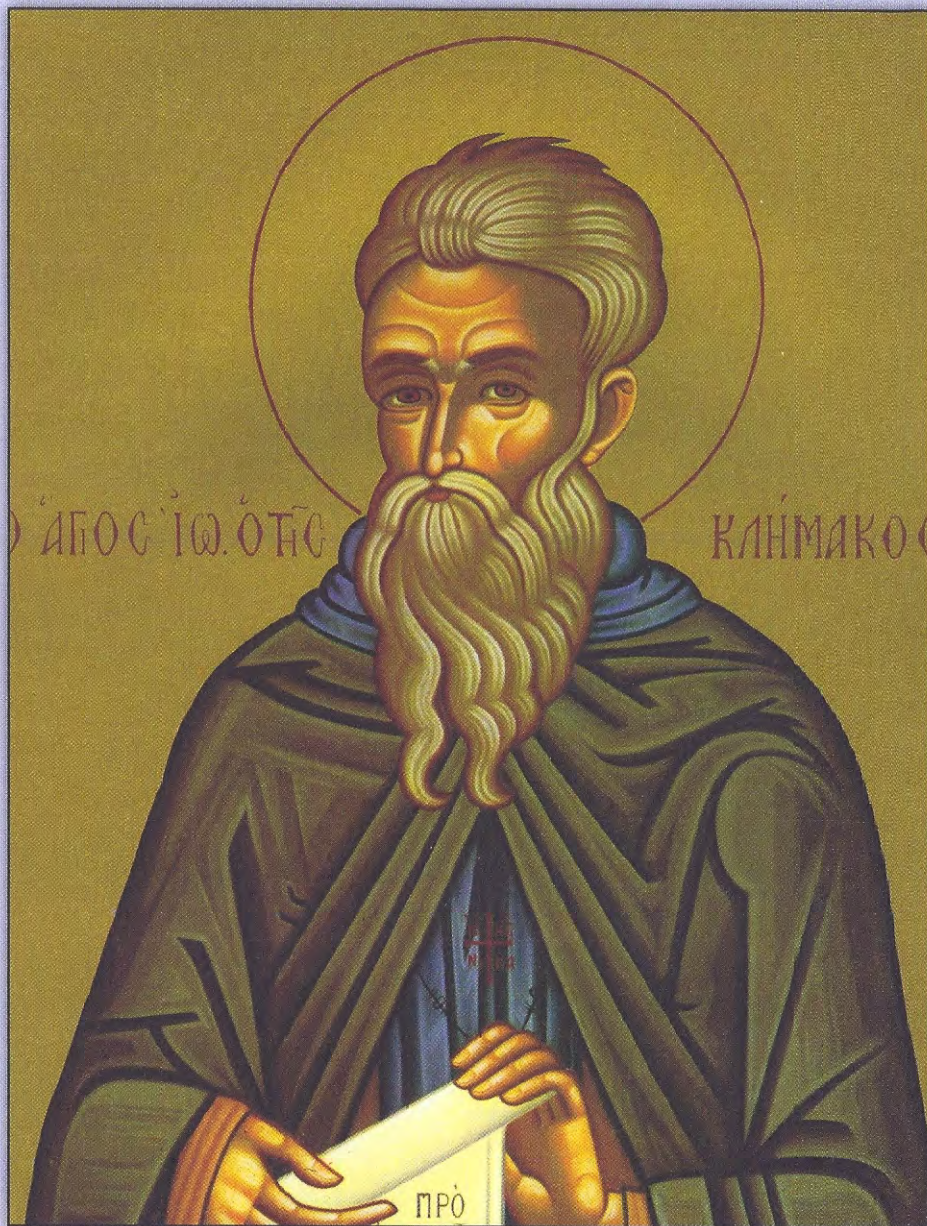


FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
COMMEMORATION OF SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS



Icon of Saint John Climacus

March 10, 2013

4TH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST; SUNDAY OF JOHN CLIMACUS
THE HOLY MARTYR QUADRATUS AND HIS COMPANIONS, IN CORINTH

TONE 8

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 11 – MARCH 17

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13 – THE TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF OUR HOLY FATHER NICEPHORUS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPOLE

6:30 PM – Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

THURSDAY, MARCH 14 – FRIDAY, MARCH 15 – OUR VENERABLE FATHER BENEDICT OF NURSIA

6:00 PM – Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete with Life of St. Mary of Egypt

