



The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

Sunday 22nd March 2026
4th Sunday of Lent (John of the Ladder)



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today marks the 4th Sunday of the Great Lent, the Sunday of St. John Climacus, the author of “The Ladder of the Divine Ascent”. This is an important point in our journey to Pascha. It is the mid-point of the Great Lent and the Sunday of St. John Climacus marks this point as an encouragement to continue our intense efforts in fasting, prayer and repentance. His teachings are that spiritual growth requires effort, and our ascending to holiness demands self-discipline, prayer, love to our neighbour and self-knowledge through others. The last one is very difficult in our modern life and in the society that looks on such a thing as weakness. This Sunday is set for us as encouragement to continue our Great Lent. Even if we fall down we should step back on track and continue. The faith and our liturgical and prayer discipline is something that we can very easily lose. It is like the sand in your palm, if you don't hold it strongly and you are not careful, it will just slip and disappear. So we have to hold the faith, and if we fall, not to leave it to dissolve in the chaos of the world. Instead we have to start again, encouraged by the love of God and His forgiveness. To keep the pace and routine of our faith and Sacramental life is very important. The liturgical life of the Orthodox church is very rich and gives us plenty of opportunities to participate. It is created to encourage us in difficult times. The easiest thing to do in difficulties is to leave and never turn back, but this is just more food for our weakness. St. John Climacus teaches another way; to search the problem within us and to continue our work even if we have to start from the beginning. During this Lenten period we very often use the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syriac. This little prayer helps a lot in our everyday struggle:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Fr. John



Announcements

- Holy Week is very close! Your help will be needed as we need to prepare the church. We will announce the day for the cleaning the church shortly. Volunteers will be needed during the Holy Week, especially for the Holy Saturday midnight service.
- For the feast of Annunciation 25/03, the church in Manchester will have their parish Feast. On the day, a Hierarchical Liturgy will be served by Bishop Maximus. On the following Sunday 29/03 Sunday, Archbishop Nikitas will preside over Matins and Divine Liturgy.
- During the fifth week of the Great Lent there will be a lot of Services in the church. Please note that the Great Cannon of St. Andrew of Crete will be on Monday evening (23rd) because on Wednesday there will be the Feast of Annunciation and on Tuesday evening there will be Vespers for the Feast. Please come to as many services as possible. Lenten services are the crown of the Liturgical Year.

Upcoming Services

22 March Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday of St. John Climacus
23 March Mon	6.00pm	Great Compline, Full Canon of St Andrew of Crete	
24 March Tue	6.30pm	Great Vespers	
25 March Wed	8.00am 9.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Annunciation of Theotokos
27 March Fri	6.00pm 7.15pm	Pre Sanctified Liturgy Akathist of Theotokos	
28 March Sat	5.30pm	Great Vespers	
29 March Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt



Annunciation of the Theotokos Divine Liturgy, Wednesday 25th March



For the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, we will serve the following services:

- 24th of March 6.30pm Vespers
- 25th of March 8.00 am Matins
9.00am Divine Liturgy

Please, come if you can for this Great Feast. Note that we break the fast in this day and the fish is allowed for the Feast of Annunciation of Theotokos.

*Please note that the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete will be served on 23th of March, Monday at 6.00pm



A story from the internet

Loaves of bread from the 7th-8th centuries stamped with Christian imagery have been discovered at the ancient site of Eirenopolis, modern-day Topraktepe, Turkey. They are among the best-preserved archaeological examples of bread ever found in Anatolia.

The five loaves were found carbonized, which preserved them in such condition the iconography stamped on them is still clearly legible. The most elaborately decorated loaf is stamped with the image of Christ as the sower who plants wheat for harvest. An inscription in Greek around the border translates to “With gratitude to Blessed Jesus,” a reference to John 6:35: And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” The other four are all stamped with Maltese crosses. They are circular, and the stamped markings indicate they were prosphora, simple, small loaves of leavened bread Greek Orthodox Eucharistic rituals, either as the bread consecrated as the literal Body of Christ shared during Communion, or as the antidoron, blessed bread distributed after the service. Imprinted bread is still used today as the prosphora and antidoron. The Topraktepe discovery transcends the value of the individual artifact and extends to the historical understanding of the Ermenek region during Late Antiquity and the early medieval period. The presence of a production center for ritual objects of this quality and with such specific iconography suggests the existence in

Irenopolis of an active Christian community, endowed with resources and a distinct theological identity expressed through these representations that diverged from imperial canons. The loaves will undergo archaeobotanical studies to determine the exact composition of the grains used in their preparation, as well as microscopy and tomography techniques to better understand the manufacturing and carbonization processes. Each of these data points will help reconstruct more precisely the ritual, daily life, agriculture, and beliefs of a community that, more than thirteen hundred years ago, baked its faith into bread—and that, by a quirk of archaeological preservation, has reached us today to tell its story.

