhorts us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33).

The following is an excerpt from the Prologue from Ochrid by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic on the life of Holy Father John Climacus:

"The author of the famous 'Ladder' came from an unknown place to Mount Sinai as a sixteen-year-old boy and remained there, first as a novice, then as a hermit and finally as abbot of Sinai, until he died at the age of eighty, in about 649. His biographer, the monk Daniel says of him: 'He brought his body up to Mount Sinai, but his spirit he brought to the Mount of Heaven'. He spent nineteen years in obedience to his spiritual father, Martyrios. Anastasius of Mount Sinai, who saw John once as a young man, foretold that he would be abbot of Mount Sinai. At the importunate urging of the brethren, John accepted the abbacy, and guided their souls to salvation with loving zeal.

During the time that he was silent in his cave, John wrote many instructive books, of which the most famous, 'The Ladder', is much read to this day. It describes the way to raise the soul to God as if on a ladder. Before his death, John appointed his own brother, George, to the abbacy, but George began to grieve greatly at the approaching parting with John. Then John said that, if he were found worthy to stand close to God in the next world, he would pray that George be taken up to heaven in the same year. And so it came to pass. After ten months, George also fell asleep and departed to take his place among heaven's citizens alongside his brother John."

The following topics that make up the rungs of the ladder of divine ascent are taken from the book "The Ladder" written by St. John Climacus:

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| 1. on renunciation of the world | 16. on avarice |
| 2. on detachment | 17. on poverty |
| 3. on exile | 18. on insensitivity |
| 4. on obedience | 19. on sleep, prayer, and the singing in church of psalms |
| 5. on penitence | 20. on alertness |
| 6. on remembrance | 21. on unmanly fears |
| 7. on mourning | 22. on vainglory |
| 8. on placidity and meekness | 23. on pride |
| 9. on malice | 24. on meekness, simplicity, guilelessness & wickedness |
| 10. on slander | 25. on humility |
| 11. on talkativeness and silence | 26. on discernment |
| 12. on falsehood | 27. on stillness |
| 13. on despondency | 28. on prayer |
| 14. on gluttony | 29. on dispassion |
| 15. on chastity | 30. on faith, hope, and love |

May the intercessory prayers of Holy Father John Climacus enable us to perfect our spiritual vision so all that the Lord has accomplished for our salvation might be readily perceived and the joy of the resurrection might permeate our hearts and minds.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT – ST. MARY OF EGYPT - APRIL 14
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Our holy Church provides for our strengthening during the Lenten season by bringing to our attention the lives of holy/righteous men and women from the scriptures and the lives of the saints. This Sunday is dedicated to the memory of St. Mary of Egypt. Her life with its graphic description of licentiousness and her total restoration even to the point of achieving deification in this life via repentance is read during the fifth week of Lent in conjunction with the Compline and Canon of St. Andrew of Crete.

St. Mary's sinfulness, revealing to what depths she sank when she fell from grace and her desire to return to a life with God through the severest ascetic discipline, helps us to see most clearly the two extreme potentials that exist in each and every one of us. The potentials to do either good or evil—the potentials to reach the heights of heaven or the depths of hell—are for us to choose. Her becoming an "angel in the body," as St. Zossimas describes her, kindles a flame of desire in us to emulate her, that we might achieve in this life what God calls us to be.

Holy Mother Mary relates to Father Zossimas her longing and deep desire to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. From the time she entered the desert until he found her some forty-seven years, she had been deprived of Holy Communion. Although she had reached a deified state and no longer needed earthly food, she craved the divine Body and Blood of Christ that he so freely gives to us in the sacrament of Holy Communion. St. Mary's reverence and desire for the Holy Sacrament should cause us to approach the Holy Mysteries with greater awe and trepidation and only after preparing for them properly. Reflecting on her powerful witness, we should never take the Holy Mysteries for granted.

The following is taken from Prologue from Ochrid by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic:

St. Mary of Egypt. The recorder of the life of this wonderful saint was St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. A hieromonk, the elder Zossimas, had gone off at one time during the Great Fast a twenty-days' walk into the wilderness across the Jordan. He suddenly caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body and with hair as white as snow, who fled in its nakedness from Zossimas' sight. The elder ran a long way, until this figure stopped at a stream and called: 'Father Zossimas, forgive me for the Lord's sake. I cannot turn round to you, for I am a naked woman.' Then Zossimas threw her his outer cloak, and she wrapped herself in it and turned round to him. The elder was amazed at hearing his name from the lips of this unknown woman.

After considerable pressure on his part, she told him her life-story. She had been born in Egypt, and had lived as a prostitute in Alexandria from the age of twelve, spending seventeen years in this way of life. Urged by the lustful fire of the flesh, she one day got into a ship that was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she made to go into one of the churches to venerate the Precious Cross, but some unseen power prevented her from entering. In great fear, she turned to an icon of the Mother of God that was in the entrance, and begged her to let her go in and venerate the Cross, confessing her sin and impurity and promising that she would then go wherever the Most Pure led her. She was then allowed to enter the church.

After venerating the Cross, she went out again to the entrance and, standing in front of the icon, thanked the Mother of God. Then she heard a voice: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace.' She immediately bought three loaves of bread and set off for the Jordan, arriving there the same evening. She received Communion the following morning in the monastery of St. John and then crossed the river. She spent forty-eight whole years in the wilderness in the greatest torments, in terror, in struggles with passionate thoughts like gigantic beasts. She fed only on plants.

After that, when she was standing in prayer, Zossimas saw her lifted up in the air. She begged him to bring her Communion the next year on the bank of the Jordan, and she would come to receive it. The following year Zossimas came with the Holy Gifts to the bank of the Jordan in the evening, and stood in amazement as he saw her cross the river. He saw her coming in the moonlight and, arriving on the further bank, make the sign of the Cross over the river. She then walked across it as though it were dry land. When she had received Communion, she begged him to come again the following year to the same stream by which they had first met. Zossimas went, and found her dead body there on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: 'Abba Zossimas, bury in this place the body of the humble Mary. Give dust to dust, I passed away on April 1st, on the very night of Christ's Passion, after communion of the divine Mysteries.' Zossimas learned her name for the first time, and also the awe-inspiring marvel that she had arrived at that stream the previous year on the night of the same day on which she had received Communion—a place that he had taken twenty days to reach. And thus Zossimas buried the body of the wonderful saint, Mary of Egypt. When he returned to the monastery, he recounted the whole story of her life and the wonders to which he had been an eyewitness. Thus the Lord glorifies repentant sinners. St. Mary is also commemorated in the fifth week of the Great Fast. The Church holds her up before the faithful in these days of the Fast as a model of repentance. She entered into rest in about 530.
