



## ***Sunday of St John Climacus***

***"And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him."***

We see today the same spirit having power over the young generation. The spirit of self harm that takes many forms and many shapes, that takes hold of the person destroying their desire to live, to find joy in being alive before anything else. Because this is the time of innocence where creativity mixed with geniality of the age should embody the spirit with freedom and song. Way too often today we see young people feeling heavy and weary of life, being taken over by this spirit that leads them to a violent self destruction, makes them mute to express their pain and deaf to hear guidance. They become out of reach for the older generation. The gospel tells us today that this evil spirit is not new. What is new in our generation is the success of this spirit in really harming young people, "for good". On Friday, when we were listening to the gospel, a father who was present in the room could relate with this evil. With age, we relate differently with the gospel, and we see things to which we didn't pay attention before.

**"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."**

We see in the gospel Jesus praying often, late at night or early in the morning (Mark 1:35). Not so much the apostles, when they are with him. At times we see the apostles being invited by Jesus to pray but they are overcome by sleep (Mat 26:40). Christ was with them, and they probably did not feel the urge to pray since God set the table for them, when he preached and when he healed all who were brought to him. In the Gethsemani Garden they fell asleep, even when they could touch and sense the danger, they would not yet believe that Christ was vulnerable and about to be crucified. They did not see that He needed their prayer and their presence. As for fasting, it is Jesus who says that they don't need to fast, yet when asked about John's disciples who failed to do that, He tells them: *"How can the wedding guests mourn while the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast"* (Mat 9:14). It could be that Jesus was frustrated with the disciples when He speaks about a faithless generation, and they were part of it, and yet, we see in the gospel that they had no need to fast, because the Bridegroom was with them. Thus, they could not take out the evil spirit from the young man because they had not yet experienced the real loss in their life. They had not yet mourned. Historically, Christians fasted on Holy Friday and Saturday because that was the time when Christ was taken away from them. Through the cross and in the tomb.

**"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. One nation will not lift up a sword against another, nor will they ever again be trained for war."**

The spirit that makes people captive from an early age, leading to self destruction, cuts them off from community, paralyses their senses, exhibiting power and violence.

At the beginning of lent, on clean Wednesday, the scripture tells us that fasting is associated with breaking out from this violence. As Carlos was saying on Friday, through fast we become weak in order to

become stronger in accepting our vulnerability. That helps us, through prayer, to confront the violence in us by finding kindness within us for the sake of our brothers and sisters. As the scripture says, we do not abstain and withdraw but the aim of our life is reshaped. Like the censer we have in the chapel, which is made in Ethiopia, out of bullets previously used in war.

We see in our community witnesses of people who, just like the censer from Ethiopia, came out from a destructive war in order to find within their soul kindness towards the wounded stranger. And all this, because they have literally fasted and prayed in front of closed churches for months. Until their heart looked within itself without hate but with a hopeful candor.

The fault of the father in the gospel is that he belongs to this generation. That's where the unbelief is coming from, while the pain of the father and the voice of God who speaks to him, makes him pray while still doubtful. He fasted from communion with his son, now he discovered the prayer. It is true that many times parents make mistakes that leave children with a deep need for forgiveness within their souls. However, when it comes to this evil spirit, it takes a whole generation's lack of faith and adultery to give power to the evil spirits over the innocents.

In a generation that is adulterous, even the good becomes poison. As a homeless brother was confessing on Sunday, after the liturgy, when he came tell us he was grateful for the community feeding and clothing him in the morning. He felt that the shelters in the city harm people by doing good. "Because of the way they treat you when you are in need...like a dog", he says "making you feel unhuman."

The children who suffer because of this spirit today cannot look for healing in the many programs that society offers. The programs can do good for other sicknesses but not for this one. Because somehow this form of goodness that comes from our own skills and self determination does not satisfy their desire for communion. Because it is not what the programs are intended to do and offer. But the suffering youth can relate to and open to the encounter with those who experience fasting from all kinds of goods, with those who had the experience of loss that taught them to pray. After the ascension, the apostles started to pray as a community and announce the good news, being accompanied by the signs that gave power to the Word. While ascending, the apostles discovered Christ in their midst. Within the emptiness within a faithless generation.

Fasting from good makes us vulnerable and helps us to see that only God is merciful and we start to pray. On an empty stomach. The church can relate with the poor because it starts to resemble them. If we cannot reach out to the young people today who are taken captive it is because we have not yet renounced the violence in us.

We repent for a faithless generation's disbelief in violence, in a personal manner. We do so when, just like the Mother of God, we become obedient to the Word, when the Word visits us. Welcoming the Word is a sign of breaking away from a generation that is faithless, by discovering among us the One who is faithful. We can ask as she did: How is this going to happen since we have many weaknesses or conditions that will make it impossible for the spirit of God to manifest itself within us. The question does not stem from disbelief, but it is a confession. The good news of the gospel is not impersonal, coming to us from outside. Christ is coming to work a miracle in us. By being obedient to the good news, grace is poured into the community and into the world. And it is about to touch also the captive children who suffer. The key to their captivity is hidden within our own heart. When we become a word in the scripture.

## Announcements for the coming week:

Continuing with the services approaching Holy Week, you will find a detailed schedule included with today's bulletin. Please take note of the dates/times and take advantage by attending these special services.

Wednesday, April 2 there will not be a Presanctified Liturgy; instead, we start with Great Compline at 6:30pm with the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete continuing to approximately 9:30pm.

Friday, April 4, 7am - Lenten Orthros

In the evening, at 6:30pm, there is Presanctified Liturgy with communion followed by a silent meal with a reading. This will be followed by the Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos and a vigil for peace until midnight. This will be the last of our vigils leading up to Pascha. If you haven't had a chance to partake in this ancient Christian tradition, take the opportunity in order not to miss out. If you'd like to bring flowers to decorate for this evening, please have them at the mission by 3pm to allow some time to adorn the Holy Icon of the Theotokos.

Father Nicolaie will be available for confession Friday evening, please use the sign up sheet on the bulletin board.

On Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>, at 11 am there will be a showing of an original play about Jesus and the Apostles during the last days of Jesus' life. It will take place at the mission and there will be music and theater. The performance will be followed by a shared meal. Please come and involve yourself with the singing, performing or serving as we reflect with the community together on the meaning of the season.

Christ is among us!

Φῶτιος.



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under  
the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, March 30, 2025

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