FRIDAY, MARCH 15 – OUR VENERABLE FATHER BENEDICT OF NURSIA

9:30 AM – Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

SATURDAY, MARCH 16 – AKATHIST SATURDAY; THE HOLY MARTYRS SABINAS AND PAPAS

9:30 AM – Akathist

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, MARCH 17 – 5TH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST; OUR VENERABLE FATHER ALEXIS, THE MAN OF GOD; PATRICK, THE ENLIGHTENER OF IRELAND

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

CARDS FOR SALE

Easter Cards, and various other greeting cards are available for sale in the church hall following each Divine Liturgy. See Mary Kitt to purchase.

FLOWER COLLECTION

Special envelopes are available in the back of the church do help with the purchase of flowers for the Feast of Pascha.

NEW ALTAR VESTMENTS

Olga Fedunyak will be making a set of Lenten altar vestments for the Holy Table and the various furnishings in the front of the church. Envelopes are available if you would like to make a donation to help cover the cost of materials (\$450.00).

We hope to eventually have a bright set made in the future. Would you like to help with that expense as well?

Sunday offering for March 3

Amount	Number
\$10.00	3
\$20.00	4
\$25.00	2
\$40.00	6
\$50.00	2
\$60.00	1
\$75.00	2
\$200.00	1
\$910.00	20 Parishioners

Parishioner Total: \$885.00

Visitor Total: \$25.00

Average / parish household (40): \$21.07

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Shortfall: (\$1240.00)

THE PRACTICAL PRACTICE OF ALMSGIVING

FR. DWIGHT LONGENECKER

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/standingonmyhead/>

One of the dreariest tasks of a parish priest is to stand up and ask for money. One can almost hear the moans of the parishioners and hear them thinking, “Here we go again. Father’s always asking for money. That’s all he ever thinks about is money.”

This complaint is more accurately aimed at the complainer. Father Frugal – like most priests – loathes asking for money. It is the grudging parishioner – Mr. Cashback – who is always thinking of money – otherwise he wouldn’t be grumbling about it.

During this season of Lent we stop and remind ourselves that almsgiving is one of the three expectations for a good Lent along with fasting and prayer. A request to give one’s money away is most painful because the request for alms is about far more than money.

Money itself is not the issue. It’s not money. It’s what money buys: security, prestige, power, control—and most of all power over oneself and one’s decisions. **If we gave up our money we’d have to trust in God instead of our bank account, and that is the real test.**

Fr Frugal does not ask for money for himself. He also does not ask for money because the church needs a new roof or the boiler needs to be repaired. He doesn’t even ask for money to feed the hungry, educate the children and clothe the naked. Yes, indeed all those things need to be paid for, but the good priest asks for money not for himself, or for the church roof or for the school or to feed starving children. He asks for money to save your soul.

It is really quite simple. You cannot get into heaven if you worship some other God. You

cannot serve God and money. This simplest of Sunday School lessons is somehow the one most difficult to understand. If you wish to get into heaven you will – sooner or later – have to overcome your love of money. You thought the priest was asking for money so he could have control over you. In fact, the good priest asks for your money not so he can have control over you, but **so that your money will not have control over you.** He does not ask for money to enslave you, but to set you free.

When we give sacrificially we tell our money who’s boss. We take control of the money rather than the money taking control of us. It is all too easy to be possessed by our possessions, and all too easy to forget that if we are possessed by anything other than the Holy Spirit we are possessed by a kind of demon, and the way to exorcise the demon of greed and the false idol called mammon is to give our money away.

What we cannot see is that most of us are hooked on money just as certainly and demonically as a drug addict is addicted or an alcoholic is dependent. Drugs and booze make them feel good about themselves and their world. Drugs and booze give them an artificial high. Same with money. It makes us feel good about ourselves and the world, and like any other artificial stimulant – the high soon fades and we need more and more and will never be satisfied. **Giving alms is like giving up a drug, and it is just as difficult.**

But just like giving up a drug, the practical effect of sacrificial giving is an authentic freedom. When we give alms we are breaking the chains that bind us, and we not only experience spiritual freedom, but we experience a new freedom from

financial worry. Furthermore, in a paradoxically practical way, by giving freely and sacrificially we end up being more prosperous than before.

