Fourth Sunday of Great Lent
ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

(579 A.D. – 649 A.D.)

This year the Theosis Class at Holy Trinity is studying “Thirty Steps to Heaven”, a condensed version of “The Ladder of Divine Ascent” by St. John Climacus.

St. John is one of the greatest Christian writers in the world and is a celebrated saint of both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. The Orthodox Church celebrates his memory twice each year, on March 30 and the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. This year, The Fourth Sunday of Lent is April 14.

Born in the sixth century, John spent the first sixteen years of his life in Palestine, the ancient Holy Land of his birth. His early ambitions were realized when he went to the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai, the oldest Christian monastery in the world. There he became one of the most scholarly monks in Christendom. The site of St. Catherine’s was conducive to prayer and meditation, for there the scene of the burning bush took place and there Moses received the word of God himself. Moreover, to this place the grieving St. Helen, mother of St. Constantine the Great, came on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land some three hundred years before.

John is remembered not only as the author of the masterful “Ladder of Perfection” or “Divine Ascent” but also as the originator of hesychasm, the divine quietness that leads one to God through constant prayer, the prayer which has come to be known as the pure or intellectual “Jesus Prayer.” Regarding this John wrote: “Let the remembrance of Jesus be present with each breath,

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Holy Week Schedule

APRIL 28, PALM SUNDAY
Orthros................................. 8:30am
Divine Liturgy......................... 9:30am
The Bridegroom Service ............ 6:30pm

APRIL 29, HOLY MONDAY
The Bridegroom Service ............ 6:30pm

APRIL 30, HOLY TUESDAY
Presanctified Liturgy ................ 9:30am
The Bridegroom Service
Hymn of Kassiani ...................... 6:30pm

MAY 1, HOLY WEDNESDAY
Sacrament of Holy Unction ......... 3:00pm
The Bridegroom Service with the Unction anointing ............. 6:30pm

MAY 2, HOLY THURSDAY
Divine Liturgy of the Mystical Supper
.............................. 9:30am
The Holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The Twelve Gospels and the Crucifixion ............. 6:30pm

MAY 3, HOLY FRIDAY
Veneration of the Cross .......... 9:00 am–3:00 pm
Imperial Hours ...................... 9:30 am
Apokathelosis Vespers, Unnailing,
Descent from the Cross and
Burial of Christ ...................... 3:00 pm
The Lamentation Service at the Epitaphios ............. 6:30 pm

MAY 4, HOLY SATURDAY
Vesperal Divine Liturgy .......... 9:30 am
Resurrection Vigil .................. 11:15 pm
Divine Liturgy ...................... 12:00 am

MAY 5, THE GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA
Divine Liturgy ...................... 12:00 am
Agape Vespers ...................... 11:00 am
### Dates in the Life of Our Church

**April 2024**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>APRIL</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11:00 AM Trinity Circle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 PM Greek School</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5:00 PM Lenten Vespers</td>
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<td>7:00 PM Marriage Prep</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy</td>
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<td>7:45 PM Theosis</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4:00 PM Greek School</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6:30 PM Akathist Hymn</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Veneration of the Holy Cross</td>
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<td>8:15 AM Orthros</td>
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<td>9:30 AM Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>1:00 PM Baptism</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>5:00 PM Great Compline</td>
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<td>Metropolis Clergy/Laity</td>
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<td>4:00 PM Greek School</td>
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<td>7:00 PM Philoptochos Board Mtg</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>9:30 AM TOTs</td>
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<td>6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11:00 AM Baptism</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Fourth Sunday of Lent</td>
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<td>8:15 AM Orthros</td>
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<td>9:30 AM Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>4:00 PM Greek School</td>
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<td>5:00 PM Lenten Vespers</td>
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<td>7:30 PM Parish Council</td>
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<td>8:00 PM NJJYC State Youth Mtg.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy</td>
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<td>7:45 PM Theosis</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>10:00 AM Parish Lenten Project</td>
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<td>Fifth Sunday of Lent</td>
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<td>7:45 PM Theosis</td>
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<td>4:00 PM Greek School</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>9:30 AM TOTs</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Saturday of Lazarus</td>
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<td>8:30 AM Orthros</td>
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<td>9:30 AM Divine Liturgy</td>
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**St. John Climacus**

