



**SAINT NICHOLAS  
ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
P.O. Box 777  
Barton, OH 43905-0777

*A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese  
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople*

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**Very Rev. Father Michael C. Kabel** *Pastor & Dean*

**OFFICE PHONE** (740) 695-9533  
**Church Hall Phone** (740) 695-9456

- E-MAIL: [stnicholas777@yahoo.com](mailto:stnicholas777@yahoo.com)
- WEB SITE: [www.stnicholasbarton.org](http://www.stnicholasbarton.org)
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**MYSTERY OF HOLY CONFESSION:** Before & after Saturday evening Vespers. Other Sacraments by appointment.

**GOING TO THE HOSPITAL?** Please notify Father when you are admitted if you want him to visit. Kindly notify Father also when you are discharged.

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**SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2017 DIVINE LITURGY 10:00 AM**  
**HAVING ENDURED THE PASSION FOR US,**  
**O JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON US!**

THE COMMEMORATION OF SAINT JOHN OF THE LADDER (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent): Antiphon “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” on p. 8 and the Beatitudes. Tropar for Tone 7 on p. 99. Tropar & Kondak of Saint John Climacus and all remaining Propers can be found on pp. 183-184. The *Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great*, with its special melodies, is served on the Sundays of Great Lent.

**EPISTLE:** Hebrews 6:13-20.                      **GOSPEL:** Mark 9:17-31.

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**SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES**

For the week of March 26, 2017:

**Sun., March 26:** (After Liturgy) **Panachida** in memory of +**Julia Zavatsky**. Requested by the Zavatsky Family. Also in memory of +**John Oliver**. Requested by the Brady Family.

**5:00 PM:** **Lenten Mission Vespers** at *Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Church* in Steubenville, OH. (*Serbian Deanery.*)

Wed., March 29: (6:30 PM) Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Please keep at least a 3-hour fast!

Thurs., March 30: (6:30 PM) Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete, *Part I*.

Fri., March 31: (6:30 PM) Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

Sat., April 1: (1:00 PM) Baptism of *Eleanor Mae Susick*.

Sat., April 1: (6:00 PM) Great Vespers for the *Commemoration of Saint Mary of Egypt (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent)*. Propers for Tone 8 and Saint Mary of Egypt.

### Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt, April 2:

8:15 AM Matins.

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy for the *Commemoration of Saint Mary of Egypt (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent)*. Antiphon "Bless the Lord, O my soul," on p. 8. and the Beatitudes. Tropar for Tone 8 on p. 102. Tropar & Kondak of Saint Mary of Egypt and all remaining Propers can be found on pp. 185-186. The *Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great*, with its special melodies, is served on the Sundays of Great Lent.

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THE ETERNAL LAMP burns with prayers for Laney & Anna Ross. Requested by *Laney & Cindi Ross*.

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THE LEFT SIDE ALTAR LAMPS (Prothesis) burn *in memory* of +Julia Repchak Zavatsky. Requested by *Carolyn, Ray, Eric, Erin, Alexander & Juliana*.

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THE RIGHT SIDE ALTAR LAMPS (Diakonikon) burn with prayers and best wishes for a *Happy Anniversary* to Doctors Sharon & Fausto Lazo. Requested by *Laney & Cindi Ross*.

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THE TETRAPOD LAMPS burn with prayers for *Special Intentions*. Requested by *Theresa Reese*.

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TODAY'S SUNDAY BULLETIN is sponsored with prayers for the *Health & Strength* of Garrett Holubeck. "May God watch over him." Requested by *Joyce and Brian*.

\*\*\*\*\*  
THE PATRIARCHAL PENCE COLLECTION will be taken-up *TODAY*. Please use the envelope from your offering box to assist the work of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.

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THE LADIES' ALTAR SOCIETY MEETING will be held *TODAY* after the Divine Services. The Ladies plan to hold their meetings on the last Sunday of each month.

\*\*\*\*\*  
LAST CALL! Orders for chocolate 3-Bar Crosses for your Easter Baskets from Sarris Candies are DUE *TOMORROW*, Monday, March 27. Please submit your order to Theresa Reese by phone at **740-695-5254**; or text to **740-359-0646**.

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THE CHURCH CARPETS are scheduled to be cleaned *TOMORROW*, Monday, March 27.