<https://www.labrujulaverde.com/en/2025/10/charred-byzantine-era-loaves-of-bread-with-greek-inscriptions-discovered-in-anatolia/>



The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: www.thyateira.org.uk.

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἐβρ. στ ' , 13-20

Ἀδελφοί, τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὁ Θεός, ἐπεὶ κατ' οὐδενὸς εἶχεν μείζονος ὁμόσαι, ὤμοσεν καθ' ἑαυτοῦ, λέγων, Ἥ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε, καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε. Καὶ οὕτως μακροθυμήσας ἐπέτυχεν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. Ἄνθρωποι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὁμνύουσιν, καὶ πάσης αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογίας πέρασ εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ ὄρκος. Ἐν ᾧ περισσότερο βουλόμενος ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιδειξαι τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ, ἐμεσίτευσεν ὄρκῳ, ἵνα διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι Θεόν, ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατήσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος· ἦν ὡς ἀγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν, καὶ εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος· ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσηλθεν Ἰησοῦς, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

EPISTLE READING

Heb. 6: 13-20

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, Surely I will bless you and multiply you. And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος πλ. δ ' .

Ἐξ ὑψους κατήλθες ὁ εὐσπλαγχνος, ταφήν κατεδέξω τριήμερον, ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἐλευθερώσης τῶν παθῶν. Ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡμῶν, Κύριε, δόξα σοι.

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

Plagal of the 4th Mode

You the Compassionate came down from above, you accepted burial for three days, that you might free us from the passions. Our life and resurrection, Lord, glory to you!

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Μάρκ. θ ' , 17-31

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκεῖνῳ, ἄνθρωπός τις προσῆλθε τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγων, διδάσκαλε, ἤνεγκα τὸν υἱόν μου πρὸς σε, ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον. καὶ ὅπου ἂν αὐτὸν καταλάβῃ, ῥήσσει αὐτόν, καὶ ἀφρίζει καὶ τρίζει τοὺς ὀδόντας αὐτοῦ, καὶ ξηραίνεται· καὶ εἶπον τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου ἵνα αὐτὸ ἐκβάλωσι, καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσαν. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ λέγει· ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος, ἕως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; φέρετε αὐτὸν πρὸς με. καὶ ἤνεγκαν αὐτὸν πρὸς αὐτόν. καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν εὐθέως τὸ πνεῦμα ἐσπάραξεν αὐτόν, καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐκυλίετο ἀφρίζων. καὶ ἐπηρώτησε τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ· πόσος χρόνος ἐστὶν ὡς τοῦτο γέγονεν αὐτῷ; ὁ δὲ εἶπε· παιδίόθην. καὶ πολλάκις αὐτόν καὶ εἰς πῦρ ἔβαλε καὶ εἰς ὕδατα, ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν· ἀλλ' εἴ τι δύσασαι, βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ εἶ δύνασαι πιστεῦσαι, πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεῦοντι. καὶ εὐθέως κράξας ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ παιδίου μετὰ δακρῶν ἔλεγε· πιστεύω, κύριε· βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ. ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἐπισυντρέχει ὄχλος, ἐπετίμησε τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ λέγων αὐτῷ· τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφόν, ἐγὼ σοι ἐπιτάσσω, ἐξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς εἰς αὐτόν. καὶ κράξαν καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξαν αὐτόν ἐξῆλθε, καὶ ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ νεκρός, ὥστε πολλοὺς λέγειν ὅτι ἀπέθανεν. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κρατήσας αὐτόν τῆς χειρὸς ἤγειρεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀνέστη. Καὶ εἰσελθόντα αὐτόν εἰς οἶκον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν κατ' ἴδιαν, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ. Καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐξελθόντες παρεπορεύοντο διὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἵνα τις γνῷ· ἐδίδασκε γὰρ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῷ ὅτι ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀποκτανθεὶς τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστήσεται.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 9: 17-31

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.



The placing of the Prosfhora on the Paten is not just the bread my family is offering on behalf of the entire congregation, it is the bread that will be used for those faithful living and for those departed. The bread that is being offered will be used to offer the Lamb, the Holy Oblation. And, with the Lamb, the Holy Oblation. And, with the Lamb, an offering of the bread for the Theotokos, the Heavenly Host, all the Saints and all of the Kingdom on both sides of this life.

