

Climb the Ladder of Great Lent Leading Us to P A S C H A!



In our Adult Religious Education classes on Sundays, we are reading the book, *30 Steps to Heaven: The Ladder of Divine Ascent for All Walks of Life*. As we “climb” each step every Sunday, the ladder pictured at left reminds me that during Great Lent, we “climb” a time-honored spiritual ladder leading us to Holy Pascha. *Will you climb with us?*

Before you answer, consider this reflection from www.oca.org: The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man’s entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and His teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to “anoint our faces” and to “cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls.” The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

Let us begin the lenten time with delight . . . let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and His Holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.

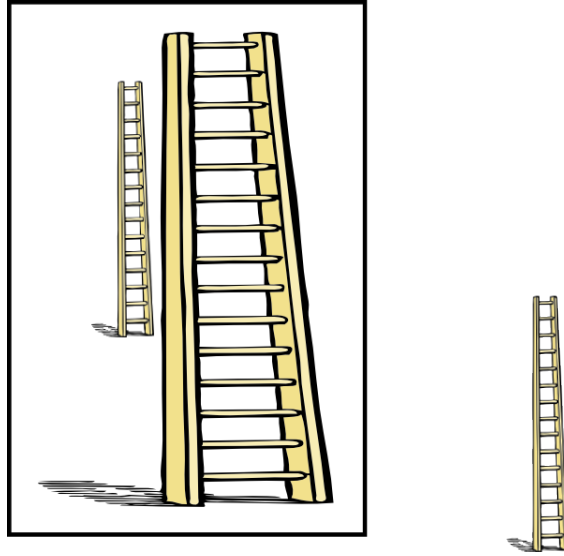
Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vespers Hymns).

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God’s mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ’s Resurrection and our own. (adapted from *Great Lent*, oca.org)



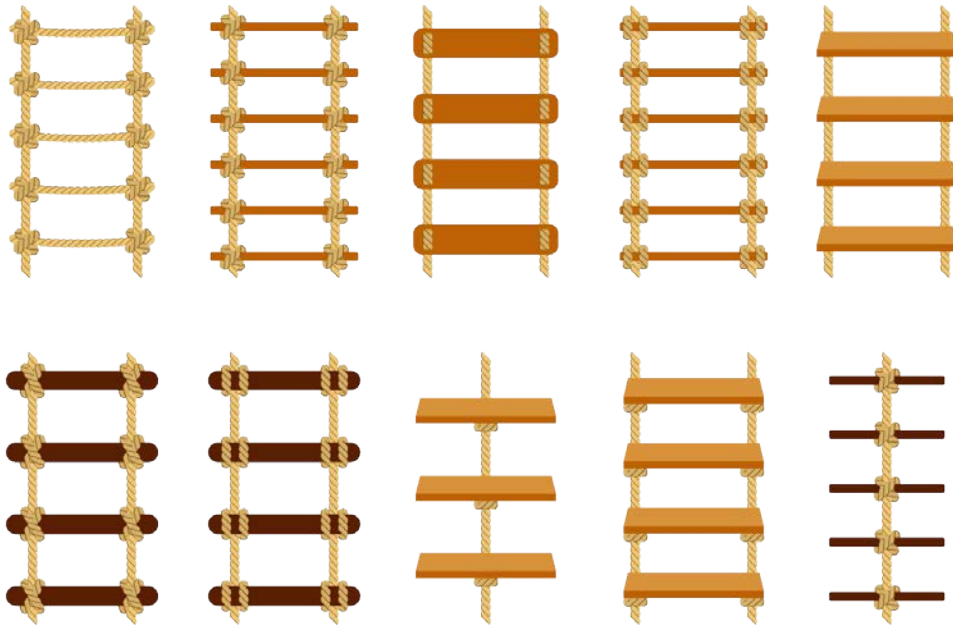
40 Days of Diverse Services Using Unique Ladders

1. Saturday of the Souls Memorial Service on First Saturday of Great Lent, February 24, and two Saturdays leading up to it.
2. Great Compline Service, Lenten Supper & Special Lenten Movie – *In the Footsteps of Jesus*, Monday, February 26, 5:30 p.m.
3. 9th Hour/Presanctified Liturgy/Community Family Dinner/Lenten Program (using *30 Steps to Heaven*) every Wednesday of Great Lent
4. Salutations to the Theotokos Services on Lenten Fridays
5. Sundays of Great Lent – exceptional spiritual themes every Sunday



Special Ladder Between 40 Days of Great Lent & Holy Week Ladders

1. Saturday of Lazarus (tying of Palm Crosses), April 7
2. Palm Sunday (blessing and distribution of Palm Crosses), April 8



Seven Days of Holy Week Services Using Ten Remarkable Ladders

1. Service of the Bridegroom, Sunday through Wednesday Evenings of Holy Week, April 1 – 4
2. Sacrament of Holy Unction, Wednesday, April 4
3. Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil, Thursday, April 5 and Saturday, April 7
4. Holy Passion Service & Procession of Cross, Thursday, April 5
5. Service of Royal Hours, Friday, April 6
6. Vespers of the Unnailing of Christ from the Cross, Friday, April 6
7. Lamentations at the Tomb of our Savior (*Epitaphios Thrinos*), Friday, April 6
8. Preparatory Service to Resurrection (Pascha), Saturday, April 7
9. Proclamation of the Gospel & Resurrection Divine Liturgy, Sunday, April 8 (beginning at midnight)
10. Great Vespers of Agape, Sunday, April 8

Remember: You Decide Which Ladder to Choose...



Or

