



74th Year

March 22, 2026

Pamphlet #12 (3799)

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Mark 9:17-31)

Faithless generation

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; 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." 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." 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. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. 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." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." 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." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and

fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; 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."

FAITH AS THE REGENERATION OF MAN

On this Sunday, the Church sets before us the ascetical figure and teaching of one of the foremost abbots of the Sinai desert, Saint John of the Ladder. He lived in the 7th century and left behind the example of his venerable way of life as a precious legacy to the whole Church. He nourished, and continues to nourish spiritually, the people of God, laypeople, monks, and clergy alike, through his renowned book, *The Ladder*. Through this work, Saint John drives out from human existence the dark demonic passions that seek to lead man to perdition and destruction, and he brings forth the light and truth of Christ, as a breath of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, today's Gospel reading proclaims the faith of the Church that the Lord Jesus came into the world "that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14), as the Apostle Paul writes. The Lord became man in order to abolish, through His death, the one who exercised dominion over death, that is, the devil. In this way, faith regenerates man; it renews and refashions him; it frees him from the death of sin and egotism and introduces him into the realm of miracle-working.

Faith as the agent of the miracle

The father of a demon-possessed child, the Gospel tells us, seeks the help of Christ for his suffering son, who has suffered from childhood the influence of demonic powers. The father's faith passed through certain stages, which are important for us to note.

At first, we see him sinking into despair and hopelessness. He did not know what to do with his child, how to help him to be delivered from the dreadful condition in which he was. For this reason, with pain he says to Christ: "And often the impure spirit has cast him into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him." Many times, the unclean spirit threw the child into fire and into water in order to annihilate him. Bottomless is the malice of the devil; incomprehensible and unfathomable are the love and power of God. The Fathers of the Church interpret this event allegorically, saying that man is driven by the primordial evil serpent into the fire of anger and desire. Indeed, there is nothing more dreadful than being unable to set boundaries and to transform anger into meekness and beneficial strength; than being unable to cease desiring continually and worshipping material things as idols; than seeking egotistical domination and control over the consciences of people, without respecting their freedom. And then man is driven into the water, which, in an allegorical sense, is the turbulence of worldly affairs. That is, he becomes absorbed by ambition, by the love of pleasure, and by every other harmful passion, and thus gradually becomes unjust, foolish, miserable, and unbalanced.

The tormented father, after passing through the second stage, that of doubt, since, without fully believing, he said to the Lord, "If You can do anything, help us; have compassion on us," arrives at the third stage, that of strong faith, because he accepted without hesitation the word of Christ: "If you are able to believe, all things are possible to the one who believes," and with tears he begged the Lord to help him in his unbelief. And the miracle took place. His child was freed from demonic domination by the divine energy of Christ.

The unashamed hope of faith

Faith, as the Apostle Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, gives existence to what we hope for and proves those things that we do not see. Saint Gregory the Theologian adds:

“If everything were evident, where is faith? Tell me, for faith is the unreserved acceptance.” Shortly before Christ delivered the young man of our Gospel passage from the malice of the demons, He took him by the hand, raised him up, and he stood upright in a miraculous manner. This motion of Christ portrays the faith that true life is offered by Christ Himself, Who is our resurrection from the influence of demonic powers. For true miracles do not take place around us, but within us, deep in our soul. Then the question is no longer whether Christ is able to heal our child, our body, our soul, our world, but whether we ourselves are able to believe that Christ, as the only true God, has the power to heal and resurrect us, to enlighten and sanctify us, to dwell within our being, and for us to dwell within the radiance of His love.

Archimandrite N. K.

March 22, 2026: 4th Sunday of Lent (Saint John of the Ladder)

John, the venerable author of *The Ladder*; Basil, hieromartyr of the Church of the Ancyrenes († 362); Callinicus, martyr († 252).

Pl. 4th Tone – Eothinon: 8 – Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20
– Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

NEXT SUNDAY: March 29, 5th Sunday of Lent (Saint Mary of Egypt)
Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 – Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

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