*Continued from page 1*

And then you will know the value of hesychia." John's love for Jesus was like a deep well, ever drawing him in and quenching his spiritual thirst. For more than seventy years, John of the Ladder practiced his love for Jesus in the confines of his desert monastery. He achieved such a reputation for piety and wisdom that men from all walks of life were drawn to his side and came from all over the east to make a pilgrimage to his retreat. From John's strong faith and fervent prayer came the power of healing through the divine intervention of the Jesus. (They become one through theosis.) If nothing else, St. John’s visitors would leave with a serenity which they had never before experience and with a sense of fulfillment that would last a lifetime.

“Prayer is the mother and daughter of tears. It is an expiation of sin, a bridge across temptation, a bulwark against affliction. It wipes out conflict, is the work of angels, and is the nourishment of everything spiritual.” — St. John Climacus
It’s unbelievable how a small thing can grow into a tremendous success when our hearts are in the right place. The Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) Agape Fund raised awareness of OCMC’s (Orthodox Christian Mission Center) efforts. Holy Trinity with her parishioners is now supporting some seven priests. Glory to God for this!

The Support a Mission Priest Program provides a subsidy to help priests in the Orthodox Church of Africa (Patriarchate of Alexandria) share the Faith, care for their communities, and provide for their families.

Parish contributions are helping the following clergy:

- Fr. Martin Bayang (Cameroon);
- Fr. Joseph Mukadi (Democratic Republic of the Congo); Fr. John Okello (Uganda).

In addition, Fr. Peter and Presvytera Victoria committed to support His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Kenya. There are another four parishioners supporting a mission priest in our parish. If you or your family would like to be part of extraordinary effort, please contact Father Peter, he will get you connected so that you can Support a Mission Priest.
The "Ladder of Divine Ascent" describes how to lift one’s soul heavenward towards God through the acquisition of ascetic virtues. This is a lifelong process that is only achievable through extended prayer, fasting, and liturgical worship of the Trinity.

This book is a guide for those practicing a life entirely devoted to God. This is why it is so important for monastics and the faithful as well.

The metaphor of a ladder is used to describe an ascent. Interestingly enough, the name “Climacus” means ladder in Greek. Since Holy Scripture is at the center of a Christian’s life, John uses the Old Testament image of Jacob’s Ladder as the framework for his spiritual teaching.

“Jacob dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven, and the Angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord leaned upon it and said: ‘I am the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; be not afraid.... And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places wither thou goest.” (28:12-13, 15—Septuagint).

The importance of this heavenly ladder is to visualize God’s care that He does not abandon or leave us as orphans. And although we might not physically see God, He is constantly present protecting us, encouraging us, helping us come closer to Him. The “ascent” is our journey towards Him. As we climb the ladder, His angels guide and protect us as we get closer to Him. But as the icon depicts there are pitfalls along the way.

Besides angels, there are others who help us with our spiritual ascent. The Panagia, the Ever-Virgin Mary, is the first and foremost to help. Symbolically, she is the ladder whom Jacob sees in his dream. The Virgin Mary is the one who allowed Christ to descend from heaven into this world, and thus she is the one who always allows us to ascend bringing us toward Him.

As one begins an ascent, he must work against the elements of this world. In the physical world, gravity pulls us down. In the spiritual world, the demons do the same. The icon shows the demons’ insidious activity. These fallen creatures tempt us and seek to do us harm. Therefore, any ascent requires effort on our part. We must work against the elements of the fallen world to rise higher and higher. The devil wants to pull us down so that we fall from God’s grace. In our struggle, we acquire strength to rise higher. By putting our faith in God, His ministering spirits will aid us, as will all the saints.