The person who gives alms generously does not become poorer. He becomes richer. He becomes richer because he has started to learn the **value of everything** rather than the **price of everything**. He becomes richer because he grows in self respect and honor. he sees clearly what really matters and what does not matter. When he gives his money away he also gives away the worldly viewpoint that made him greedy and reliant on the false god of money for his security. Furthermore, he not only becomes rich in real values and honest principles. He also becomes more wealthy. He has more money – not less.

This is how it works: when we give generously – I mean really generously – we shift our values. Our mind is changed. We come to realize that we do not need so much. The old car we have will do. Soon we don’t care so much about the clothes we needed to impress people and the extra luxuries we needed to re-assure ourselves and build our self esteem. By giving generously we become more contented and we really do need less. The sooner we realize we have enough, the sooner we have enough. We used to seek happiness in buying stuff. Now we don’t need to. Consequently we are not only happy

and more prosperous spiritually and mentally, but we also have more disposable income.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means that we must leave all and follow him. This is not just a cute Bible story. Neither is it an optional extra. This is not one of many ways to follow him. It is THE way to follow him. **Sooner or later in one way or another Jesus Christ will demand that we leave all to follow him.** It’s part of the deal. Part of leaving all for the first disciples was to leave their livelihood their capital investment of their fishing boats and nets and their career. When we are called to give alms during Lent this is part of the radical discipleship we are called to.

Until Catholics in the United States learn this lesson, the church will continue to be ineffectual, weak and complacent. As long as American Catholics continue to rely on cash rather than Christ, the church will be a sleeping giant.

Finally, every action of sacrifice releases spiritual power into the world. Through sacrifice God’s grace is poured out and great things are accomplished. They are accomplished not just because good people now have the money to do God’s work. They are accomplished because through the sacrifice of giving alms **human will aligns to God’s will**. Pride and the worship of mammon is broken and God’s great and loving power is unleashed on a dark and needy world.

What is tithing?

In Sacred Scripture, tithing is the setting aside of 10% of the “first fruits” of one’s labors. Many Protestant congregations strongly encourage and sometimes even require their faithful to tithe. While we don’t require it, I certainly encourage you to consider tithing. If not 10%, perhaps 5%.

If your monthly income is:	A 10% tithe would be per month	A 5% tithe would be per month
\$1,000	\$100	\$50
\$2,000	\$200	\$100
\$4,000	\$400	\$200
\$6,000	\$600	\$300
etc...		

The Fathers Reaffirmed

Source: Eparchy of Newton

WHAT DO FASTS, METANIES, PROSTRATIONS, and standing through long church services have to do with prayer? Isn't prayer the conversation with God we have in our hearts? Why is Eastern Christian spirituality so physical?

On the First Sunday of the Fast we proclaimed the Orthodoxy of incorporating material creation (sacred images) in our worship because the living Word of God assumed matter in becoming fully man. On this second Sunday of the Fast we affirm our use of the material in worship for a similar reason. We worship using matter because **to be fully human is to be physical**. The physical, we believe, will not be left behind in eternal life. The resurrection of the body is the transfiguration, **not the elimination**, of our physical side. Fully human worship, then, must involve the material as we as the non-material.

Two commemorations observed on this Sunday help us reflect on the physical dimension of the life in Christ. The first is the remembrance of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), who championed the Greek Fathers' teaching on the way we have communion with God. Brought up in the Byzantine court, Gregory entered the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos when he was 20 years old. A threatened Turkish invasion of the holy mountain in 1325 brought several monks including Gregory to Thessalonika where Gregory was ordained to the priesthood and, in 1347, chosen as Metropolitan of Thessalonika. The icon of his enthronement shows him surrounded by Greek Fathers of the previous millennium whose teachings he affirmed.

Gregory and the Light of God

Gregory became involved in a controversy with another Greek monk, Barlaam of Calabria, over how we can know God. The West was just getting reacquainted with the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and others of the classical era. Many adopted their view that dialectics and metaphysics were the highest form of knowledge. Some, like Barlaam, taught that the highest possible knowledge of God that anyone could have was through the intellect.

Gregory countered with the teaching of the Fathers

that the highest knowledge of God comes, not through reasoning and the application of classical philosophy but through an experience of God gained through application to a life of prayer. **The theologian is the person who knows God through experience, not through intellectual study.** Doctrinal statements are fully meaningful only for those who have encountered the living Christ. You can study the makeup of a city all you like, he observed, but you will not know what a city is until you visit one.

