



■ † Fourth Sunday of Lent - St John of the Ladder

**“By nothing but by prayer and fasting”\***

**Epistle** (Hebrews 6: 13-20)

**B**rethren, when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee.” And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath of confirmation is to them an end to all strife. Thereby God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we, who have fled for refuge, might have a strong consolation to lay hold upon the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, where the Forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, Who is made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

(St. Mark 9:17-31)

**Gospel**

**A**t that time, one of the multitude answered and said, “Master, I have brought unto thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth his teeth, and pineth away. And I spoke to Thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not. Jesus answereth him and saith, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me.”

And they brought the boy unto Him. And when the spirit saw Him, straightway he tore the boy; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed about foaming. And He asked his father, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" And he said, "From childhood." And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him; but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him and enter no more into him." And the spirit cried, and rent the boy sorely and came out of him; and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, "he is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked him privately, "Why could not we cast him out?" And He said unto them, "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." And they departed thence and passed through Galilee, and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples and said unto them, "The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day."



**I**n His talk about the Beatitudes, the Lord depicts a heavenly heart (St. Matthew 5:1–12). It consists of humility, weeping and contrition, meekness and angerlessness, complete love of righteousness, perfect mercifulness, purity of heart, love of peace and peacemaking, and long-suffering in the face of misfortunes, false accusations and persecution for the sake of the Christian faith and life.

If you want heaven, be like this, and already here on earth you will have a foretaste of heaven, into which you will enter after death prepared, like a preordained heir.



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(\* St. Theophan the Recluse, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year According to the Daily Church Readings from the Word of God*.