The ladder has thirty steps or rungs, which correspond to the age of Jesus at His baptism and the beginning of His earthly ministry. Each step deals with a separate spiritual subject. Within the general framework of a ‘ladder’, Climacus’ book falls into three sections. The first concerns itself with the virtues necessary for an ascetic life. The middle section gives instruction on overcoming vice and building their corresponding virtues. And the final steps concern the higher virtues that exist beyond prayer, stillness and dispassion. The final rung is an experience of God’s love.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I recommend reading this book as a Lenten spiritual exercise. It will provide us insight in how to govern our lives so that we may ascent heavenward.
Palm Cross Preparation

Please join us after liturgy on Saturday, April 27 in the Bouras Center to tie Palm Crosses for Palm Sunday distribution. No experience is necessary. Your Stewardship and Fellowship are important components helping to make Holy Week special. The more hands we have the better and faster the process goes. The Saturday of Lazarus, for all intents and purposes, is the beginning of Holy Week. By helping, you start off Holy Week on an uplifting note.

The Metropolis of New Jersey
New Facebook Page

The Metropolis of New Jersey introduces its new Facebook page. For latest news, information, and pictures of Metropolis activities, please visit and subscribe.

You can see first-hand how your donation to the Capital Campaign was used. Thank you for your contribution to this important campaign.

- New Air Conditioning Systems for Church and Administration Offices
  - Removal and arrival of new system, April 1
  - Installation to begin May 6

- New Church Boiler System
  - To heat and maintain temperature in the Church and Administration Offices

- Church Dome
  - Work and new protective membrane covering the dome

- Parking Lot Milling & Paving
  - Paving of the church's parking lot in front and back of the church is completed

On Monday, April 1 contractors removing old air conditioning units and placing new units on church office roof
The Youth of Holy Trinity is thrilled that our hard work and dedication paid off in Sights & Sounds, allowing us to secure fifth place overall. We thrived in many of our group and solo categories and won awards for some awesome sights! We are very proud of everyone! We would like to thank our coaches, advisors, parents, and volunteers all who helped to make Sights & Sounds as memorable and enjoyable as it always is. At the post-show we presented the Good Friend Award to Mrs. Roula Iouannou. We are beyond grateful for all she has done for us these past few years. Our costumes for the play, and the decorations for the Harvest dance we hosted last year were fantastic because of her. If you would like to get involved in the event in the future please reach out to the advisors; there are categories for everyone, even if you don’t play an instrument, or are an artist or singer!

Several of us prepared to participate in the 40th annual St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival on Sunday, March 31. Although only one participant is selected to continue in the competition for each of the junior and senior categories, we were all thrilled to delve deeper into our religion and the topics we selected. I personally enjoyed incorporating my own research and opinion into my speech and loved hearing my fellow GOYAN’s responses as well. We wish the finalists from Holy Trinity the best moving forward!

Our outreach committee is planning an activity for us to provide Easter treat bags to children in a Plainfield school. We anticipate future state-wide events like Olympics and GOYA Prom, and other activities within our own GOYA in the next few months.
Holy Trinity’s signature youth event, Sights and Sounds, celebrated their 52nd Anniversary of this momentous event on Saturday, March 2, 2024. There was much to celebrate as this year’s festival brought together GOYANs from 15 parishes from the Northern Metropolis of New Jersey to compete in the areas of literature, art, music, theater, and dance. This year we hosted over 600 youth, advisors, chaperones, judges, priests, presvyteres, and Westfield volunteers.

The endless downpour of rain throughout the day could not stop the excitement, nervousness, and anticipation of the performers. After many months of practices and rehearsals, everyone was ready to display their God-given talents and the Bouras Center was decorated with their spectacular artistry.

It was a wonderful event for all who were involved, and it was inspirational to see our youth members share their talents with each other in Christian unity. All of the youth performers and participants should be congratulated for their dedication, passion, and efforts which made this event so enjoyable and worthwhile.