The bread we bake and offer becomes the Lord's Body and with the wine that is offered becoming His Blood, the Holy Chalice will contain our God and our Salvation! The very Body and Blood of Christ, will be given individually, by name, to each person who offers themselves before Christ Jesus as they approach the Holy Chalice.

SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' (Mark 9:24).

This famous exclamation was made by the father of a boy afflicted by seizures and unable to speak since childhood. The father and his son had probably lost hope of a cure, but they were looking for compassion, and the father asked Christ to help. Christ's response is that all things are possible to him who believes. 'Lord, I believe', the father responds, 'help my unbelief!'. This prayer, in the form of a cry for help, was the key to the boy's healing. Christ commanded the spirit to leave the child, and the boy was healed.

This belief, which the father is asking Christ to strengthen, is about putting our trust in God, accepting to let go of our worries and anxieties, accepting that we are poor in spirit. It is giving our hand to God as a child would give his hand to his parents. By giving his hand, the child knows that he will be led by his parents to the right place. He does not worry. He feels secure. We too should have a similar relationship with God and put our total trust in Him. It does not mean that we are not allowed to have doubts. After all, even saints had doubts. But our first port of call should be to turn to God. Nowadays, and especially so for the younger generations, the default solution to all problems is often to seek answers through social media networks, so-called influencers, psychologists or Artificial Intelligence. Of course, we can talk to people we trust and seek wise counsel, but the cornerstone for the resolution of all issues should be our faith, our belief that, trusting God, everything is possible. 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man' (Psalm 118:8).

The predicament of the boy in the Gospel story, i.e. to be affected by an ailment for which there is no cure, has existed throughout the ages and remains a terrible problem. For example, there are millions of people affected by rare diseases. Although rare diseases have rare prevalence, there are thousands of these diseases. As a result, 1 in 17

people are affected by a rare disease. That is as many as have cancer. Patients with rare diseases are underserved by the medical world because it is not economical to run clinical trials for what is sometimes a handful of patients per disease. Despite astonishing medical improvements in the treatment of illnesses over the last decades, 95% of rare diseases have no cure, and thousands of patients find themselves in the exact situation of the boy of the Gospel reading – no cure and very little hope.

This Gospel story teaches us that, first and foremost, we should treasure our belief in God and pray for our faith to be strong. If our faith is strong, Christ will always be with us, and He will listen. 'All things are possible to him who believes' (Mark 9:23). Having this total trust and confidence in God allows us to seek God for help in all sincerity. It is the bedrock for our prayers. Praying for our belief to be strengthened is also an act of humility as we recognise our limitations.

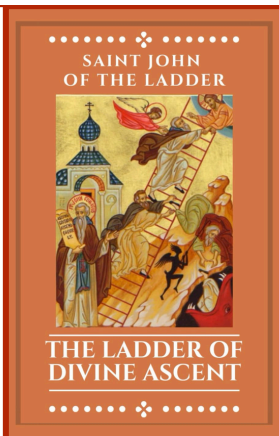
We know that God wishes the best for all of us. Let us have the courage to pray for our faith to be strong. If we do so, the Lord will listen to us. 'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us' (1 John 5:14).

Archpriest Stephane Maikovsky

Book recommendation from the Parish Library

Essential reading for all monastics and laypeople alike, for centuries this sacred text has led souls step by step to heaven.

The Holy Fathers of the Church left us their grace-filled writings in order to guide us on the path of the spiritual life. Saint John Klimakos' Ladder of Divine Ascent is undoubtedly one of the most important of all such texts. A timeless classic of Orthodox Christian spirituality, it is read aloud each year during the Great Fast in the refectories of Orthodox monasteries around the world. It has inspired generations of monks and laity alike to climb the rungs of the spiritual life with renewed zeal, ardently ascending the steps of the virtues towards the goal: eternal life in the Kingdom of God.



Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)

COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

To learn more visit: www.coty.org.uk.

Instagram: [COTY_org](https://www.instagram.com/COTY_org)



Synaxarion The Annunciation of the Theotokos



The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on March 25 each year. The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would become incarnate and enter into this world through her womb.

According to the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce to her that she would conceive and bear a son, even though she "knew no man." According to holy tradition Mary had come home to her parents when she was only fifteen when she was visited by Gabriel.

This date was selected by the Church Fathers to be exactly nine months ahead of Christmas, indicating that Christ was conceived in perfection at that time "of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary," as stated in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Apolytikion (Fourth Tone)

Today marks the crowning of our salvation and the revelation of the mystery before all ages. For the Son of God becomes the son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaims the grace. Wherefore, we also cry out with him, "Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you."



Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. Remember that all our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including of the building and all the bills.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance if the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sing it. Thank you for your support !



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