



# St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church

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"An Orthodox Presence in Northeastern Summit County"  
[www.sainthermanchurch.org](http://www.sainthermanchurch.org)



## Important This Week:

Great Fast Continues—Week 5  
NO SERVICES MON-SAT THIS WEEK!! Fr. Basil @ Diocesan Clergy Retreat  
Sunday, 21Apr, 10AM—Divine Liturgy

14Apr24

St. John Climacus/Tone 4

## It's Not My Fault—It's YOUR Fault

Isn't it funny how human nature is so very predictable? When we find ourselves guilty of something, we obfuscate, we deny, we cover.

Today (Mark 9:17-31) we find Jesus returning from Mount Tabor with Peter, James and John after He permits them to witness His Transfiguration.

But as they descend from the mountain, there is trouble brewing. St. Mark records *when He came to the disciples (the remaining nine), He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.* Jesus immediately rushes to the defense of His own and asks the scribes, *What are you discussing with them?*

It is at this point that a man from the crowd speaks. *Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke with Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.*"

There are so very many things wrong with what this man just said!

First, he opens calling the Lord *Teacher*. In this there is no recognition of authority over evil spirits. Being taught something doesn't heal. Why does the man not go immediately to *Lord* if he intends to show such

faith?

Next, *I brought You my son*. Remember the healing of the servant of the Centurion? There was faith that was commended by our Lord. 'You don't need to come to my home. I'm not worthy. Just say the word....' No, here the man complains. 'I brought You my son—YOU weren't here, so I tried the next best thing, asking Your disciples to help, but.... they couldn't.' Notice, it's now the fault of the disciples that his son hasn't received miraculous healing.

What is our Lord's response to this assignment of blame?

*O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?*

The word translated 'faithless' is the Greek *apistos*, which carries a much stronger meaning than 'just' unbelieving—it goes to calling the man a heathen.

Having said all of this, Jesus does not send the man away unfulfilled. *Bring him to Me.*

In the interplay that follows, the man still, however, displays less faith than we might expect to hope to achieve his initial goal of the healing of his son. *If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*

There's an important word we just used—compassion! Mercy! The cry

of the man has finally become *Lord, have mercy!*

Jesus does not yet immediately heal, but instead attempts to coax more faith from one who seems to be withholding it. *If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.*

There it is: belief! This is what's missing. Had this kind of belief been present when you came to My disciples, perhaps your plea could have been answered then. How many times has Jesus said *Your faith has made you well!*?

Now the man understands. *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!*

Suddenly Jesus is no longer "Teacher", now Jesus is "Lord!" Now there is no blame of anyone else. Now there is recognition that my faith is not all it needs to be. Now there is an understanding that You love me and want fully to give to me the heartfelt request made for my child. Now I will stop blaming others. Now I will take that blame on myself, and with the most sincere heart and spoken plea, ask the blessing of Your healing ME (*Help MY unbelief!*), so that my prayer for my son can and will be heard.

There's a lesson in here for all of us. *He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

**This Week's Prayer Requests**

**For Health—St. Herman's:** Met. Joseph, Pat Blazosky, Sandra, Richard, Sam, Judy, Mitchell  
**Others:** Fr.Dn.Basil, Nikandra, Don, Hannah, Natalie & Scott, Nora & Bob  
**For the Departed:** Patriarch Maxim, Metropolitan Theodosius and Maxi-

mos, Archpriest Stephan, Popadia Marika, Matushka Illaria, Nun Theophania, Matushka Theodora, Stephen, Reader Charles, Betty Lou, Lainey Kay, Katherine, Jeanne

**Weekly Statistics**

|           |                  |       |             |          |
|-----------|------------------|-------|-------------|----------|
| Saturday  | SoulSat Liturgy  | 06Apr | 5 faithful  | 6 views  |
| Saturday  | Vespers          | 06Apr | 7 faithful  | 18 views |
| Sunday    | Divine Liturgy   | 07Apr | 44 faithful | 6 views  |
| Wednesday | Presanct Liturgy | 10Apr | 13 faithful | 11 views |
| Friday    | Presanct Liturgy | 12Apr | 10 faithful | - views  |