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SPECIAL THANKS to EVERYONE who helped us get ready for the *Lenten Mission* and *Dinner* last Sunday. Nice job, everyone! Those who attended were truly nourished in spirit and body!

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YOUTH CHOIR PRACTICE will be held in the basement of the church *this* Monday evening, March 27 at **7:00 PM**. We will be going over *Lenten* and *Paschal* Hymns.

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LENTEN CONFESSIONS can be heard on Saturday afternoons from **5:00 til 5:45 PM**; and again after Vespers. Confessions can also be heard from **5:30 PM til 6:15 PM** before & immediately after most other evening Lenten services. Please don't wait til the last minute!

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GRAVE WATCH. Please sign-up for at least a *one-hour shift* so that we have continuous coverage at the Tomb of Our Lord from Good Friday evening through Resurrection Matins on Holy Saturday evening. The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the vestibule. Sign-up today!

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**EASTER FLOWER OFFERING ENVELOPES** were included with last week's bulletin. Please use these envelopes if you wish to donate an Easter Flower (or Flowers) in memory of a departed loved one and/or with prayers for the health & salvation of the living. Names and donors will be published in the Easter bulletin.  
**Donation: \$15.00 per flower.**

\*\*\*\*\*  
CEMETERY CLEAN-UP. It's time to remove all Christmas decorations from the graves of your loved ones at our parish cemetery. Please do not discard these items over the hillside. Either take them home, or dispose of them in the trash can provided for this purpose in the back of the cemetery. ***Thank you for your cooperation!***  
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**SPIRITUAL READING MATERIAL** for Great Lent is available on the table under the pamphlet rack. Additional books may be borrowed from our Lending Library or purchased at the Gift Shop.  
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**BRING A FRIEND TO CHURCH** for a Lenten Service! This is a wonderful time to share your Faith! Our young people will get an ***additional stamp*** for their passports every time they bring a friend to church. The rest of us will be blessed by sharing the pearl of great price!  
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### CHURCH ATTENDANCE

**Saturday Vespers (3/18) — 12**  
**Sunday Divine Liturgy (3/19) — 81**

**Lenten Mission Vespers**  
in **Barton** (3/19) — 78

**Moleben to the Holy Cross (3/20) — 18**

**Presanctified Liturgy (3/22) — 22**

**Parastas for 4'th All Souls' Saturday (3/24) — 19**

### UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2017

Please mark your calendars now!

**Saturday, April 1** — Baptism of *Eleanor Mae Susick*.

**Saturday, April 15** — Easter Egg Hunt.

**Sunday, April 16** — PASCHA.

**Friday, May 5** — Vespers Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Saint George at 6:00 PM.

**Saturday, May 6** — 10'th Annual Parish Flea Market.

**Saturday, May 6** — First Confession Day.

**Sunday, May 14** — Mother's Day.

**Thursday, May 25** — Ascension.

**Sunday, May 28** — Church School Ends.

**Sunday, May 28** — Memorial Day Weekend and the Blessing of Graves.

**Sunday, June 4** — Pentecost Sunday.  
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# The Fourth Sunday of Lent: Feast of our Righteous Father John (Climacus) of Sinai, Author of The Ladder of Divine Ascent

## Introduction

On March 30 /April 12 and on the Fourth Sunday of Holy Lent the Orthodox Church commemorates our Righteous Father John Climacus. He is called Climacus due to his authorship of the great spiritual work *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. His commemoration is designated by the Church on one of the Sundays of Lent as his life and writings affirm him as a supreme bearer and proponent of Christian asceticism. The ascetic example of this great Saint of the Church inspires us in our Lenten journey.

## Life of the Saint

Saint John Climacus was probably born in the second half of the sixth century; but his country and origins are alike unknown because, from the beginning of his renunciation of the world, he took great care to live as a stranger upon earth. "Exile," he wrote, "is a separation from everything, in order that one may hold on totally to God." We only know that, from the age of sixteen, after having received a solid intellectual formation, he renounced all the pleasures of this vain life for love of God and went to Mount Sinai, to the foot of the holy mountain on which God had in former times revealed His glory to Moses, and consecrated himself to the Lord with a burning heart as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.

