

## **St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church**

### **Homily: Four Faiths (which one would we be?)**

#### **St. Mark 9: 17-31 & Hebrews 6: 13-20**

**The Four Faiths (retell story).** Right after the Transfiguration (between it and the Passion, part of the movement toward Jerusalem. Christ comes down the mountain with Sts. Peter, James, and John. Quite a scene meets them: a crowd of Pharisees and others surrounds the remaining disciples. Christ question the scribes, but the only reply given is from the father of the sick boy. He entreats Christ to heal his son. After a short dialogue with the man, Christ heals the boy. Then takes his disciples aside to teach them.

**The Faith of the Pharisees.** (Blessed Theophylact) they saw the sheep without their master and used the opportunity to challenge their faith. They believed that the disciples faith in their Master was misplaced, sought to correct them. They could not recognize Christ for who he was, so they attacked him and sought to undermine the faith of those who were beginning to understand Him and His desire for our salvation. Who else is like that, like wolves seeking stray sheep? Who is the most vulnerable? Our youth. They are young in their faith, often just beginning to understand. Then, just as the young disciples were attacked by wolves as soon as they were separated from Christ (and his teaching and protection), we send our youth out amongst the modern Pharisees at our universities and in the world (we must give serious attention to this and how to prepare and protect ourselves from their predations). In short, the Pharisees have no faith, and it is their desire to destroy the faith of others.

**The Faith of the Father.** He is looking for someone to help his son. He has come to a necessary fact: that he needs help (would that everyone were so wise). He has probably looked many places. The disciples (and Pharisees) could not help him. Christ wants to help the man, not just by saving his son, but by teaching about the true source of power and healing: faith in the Son of God.

**The Faith of the Disciples.** Three years of learning from the ultimate Rabbi. But still weak (who is the greatest? Even St. Peter had challenged Christ's fundamental teaching about His coming Passion.).

**The "Faith" of Christ.** We are to be perfect as He is perfect.

- How do we get there? Believe in Him as the Son of God. As the great Healer, Teacher, and (most importantly) Savior. Grow in His Love and Knowledge. This does not happen by itself. Like everything Good, perfection must be worked for. St. John of the Ladder described this process, but it is one of disciplining yourself and growing in love. Note that the Lord commends the Apostles to Fast (are we better?). Growing in Love and Knowledge is not automatic – we have to learn what real love is. We have to unlearn a lot. Study the scriptures. Experience God's love for you and the world by reading His word, participating in His Sacraments, and through the Services of His Church. Then you will more readily see how this love can be fostered in your relations with one another.
- **More on the "Faith of Christ"** You may say that Christ had no faith – He is the source of the faith. He does not really have to believe (or have faith in) the Truth, because He is the Truth. But I tell you that "those who partake of [His] body abide in [Him] and He in them. Christ is working in each of You. You are in Christ and He is in You. The Church is the body of Christ. We are Christ to the world.
- We must move in our faith through the challenges of the modern Pharisees, from the simple and uninformed faith of the father, through the faith of the disciples, to grow in the Truth that is Christ. Tragedy if a suffering man brings his stricken child to us, and we (due to our lack of faith) cannot help them. Tragedy.

**Let us grow in the Faith of Christ, that we may take the healing and love of Christ into ourselves, and then to a suffering world.**

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##### **Hebrews 6:13-20**

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and 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 for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew 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 might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

##### **St. Mark 9:17-31**

And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;<sup>8</sup> And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He 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 him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 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 him sore, 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 was 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 that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

##### **Tone 4 Troparion of the Resurrection**

When the women Disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of the Resurrection, / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles: / "Death is overthrown! / Christ God is risen, // granting the world great mercy!"

##### **Tone 1 Troparion for St John of the Ladder**

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!