**In the News**

Videos of services can be found at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAOKICLMmH\\_FIDe8SoWOW](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAOKICLMmH_FIDe8SoWOW)

Please remember the signup sheets in the Social Hall for both sponsors for Coffee Hour, and also for this coming Holy Week's Grave Watch. The Grave Watch starts after the 3PM Vespers service on Holy Friday and extends until the beginning of Nocturnes late on Holy Saturday. As of this writing there remain MANY openings on the list. Consider helping with this noble spiritual offering!!!

**St. Theophan**

In His talk about the Beatitudes, the Lord depicts a heavenly heart (Mat 5:1-12). It contains humility, weeping and contrition, meekness and angerlessness, complete love of righteousness, perfect mercifulness, purity of heart, love of peace and peacemaking, and suffering of misfortunes, false accusations, and persecution for the sake of the Christian Faith and life. If you want heaven, be like this, and even here on earth you will have a foretaste of heaven, into which you will enter after death—prepared, like a preordained heir.



*Have you ever realized that the commandment to love our neighbor is sometimes beyond our abilities? This is what the disciples learn in today's Gospel. The Lord teaches that some acts of love need deeper preparation.*

**(Dr. Presbytera Athanasia Kostakis)**

**Many Are Called** *(Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky, Great Lent Reflections and Meditations, Pg.55)*

“Many are called, but few are chosen,” we read in Holy Scripture, and we would like to have it otherwise. We should like all people to be called, and all of them chosen for God's Kingdom. Why can't everybody be one in God? Why should even one person be excluded?

The answer lies in God's mysterious gift of free choice. He calls, but the response is ours to make. He invites, but we choose to accept or decline the invitation. All of Scripture is filled with examples of that process of separation, based on decisions made by humans.

God called Abram to separate himself from his relatives and to depart for another country. Abram almost obeyed. He chose to take his nephew, Lot, along with his own family to the Promised Land. Lot was a good man, but he enjoyed luxury. It didn't matter to him that Sodom and Gomorrah were cities we today would call “liberated,” wallowing in vices and calling it the good life. He chose to live there, among them. He went all that way, from Mesopotamia to a foreign land, only to find the same kind of lifestyle—and worse—that he had left behind.

The failure of Lot's family are a sobering lesson in our times; yet we need only reflect on the statistics of our nation's capitol, where in 1975 divorces exceeded marriage, to compare Lot's society with our own.

Christ said He came to bring a sword of separation within families (Mat 10:34). Some choose God, others choose the world. How we wish we were able to unite all who are baptized into the one Body of Christ; yet we know that each of us, even the tiniest and most shy, ultimately decides where he and she shall spend eternity.

## On the Sunday of St. John Climacus (*Metropolitan Philaret*)

More than once, brethren, the fact has been mentioned that on each Sunday in the Great Fast (i.e., Lent) there are other commemorations besides that of the Resurrection. Thus, on this day, the Church glorifies the righteous John of the Ladder, one of the greatest ascetics, which the Church, in speaking of them, calls "earthly angels and Heavenly men."

These great ascetics were extraordinary people. They commanded the elements; wild beasts willingly and readily obeyed them. For them, there were no maladies they could not cure. They walked on the waters as on dry land; all the elements of the world were subject to them, because they lived in God and had the power of grace to overcome the laws of terrestrial nature. One such ascetic was St. John of the Ladder.

He was surnamed "of the Ladder" (Climacus) because he wrote an immortal work, the "Ladder of Divine Ascent." In this work, we see how, by means of thirty steps, the Christian gradually ascends from below to the heights of supreme spiritual perfection. We see how one virtue leads to another, as a man rises higher and higher and finally attains to that height where there abides the crown of the virtues, which is called "Christian love."