Setting aside, from the moment of his entry into the stadium, all self-trust and self-satisfaction through unfeigned humility, he submitted body and soul to an elder called Martyrios and set himself, free from all care, to climb that spiritual ladder (klimax) at the top of which God stands, and to "add fire each day to fire, fervour to fervour, zeal to zeal." He saw his shepherd as "the image of Christ" and, convinced that his elder was responsible for him before God, he had only one care: to reject his own will and "with all deliberateness to put aside the capacity to make [his] own judgement," so that no interval passed between Martyrios' commands, even those that appeared unjustified, and the obedience of his disciple. In spite of this perfect submission, Martyrios kept him as a novice for four years and only tonsured him when he was twenty, after having tested his humility. Strategios, one of the monks present at the tonsure predicted that the new monk would one day become one of the great lights of the world. When, later, Martyrios and his disciple paid a visit to John the Savaite, one of the most famous ascetics of the time, the latter, ignoring the elder, poured water over John's feet. After they had left, John the Savaite declared that he did not know the young monk but, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he had washed the feet of the Abbot of Sinai. The same prophecy was confirmed by the great Anastasios the Sinaite (April 21), whom they also went to visit.

In spite of his youth, John showed the maturity of an elder and great discernment. Thus one day, when he had been sent into the world on a mission, and finding himself with lay-people, he had preferred to give in somewhat to vainglory by eating very little, rather than to gluttony; for, of these two evils, it was better to choose that which is less dangerous for beginners in monastic life.

He thus passed nineteen years in the blessed freedom from the care that obedience gives, freed from all conflict by the prayer of his spiritual father and on "a safe voyage, a sleeper's journey," moved towards the harbor of impassibility. On the death of Martyrios, he resolved to continue his ascension in solitude, a type of life suitable for only a small number, who, made strong on the rock of humility, flee from others so as not to be even for a moment deprived of the "sweetness of God." He did not commit himself to this path, one so full of snares, on his own judgment, but on the recommendation of the holy elder George Arsilaites, who instructed him in the way of life proper to hesychasts. As his exercise ground, he chose a solitary place called Tholas, situated five miles from the main monastery, where other hermits lived, each not far from the others. He stayed there for forty years, consumed by an ever-increasing love of God, without thought for his own flesh, free of all contact with men, having unceasing prayer and vigilance as his only occupation, in order to "keep his incorporeal self shut up in the house of the body," as an angel clothed in a body.

He used to eat all that was compatible with his monastic profession, but in very small quantities, thus subduing the tyranny of the flesh while not providing a pretext for vainglory. By living in solitude and retreat, he put to death the mighty flame of greed, which, under the pretext of charity and hospitality, leads negligent monks to gluttony, the door to all passions, and to the love of money, “a worship of idols and the offspring of unbelief.” He triumphed over sloth (acedia)—that death of the soul which attacks hesychasts in particular—and laxity, by the remembrance of death. By meditating on eternal rewards, he undid the chain of sadness; he knew only a single sadness: that “affliction which leads to joy” and makes us run with ardor along the path of repentance, purifying the soul from all its impurities.



Saint John Climacus is seen standing at the foot of the ladder. With his left hand he directs our attention towards the ladder, while in his right hand he holds a scroll on which is written: "Ascend, ascend, Brethren."

What still prevented him from arriving at impassibility (apatheia)? He had long since conquered anger by the sword of obedience. He had suffocated vainglory, that three-pointed thorn which forever harasses those who battle for holiness, and which entwines itself with every virtue like a leech, by solitude and even more by silence. As a reward for his labors, which he took care to season constantly with self-accusation, the Lord gave him the queen of virtues, holy and precious humility: “a grace in the soul, and with a name known only to those who have had experience of it, a gift from God.”

As his cell was too near the others, he would often withdraw to a distant cave at the foot of the mountain, which he made an antechamber of heaven by his groans and the tears which fell effortlessly from his eyes like an abundant spring, transfiguring his body as with a “wedding garment.” By this blessed affliction and these continual tears, he “did not cease to celebrate daily” and kept perpetual prayer in his heart, which had become like an inviolable fortress against the assaults of evil thoughts (logismoi). Sometimes he was ravished in spirit in the midst of the angelic choirs, not knowing if he was in the body or out of it, and then with great simplicity he asked God to teach him about the mysteries of theology. When he came out of the furnace of prayer, he sometimes felt purified as if by fire, and sometimes totally radiant with light.

As for sleep, he allowed himself just the measure necessary to keep his spirit vigilant in prayer and, before sleeping, he prayed at length, or wrote down on tablets the fruit of his meditations on the inspired Scriptures.

