



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

*March 26, 2009*

**HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS`  
REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN  
CLIMACUS**

*"Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honor your patience." St. John Climacus*

One of the many ways that our Church assists us in our Lenten journey is that each Sunday has a different lesson for us to learn. Now we are approaching the Sunday of St. John Climacus, or St. John of the Ladder, where we are taught the true nature of repentance and the spiritual struggle.

On this Sunday, the Church glorifies the righteous John of the Ladder, who accepted the ascetic life at sixteen and was tonsured as a monk a few years later. He is reported to have received the gift and grace of continual prayer, so many sought him out for spiritual guidance. Later he was appointed Abbot of the Monastery at Mount Sinai, which was built on the site of the burning bush where God spoke to Moses.

St. John is known best from a book he wrote, "The Ladder of

Divine Ascent," consisting of thirty homilies, representing stages or steps in the spiritual life and the progress of our spiritual struggle. Each homily deals with one virtue, pointing out also the problems and pitfalls along the way. The book is called "The Ladder of Divine Ascent", because of the image of a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, which we must climb, like that ladder Jacob saw in a dream: "Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on earth, and its top reached heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." (Gen. 28:12).

In last Sunday`s Gospel, we heard that our Lord said: "He that would come after Me, let him take up his cross, deny himself, and follow Me." St. John has given us an image of that journey in the form of a ladder, and he reminds us that we should never fall into despair at our failures, but constantly focus all our energies and efforts on striving to ascend.