Saint John wrote his immortal work especially for the monastics, but in the past his "Ladder" was always favorite reading in Russia for anyone zealous to live piously, though he were not a monk. Therein the Saint clearly demonstrates how a man passes from one step to the next.

Remember, Christian soul, that this ascent on high is indispensable for anyone who wishes to save his soul unto eternity.

When we throw a stone up, it ascends until the moment when the propelling force ceases to be effectual. So long as this force acts, the stone travels higher and higher in its ascent, overcoming the force of the earth's gravity. But when this force is spent and ceases to act, then, as you know, the stone does not remain suspended in the air. Immediately, it begins to fall, and the further it falls the greater the speed of its fall. This, solely according to the physical laws of terrestrial gravity.

So it is also in the spiritual life. As a Christian gradually ascends, the force of spiritual and ascetical labors lifts him on high. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "Strive to enter in through the narrow gate." That is, the Christian ought to be an ascetic. Not only the monastic, but every Christian. He must take pains for his soul and his life. He must direct his life on the Christian path, and purge his soul of all filth and impurity.

Now, if the Christian, who is ascending upon this ladder of spiritual perfection by his struggles and ascetic labors, ceases from this work and ascetic toil, his soul will not remain in its former condition; but, like the stone, it will fall to the earth. More and more quickly will it drop until, finally, if the man does not come to his senses, it will cast him down into the very abyss of Hell.

It is necessary to remember this. People forget that the path of Christianity is indeed an ascetical labor. Last Sunday, we heard how the Lord said: "He that would come after Me, let him take up his cross, deny himself, and follow Me." The Lord said this with the greatest emphasis. Therefore, the Christian must be one who takes up his cross, and his life, likewise, must be an ascetic labor of bearing that cross. Whatever the outward circumstance of his life, be he monk or layman, it is of no consequence. In either case, if he does not force himself to mount upwards, then, of a certainty, he will fall lower and lower.

And in this regard, alas, people have confused thoughts. For example, a clergyman drops by a home during a fast. Cordially and thoughtfully, they offer him fast food (i.e., food prepared according to the rules of the Fast), and say: "For you, fast food, of course!" To this, one of our hierarchs customarily replies: "Yes, I am Orthodox. But who gave you permission not to keep the fasts?" All the fasts of the Church, all the ordinances, are mandatory for every Orthodox person. Speaking of monastics, such ascetics as St. John of the Ladder and those like him fasted much more rigorously than the Church prescribes; but this was a matter of their spiritual ardor, an instance of their personal ascetic labor. This the Church does not require of everyone, because it is not in accord with everyone's strength. But the Church DOES require of every Orthodox the keeping of those fasts which She has established.

Oftentimes have I quoted the words of Saint Seraphim, and once again shall I mention them. Once there came to him a mother who was concerned about how she might arrange the best possible marriage for her young daughter. When she came to Saint Seraphim for advice, he said to her: "Before all else, ensure that he, whom your daughter chooses as her companion for life, keeps the fasts. If he does not, then he is not a Christian, whatever he may consider himself to be." You see how the greatest saint of the Russian Church, Saint Seraphim of Sarov, a man who, better than we, knew what Orthodoxy is, spoke concerning the fasts?

Let us remember this. Saint John Climacus has described the ladder of spiritual ascent: then let us not forget that each Christian must ascend thereon. The great ascetics ascended like swiftly-flying eagles; we scarcely ascend at all. Nonetheless, let us not forget that, unless we employ our efforts in correcting ourselves and our lives, we shall cease our ascent, and, most assuredly, we shall begin to fall. Amen.

We welcome you to our humble church, and we pray that your experience here will be spiritually rewarding, calling you back to pray with us at our next scheduled service.

St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church is established with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH of New York, and is one of approximately 30 parishes or missions that are all part of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada and Australia, Bulgarian Patriarchate.