He took great care over many years to keep his virtues hidden from human eyes, but, when God judged that the time had come for him to transmit to others the light he had acquired for the edification of the Church, He led a young monk named Moses to John, who, thanks to the intervention of the other ascetics, succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the man of God, and was accepted as his disciple. One afternoon, when Moses had gone a long way away to find earth for their little garden, and had lain down under a large rock to rest, Abba John, in his cell, received the revelation that Moses was in danger, and he immediately seized the weapon of prayer. In the evening, when Moses returned, he told John that in his sleep he had, all of a sudden, heard the voice of his elder calling him, at the very moment when the rock began to break away from its moorings and threatened to crush him.

Saint John’s prayer also had the power to heal visible and invisible wounds. It was thus that he delivered a monk from the demon of lust, which had pushed him to the point of despair. On another occasion, he made rain fall. Yet it was above all in the gift of spiritual teaching that God manifested His grace in him. Basing his teaching on his personal experience, he generously instructed all those who came to him on the snares which lay in wait for monks in their battle passions and against the prince of this world. This spiritual teaching, however, attracted the jealousy of some who then spread around calumnies about him, accusing him of being a conceited chatterer. Although his conscience was clear, Abba John did not attempt to justify himself but, seeking rather to take away any pretext from those who sought one, he stopped teaching for a whole year, convinced that it was better to do some slight harm to his friends rather than to exacerbate the resentment of the wicked. All the inhabitants of the desert were edified at his silence and by this proof of humility, and it was only at the insistence of his repentant calumniators that he agreed to receive visitors again.

Filled with all the virtues of action and contemplation, and having arrived at the summit of the holy ladder through victory over all the passions of the old man, Saint John shone like a star on the Sinai peninsula and was held in awe by all the monks. He thought himself no less of a beginner for all that and, avid to find examples of evangelical



conduct, undertook journeys to various Egyptian monasteries. He visited in particular a great coenobitic monastery in the region of Alexandria, a veritable earthly paradise which was governed by a shepherd gifted with infallible discernment. This brotherhood was united by such charity in the Lord, exempt from all familiarity and useless talk, that the monks had scarcely need of the warnings of the superior, for they mutually encouraged each other to a most divine vigilance. Of all their virtues, the most admirable, according to John, was the way they were especially careful never to “injure a brother’s conscience” in the slightest. He was also very edified by a visit to a dependency of this monastery, called “The Prison,” where monks who had gravely sinned lived in extreme asceticism and gave extraordinary proofs of repentance, straining by their labors to receive God’s forgiveness. Far from appearing as hard and intolerable, this prison seemed rather to the Saint to be the model of monastic life: “A soul that has lost its one-time confidence and abandoned its hope of dispassion, that has broken the seal of chastity, that has squandered the treasury of divine graces, that has become a stranger to divine consolation, that has rejected the Lord’s command...and that is wounded and pierced by sorrow as it remembers all this, will not only take on the labors mentioned above with all eagerness, but will even decide devoutly to kill itself with penitential works. It will do so if there is in it only the tiniest spark of love or of fear of the Lord.”

When the Saint had sojourned these forty years in the desert, he was charged by God, like a second Moses, to be at the head of this new Israel by becoming abbot of the monastery at the foot of the holy mountain (c. 650). It is recounted that, on the day of his enthronement, six hundred pilgrims were present, and when they were all seated for the meal, the great prophet Moses himself, dressed in a white tunic, could be seen coming and going, giving orders with authority to the cooks, the cellarers, the stewards and the other helpers.

Having penetrated into the mystical darkness of contemplation, this new Moses, having been initiated into the secrets of the spiritual Law, and coming back down the mountain impassible, his face transfigured by divine grace, was able to become for all the shepherd, the physician and the spiritual master. Carrying within him the Book written by God, he did not have need of other books to teach his monks the science of the sciences and the art of arts.