Gregory further taught that a life of prayer can bring us to experience the uncreated light of God, as Peter, James and John did on Mount Tabor. God's divine actions or energies, which are to God as the light is to the sun, can touch us physically as well as spiritually. This transformation of the whole person, or theosis, comes about by true participation in the very life of God. The whole of human existence becomes permeated by the Divine Presence.

Barlaam countered that the grace of God we may receive is something created, distinct from Him. In this Gregory was following the Greek Fathers while Barlaam was more in the tradition of Augustine. The issue thus became part of the East/West controversy of the Middle Ages.

In the West theology became increasingly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy and tied to academic study. Piety came to be divorced from theology and even from liturgy, and focused on devotional practices such as the rosary and the Stations of the Cross. In the East theology remained connected to liturgy, prayer and ascetic endeavor: the fruit of a personal experience of God **involving the whole person**.

Gregory's teaching was upheld by several local councils in Constantinople which were eventually accepted by the other Byzantine Churches. While Gregory himself is remembered on the day of his death, November 14, today's commemoration focuses on the place his holistic teaching has in our understanding of the Christian life. We can directly experience the action of God in us through the Spirit who dwells in us. **We can bring our whole being**

into contact with God through physical prayer (fasts, vigils, prostrations, etc.) **as well as interior meditation.** And we may, as some have done, experience the uncreated light of God in this life as well as the next.

God's Presence in "Mere Bones"

A second observance today points to the presence of the divine energies of God experienced in the very remains of the saints. In the Melkite Church holy relics are solemnly venerated today as "the pledge of the glorious resurrection of sanctified bodies" (exapostilarion at orthros). Thus we venerate the relics of saints in anticipation of their future incorruptibility and their complete transformation after the resurrection.

The Second Council of Nicea which affirmed the veneration of icons also spoke about the remains of the saints: "Our Lord Jesus Christ granted to us the relics of Saints as a salvation-bearing source which pours forth varied benefits on the infirm."

What are the "varied benefits" which come from the relics of the saints? In some cases miracles, particularly healings, have taken place at the tombs or reliquaries of the saints. As St Ephrem the Syrian observed in the fourth century, "Even after death they act as if alive, healing the sick, expelling demons, and by the power of the Lord rejecting every evil influence of the demons. This is because the miraculous grace of the Holy Spirit is always present in the holy relics."

In some cases the bodies of the saints have been

preserved incorrupt (without decay). In other cases relics have emitted a pleasing fragrance or exuded ointment. Believers see these occasions as evidence that deification is something that involves the body. The physical can be touched by the energies of God and participate in holiness. In the words of the kondakion, "It is a great marvel indeed that healing should come forth from mere bones. Glory to the Creator, to God alone!"

Fragmentary relics are placed in the holy table when a church is consecrated. They are also found in every antimimension used for the Divine Liturgy. Some icons have similar fragments in a small case embedded in them. Largely intact relics (skulls, limbs or even entire bodies) are generally preserved at the place where the saint lived. Thus the reputedly incorrupt relics of St. Gregory Palamas are kept in Thessalonika where he was bishop. Every year on this day they are brought forth in procession and placed before the bishop's throne in the cathedral for veneration.

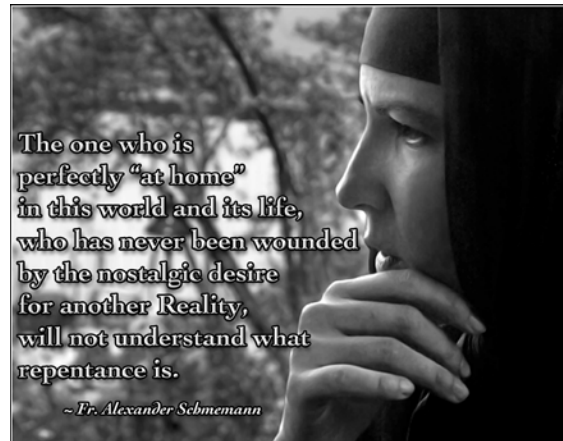
A Feast of the Holy Relics was formerly celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church on November 5 (or the Sunday after All Saints). It is still observed in the older rite but not in the ordinary (modern) form.