We were honored and especially blessed once again with the arrival of His Eminence, Metropolitan Apostolos, who engaged with the youth and addressed the GOYANs after watching several performances in the Bouras Center as well as some individual solos in our other performance rooms. We were so elated to have His Eminence join us later that evening for vespers and the awards ceremony where he congratulated the GOYANs for their artistic achievements and dynamic performances. He encouraged them to continually grow in their faith as young Orthodox Christians and to be grateful for the artistic talents that God has bestowed upon them.

It goes without saying that Sights and Sounds requires many months of preparation. This event is blessed to have a dedicated Host Committee who selflessly give of themselves because of their love and appreciation for the event that Holy Trinity founded over 50 years ago. The committee extends a very special thank you to all of the many volunteers of our parish who assisted during the event. We pray that God will continue to bless Holy Trinity. We are honored to serve as chairman of this wonderful and amazing event.

We note the following recognitions:

Chairs: Peter and Alexandra Bout-sikaris

Our Host Committee: Marigo Mar-kos, Ellen Manos-Athenson, Yiana Leichtling, Maria Kanaras, Roula Ioann-nou, Keli Leunes, Christina Colonias, George Colonias, Ron Cerini, Andrea Cerini, Stephen Ladas, Debbie Vlahakis, Ellen Conti, Maria Tarhanidis, and Sophia Saketos.

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Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 24
Greek School
March 25
Celebration Program

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of Westfield

Annual Lenten Project
Volunteers Needed!

Join us in our meal-packing event!

Support us:
• Volunteer: Sign up @ Philoptochos Table
• Donate any amount to help offset costs

http://events.riseagainsthunger.org/HolyTrinity2024

Saturday, April 20, 2024
10-12pm
250 Gallows Hill Road
Westfield, NJ

For more information, please stop by Philoptochos table or Kathy Maglaras at maglarask@yahoo.com

Saint George Greek Orthodox Church
1101 River Road
Piscataway, New Jersey

is pleased to host

The Eastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians
District of New Jersey

31st Annual

The Spirit of Lent Concert

A Choral Offering of Ancient and Modern Works in English and Greek

Ryan J. Kiel, Director
E. Hope Demitry, Organist

Friday, April 26, 2024
7:30 p.m.

Donation $10.00
Students free
Refreshments following program

www.gocnj.org
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

CLASSIFIEDS

Contact the Church Office if you would like to advertise in the next issue of The Promise!
**Schedule of Services**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sundays</th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthros</td>
<td>8:15 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
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**Ministries**

- **Parish Council:** Penny Mavridis Sales
- **Philoptochos:** Maria Kanaras
- **Religious Education:** Pete Markos
- **Greek School:** Stavroula Mergoups
- **Greek School PTO:** Zaharoula Ioannou
- **Youth (GOYA):** Nadia Tarhanidis
- **JOY / HOPE TOTS:** Kathy Petsinis Paone
- **Cultural Bookstore:** Valerie Comprelli
- **Cultural:** Sandy Mouratoglou
- **Trinity Circle:** Celia Kapsomera
- **Scouting:** Peter Tarhanidis
- **Fellowship:** Miriam Kotsonis

**Office Staff**

- **Office Manager:** Diana R. Waltsak
- **Admin. Assistant:** Kathy Genakos
- **Caretaker:** Beatriz Ramirez

**Worship**

- **Lead Psaltis:** Pascalis Kuvalakis
- **Choir Director:** Kathryn Athanasoulas
- **Organist:** Phyllis Verenes
- **Head Acolyte:** Nicholas Sikellis

**Contact Information**

- **Mailing Address:** HolyTrinity@htgocnj.org
- **Phone:** 908-233-8533
- **Fax:** 908-233-0623
- **Web site:** holytrinitywestfield.org
- **Presiding Priest:** Fr Peter Delvizis
- **E-mail:** FrPeter@htgocnj.org

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