Our worship is exclusively in English, and we use “contemporary” English translations of liturgical texts wherever possible. Singing is congregational. The Divine Liturgy is literally “the work of the people”, and as such your presence and participation in the service are essential parts of our worship. The worship of others here present is diminished when you are absent or unable to participate.

Participation in the Eucharist is important to us, and as such we ask you to recognize that it is limited to Orthodox Christians who have prepared for receiving the very Body and Blood of our Lord. Preparation includes fasting from the previous evening and recent confession. If you are not known to our priest, please let him know as you approach that you are Orthodox and prepared to receive! Please do not be offended if the priest so questions your approach—this is important, truly “our Life”!

**Troparion for the Day:** (Tone 4) *When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse, and elatedly told the Apostles: ‘Death is overthrown! Christ our God is Risen, granting the world great mercy!’*

**Troparion Sunday of St John Climacus:** (Tone 1) *O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body, you were a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John. You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil and prayer, healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith. Glory to Him Who gave you strength! Glory to Him Who granted you a crown! Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!*

*Glory to the Father....*

**Troparion to Saint Herman:** *O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, / north-star of Christ’s holy Church, / the light of your holy life and great deeds / guides those who follow the Orthodox way. / Together we lift high the Holy Cross / you planted firmly in America. / Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ, / singing His holy Resurrection.*

*Now and ever....*

**Kontakion of the Day:** (Tone 4) *The Lord truly set you on the heights of abstinence, to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, O our Father and teacher John.*

**Epistle:** Heb 6:13-20

**Gospel:** Mark 9:17-31

**Monthly Financial Tracker**

March Total Income      \$32,787  
 March Total Expenses    \$ 4,050  
 Year Net Income (Loss)    \$28,737

**Web Tracker**

StHerman Google Bus Site    525 interacts/28 days  
 Blog Site Views                40003 Total Views  
 Web Site Views                13983 Total Views  
 Facebook Followers            5530 Total

**St. Herman of Alaska  
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 VRevFrBasil Rusen, Pastor**

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**CURRENT WEEK  
 HIGHLIGHTED**

| April 2024  |   |  |  |          |        |  |
|---|---|--|--|----------|--------|--|
| Sunday  | Monday  | Tuesday  | Wednesday                                    | Thursday | Friday | Saturday   |
| <b>St Gregory</b> 31<br>Palamas T1<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 1:10-2:3<br>Mark 2:1-12          | 1   | 2  | 3  | 4        | 5      | <b>Soul Saturday</b> 6<br>DivineLiturgy 10AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 10:32-38<br>Mark 2:14-17   |
| <b>Cross</b> 7<br>Veneration T1<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 4:14-5:6<br>Mark 8:34-9:1           | 8   | 9  | 10   | 11       | 12     | <b>Soul Saturday</b> 13<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 6:9-12<br>Mark 8:27-37   |
| <b>St. John</b> 14<br>Climacus T4<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 6:13-20<br>Mark 9:17-31           | 15  | 16   | 17   | 18       | 19     | 20   |
| <b>St Mary of</b> 21<br>Egypt T5<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 9:11-14<br>Mark 10:32-45           | 22  | 23   | 24   | 25       | 26     | <b>Lazarus Sat</b> 27<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 12:28-13:8<br>John 11:1-45 |
| <b>Entry of Lord</b> 28<br>Divine Liturgy T2<br>BridegrmMatins 10AM<br>Phil 4:4-9<br>John 12:1-18 | <b>Grt&amp;HolyMon</b> 29<br>Presanctified Lit 430P<br>Bridegroom Mat 6PM<br>Matt 24:3-35 | <b>Grt&amp;HolyTue</b> 30<br>Presanctified Lit 430P<br>Bridegroom Mat 6PM<br>Ex 2:5-10, Job 1:13-22<br>Matt 24:36-26:2 | <b>Diocesan Clergy Retreat - NO SERVICES</b> |          |        |  |