The Abbot of Raitho, who was also named John, having been informed of the wonderful manner of life of the monks of Sinai, wrote to Saint John, asking him to explain briefly but in a methodical way what those who had embraced the angelic life should do in order to be saved. He who did not know how to go against the wishes of another, thus engraved with the stylus of his own experience the Tablets of the Spiritual Law. He presented this treatise as a Ladder of thirty steps, that Jacob, “he who supplanted the passions” contemplated while he was lying on the bed of asceticism (Genesis 28:12). In his Orthodox Summa of the spiritual life, which has remained for centuries the outstanding guide to evangelical living, both for monks and for lay people, Saint John does not institute rules but, by practical recommendations, judiciously-chosen details and short pithy maxims and riddles often full of humor, he initiates the soul into spiritual combat and the discernment of thoughts. His “word” is brief, dense and tapered, and it penetrates like a sword to the depths of the soul, uncompromisingly cutting out all self-satisfaction, and tracing hypocritical asceticism and egoism to their roots. Like that of Saint Gregory (January 25) in the theological domain, this “word” is the Gospel put into practice, and it will lead most surely those who let themselves be impregnated by it through an assiduous reading to the gates of heaven, where Christ awaits us.

At the end of his life, the blessed John designated his brother George, who had embraced the hesychast life from the beginning of his renunciation, as his successor at the head of the monastery. When he was about to die, George said to him: “So, you are abandoning me and leaving! I prayed, however, that you would send me to the Lord first, for without you I cannot shepherd this brotherhood.” But Saint John reassured him, and said: “Do not grieve and do not be afraid. If I find grace before God, I shall not let you complete even a year after me.” And it was so: ten months after John’s falling asleep, George departed in his turn to the Lord.

## **Orthodox Commemoration of the Sunday of Saint John Climacus**

The feast day of Saint John Climacus is March 30, however, due to the popularity of the Saint and the practice of not having weekday Divine Liturgies during Great Lent, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Saint on the Fourth Sunday of Lent. As a Sunday of Great Lent, the commemoration is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, which is preceded by a Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on Saturday evening.

Scripture readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent are the following: At the Matins: The prescribed weekly Gospel reading. At the Divine Liturgy: Hebrews 6:13-20; Mark 9:17-31.

From: [lent.goarch.com](http://lent.goarch.com)

# St. John Climacus - The Rungs of His Ladder of Divine Ascent

By St. John of the Ladder Commemorated on the Fourth Lord's Day of the Great Fast

- Step 1. On renunciation of the world
- Step 2. On detachment
- Step 3. On exile or pilgrimage
- Step 4. On blessed and ever-memorable obedience
- Step 5. On painstaking and true repentance
- Step 6. On remembrance of death
- Step 7. On joy-making mourning
- Step 8. On freedom from anger and on meekness
- Step 9. On remembrance of wrongs
- Step 10. On slander or calumny
- Step 11. On talkativeness and silence
- Step 12. On lying
- Step 13. On despondency
- Step 14. On that clamorous mistress, the stomach
- Step 15. On incorruptible purity and chastity
- Step 16. On love or money, or avarice
- Step 17. On non-possessiveness (that hastens one Heavenwards)
- Step 18. On insensibility
- Step 19. On sleep, prayer, and psalmody with the brotherhood
- Step 20. On bodily vigil and how to use it to obtain spiritual vigil.
- Step 21. On unmanly and puerile cowardice
- Step 22. On the many forms of vainglory
- Step 23. On mad pride and unclean blasphemous thoughts
- Step 24. On meekness, simplicity and guilelessness
- Step 25. On the destroyer of passions, most sublime humility
- Step 26. On discernment of thoughts, passions and virtues
- Step 27. On holy stillness of body and soul
- Step 28. On holy and blessed prayer
- Step 29. Concerning Heaven on earth, or Godlike dispassion and perfection
- Step 30. Concerning the linking together of the supreme trinity among the virtues



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## *From Step 27 on St. John's Ladder of Divine Ascent*

"The lessening of evil breeds abstinence from evil; and abstinence from evil is the beginning of repentance; and the beginning of repentance is the beginning of salvation; and the beginning of salvation is a good resolve; and a good resolve is the mother of labors. And the beginning of labors is the virtues; and the beginning of the virtues is a flowering, and the flowering of virtue is the beginning of activity. And the offspring of virtue is perseverance; and the fruit and offspring of persevering practice is habit, and the child of habit is character. And good character is the mother of fear; and fear gives birth to the keeping of commandments in which I include both Heavenly and earthly. And the keeping of the commandments is a sign of love; and the beginning of love is an abundance of humility; and an abundance of humility is the daughter of dispassion; and the acquisition of the latter is the fullness of love, that is to say, the perfect indwelling of God in those who through dispassion are pure in heart, for they shall see God. And to Him the glory for all eternity. Amen"