



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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April 3, 2022

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

Today, April 3rd, we celebrate the Sunday of St. John Climacus which falls every ecclesiastical year on the 4th Sunday of Great Lent, as well as on March 30th. St. John Climacus was born during the early 6th century and fell asleep in the Lord in the early 7th century. He was of Syrian descent and the only child of a noble family. From his early youth he showed his parents an inclination to be educated in the worldly and heavenly things of God, as well as in the sciences and philosophy. As a young man, St. John Climacus loved silence, fasting, prayer, living an ascetic and contemplative life in the deserts and studying the Holy Scriptures and theological writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church.

His spiritual father was St. Martyrios of Mount Sinai who guided him and nourished his understanding of monasticism. St. John Climacus was a God-fearing, spiritually-virtuous and holy man. By God's grace, he performed miracles in the name of our Trinitarian God. Hundreds and thousands of faithful Christians travelled from distant cities and lands in order to meet him and ask for his blessing. After the repose of the Abbott of Mount Sinai, St. John Climacus became the new Abbott—a position he held for only few years before he departed to live a silent, ascetic life in the deserts of Syria.

His name 'Climacus' means 'of the ladder,' which stems from writing the renowned and influential book, 'The Ladder of Divine Ascent,' which was an ascetical treatise originally intended for monks. This book is frequently chosen to be read both in a private and in an ecclesiastical manner throughout Great Lent. It consists of 30 chapters which are described as steps, or a spiritual ladder, which lead human beings from the earthly world to the heavenly realm of God. Based on St. John Climacus's experience, each chapter describes a specific Christian virtue and the ways that each Christian can attain it in order to unite with our Trinitarian God.

On April 3rd we celebrate St. Joseph the Hymnographer. St. Joseph was born in 816 A.D. and reposed in the Lord in 886 A.D. at the age of 70 years. He was born in Sicily, and in his youth, he fled his hometown along with his parents due to an invasion by Arab pirates. They went to Peloponnesos and he, later, went to Thessaloniki to become a monk at the monastery of Latomos. There, he led a loyal life to God and he met his spiritual father St. Gregory of Decapolis who brought him to Constantinople where they settled near the church of the holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus. During the reign of Emperor Leo, the Armenian there was a resurgence of the iconoclasm heresy. St. Joseph the Hymnographer was chosen to travel to Rome to report to Pope Leo III about the dispute and seek help to defend the iconophiles, but along the way he was captured and sent to Crete. After he was set free in the year 850 he established a Monastery dedicated to Apostle Bartholomew where he placed the holy relics of the Apostle and those of his

spiritual father St. Gregory of Decapolis. He, then, dedicated himself to the writing of hymns, which is why he is called 'the Hymnographer,' and he created many poetic canons which now adorn the 12 Minaion books (one for each month of the ecclesiastical year). One of the canons he is known for is the Canon for the Akathist Hymn, which is chanted on Lenten Fridays.

On April 6th we celebrate Eutychios, Patriarch of Constantinople. St Eutychios was born in 512 A.D. in a small village in the province of Phrygia. He entered the monastic life at a young age. He was a very well-educated young man in all aspects of secular and ecclesiastical life. His spiritual virtues became an inspiration to many who, because of his example, dedicated their lives to our Lord by following a monastic life full of asceticism, worship and prayer. He was ordained a Priestmonk and Bishop, and, shortly afterwards, in 552 he was chosen to be Patriarch of Constantinople. He was a strong supporter and defender of the two natures of Christ and he convened the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 in Constantinople that condemned the heresies of the Origenists and of the Monophysites. For this reason, after serving as Patriarch for 13 years he was deposed and exiled to an Amasean monastery where he stayed for 12 years. There, he lived a strict ascetic life in meekness and worked many miracles. In 577 he was restored to his Patriarchal throne in Constantinople and remained in that position until the time of his repose in the Lord in 582 A.D. at the age of 70 years.

On April 9th we celebrate St. Euppsychios the Martyr. St. Euppsychios was from Cappadocia and lived a pious life with his newly-wed wife during the era of the pagan Emperor Julian the Apostate. He was a very loyal and faithful Christian. Emperor Julian built an idol of the pagan goddess Fortuna and expected all to worship it. Instead, St. Euppsychios, along with other young men, destroyed the pagan temple, leading to his arrest and sentencing to death by beheading. St Euppsychios martyred in the year 362 A.D.

Let us all take the opportunity to read St. John Climacus's book, 'The Ladder of Divine Ascent,' and work towards arming ourselves with the various Christian virtues that we can gain through our spiritual struggles and love for Christ and one another. Let us all pay attention to the hymns that are chanted in the Orthodox Church, as composed by Holy Hymnographers such as St. Joseph the Hymnographer, for the benefit and edification of our souls. Let us all follow the correct Orthodox doctrine that St. Eutychios, Patriarch of Constantinople, faithfully defended by honoring those depicted in holy icons and venerating them in the Orthodox Church. And let us all admire and imitate the boldness of St. Euppsychios the Martyr and his companions who, with the fear of God, destroyed the pagan temple, so that we may reveal our steadfastness in our Christian faith and love for Christ in heart, mind, body and soul.

Yours in Christ,

+Rev. Economics Fr. Georgios Manias