It has been said that "the work of the Church is to 'produce relics,'" because the primary work of the Church is to lead us to theosis, to communion and union with God. By venerating the relics of the saints the Churches of East and West proclaim its commitment to that work and to the presence of the Holy Spirit in it enabling it to bear fruit.



The Mysteries of Confession and Communion

should be received by all Orthodox/Catholic Christians on a regular basis and at the very least during the Great Fast and Pascha. If you have not availed yourself of these life-giving sacraments, please be sure to do so. Likewise, frequent communicants should make a confession during this and every lenten period, as well as whenever the conscience is burdened. To schedule a confession, please see Fr. James.



Preparation for Confession

by St. John of Kronstadt

I, a sinful soul, confess to our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, all of my evil acts which I have done, said or thought from baptism even unto this present day.

I have not kept the vows of my baptism, but have made myself unwanted before the face of God.

I have sinned before the Lord by lack of faith and by doubts concerning the Orthodox Faith and the Holy Church; by ungratefulness for all of God's great and unceasing gifts; His long-suffering and His providence for me, a sinner; by lack of love for the Lord, as well as fear, through not fulfilling the Holy Commandments of God and the canons and rules of the Church.

I have not preserved a love for God and for my neighbor nor have I made enough efforts, because of laziness and lack of care, to learn the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Holy Fathers. I have sinned: by not praying in the morning and in the evening and in the course of the day; by not attending services or by coming to Church only halfheartedly.

I have sinned by judging members of the clergy. I have sinned by not respecting the Feasts, breaking the Fasts, and by immoderation in food and drink.

I have sinned by self importance, disobedience, willfulness, self-righteousness, and the seeking of approval and praise.

I have sinned by unbelief, lack of faith, doubts, despair, despondency, abusive thoughts, blasphemy and swearing.

I have sinned by pride, a high opinion of myself, narcissism, vanity, conceit, envy, love of praise, love of honors, and by putting on airs.

I have sinned: by judging, malicious gossip, anger, remembering of offenses done to me, hatred and returning evil for evil; by slander, reproaches, lies, slyness, deception and hypocrisy; by prejudices, arguments, stubbornness, and an unwillingness to give way to my neighbor; by gloating, spitefulness,

taunting, insults and mocking; by gossip, by speaking too much and by empty speech.

I have sinned by unnecessary and excessive laughter, by reviling and dwelling upon my previous sins, by arrogant behavior, insolence and lack of respect.

I have sinned by not keeping my physical and spiritual passions in check, by my enjoyment of impure thoughts, licentiousness and unchastity in thoughts, words and deeds.

I have sinned by lack of endurance towards my illnesses and sorrows, a devotion to the comforts of life and by being too attached to my parents, children, relatives and friends.

I have sinned by hardening my heart, having a weak will and by not forcing myself to do good.

I have sinned by miserliness, a love of money, the acquisition of unnecessary things and immoderate attachment to things.

I have sinned by self-justification, a disregard for the admonitions of my conscience and failing to confess my sins through negligence or false pride.

I have sinned many times by my Confession: belittling, justifying and keeping silent about sins.

I have sinned against the Most-Holy and Life-Creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord by coming to Holy Communion without humility or the fear of God.

I have sinned in deed, word and thought, knowingly and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly, thoughtfully and thoughtlessly, and it is impossible to enumerate all of my sins because of their multitude. But I truly repent of these and all others not mentioned by me because of my forgetfulness and I ask that they be forgiven through the abundance of the Mercy of God.



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91941
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com

Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

Repentance

Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life. A penitent is a buyer of humility. Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort. Repentance is self-condemning reflection, and carefree self-care. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. A penitent is an undisgraced convict. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience. Repentance is the voluntary endurance of all afflictions. A penitent is the inflictor of his own punishments. Repentance is a mighty persecution of the stomach, and a striking of the soul into vigorous awareness.

Nothing equals or excels God's mercies. Therefore, he who despairs is committing suicide. A sign of true repentance is the acknowledgement that we deserve all the afflictions, visible and invisible, that come upon us, and even greater ones. Moses, after seeing God in the bush, returned again to Egypt, that is, to the darkness and to the brick-making of Pharaoh, who was symbolic of the spiritual Pharaoh. But he went back again to the bush, and not only to the bush, but also up to the mountain. Whoever has known divine vision will never despair of himself. Job became a beggar, but he became twice as rich again.

St. John Climacus