

# St. John of the Ladder

## and the Ladder of Divine Ascent

There are 30 rungs to the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, one for each year of the life of Christ prior to His baptism and the beginning of His public ministry. The goal of the Christian life is love.

**The Break with the World** – *Ekklesia*, meaning "to be called out" of the world

1. Renouncing the world and its distractions – quiet desperation, aimless distractions
2. Detachment from possessions – not letting our possessions possess us; stewardship
3. A sense of exile from one's true home – the Kingdom of God

**Foundational virtues to begin the spiritual life**

4. Obedience – learning the meaning of "Thy will be done!"



5. Repentance – changing our minds, re-orienting our lives towards Christ
6. Remembering that we will die – getting our priorities straight
7. Sorrow for our sins and for those of the whole world

**Dealing with the passions that enslave us**

8. Anger – the root of hatred and violence
9. Malice – remembrance of wrongs, holding grudges
10. Slander – talking about other people's sins and not focusing on one's own sins
11. Talkativeness – empty talk, boorishness and the need for the discipline of silence
12. Lying – "Hypocrisy is the mother of lying" and the wearing of a mask to hide ourselves
13. Despair – "a paralysis of soul" based on a refusal to believe in God's love
14. Gluttony – "Control your appetites before they control you" and the discipline of fasting

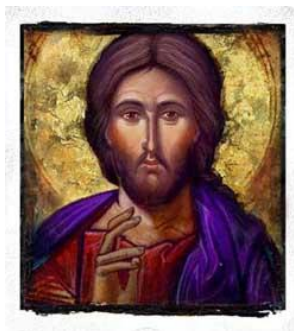
15. Lust – dealing with our disordered sexuality and the need for chastity (boundaries)
16. Greed – “the root of all evil is love for money” (1 Timothy 6:11)
17. Greed...(continued) – refusing to be miserly, encouraging generosity
18. Insensitivity – apathy, dullness, laziness, a refusal to respond to God’s call
19. Insensitivity...(continued) – the need for prayer to deal with our laziness and apathy
20. Insensitivity...(continued) – the need to keep alert, attuned to God’s call
21. Fear – cowardice in the spiritual life
22. Vainglory – the need for self-esteem as a vice, doing things to be seen, being a show-off
23. Arrogance – the Kingdom of ME vs. the Kingdom of God

#### **The virtues necessary for Christian living**

24. Simplicity and meekness – being honest with yourself and surrendering to God
25. Humility – being humble of heart and winning the battle against the Kingdom of ME
26. Discernment – authentic self-knowledge, clearly seeing the difference between good and evil and choosing whatever is good, right and true

#### **The fruit of knowing God**

27. Stillness - quietly resting in God – *hesychia*, the rejection of all that is merely noise
28. Prayer – “dialogue and union with God, food for the soul, illumination of the mind”
29. Freedom from passions – “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me”
30. Love – “God is Love” (1 John 4:8), inebriation of the soul, the summit of the ascent

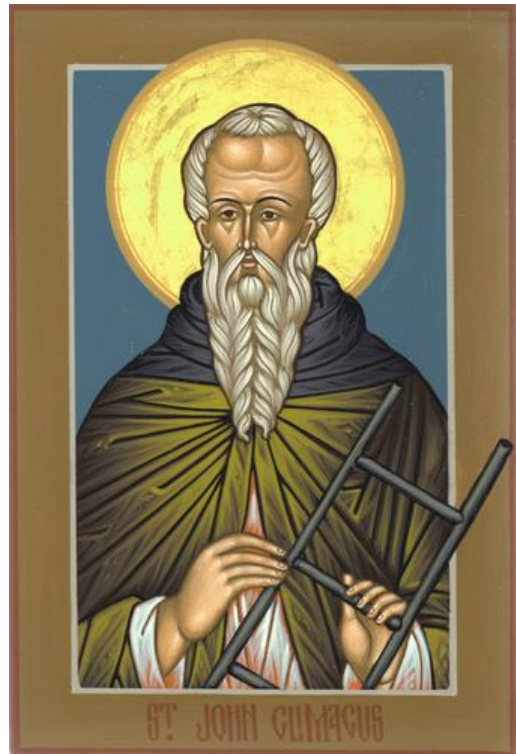


## *Sayings from The Ladder of Divine Ascent*

God is the life of all free beings. He is the salvation of all, of believers or unbelievers, the just or the unjust, of the pious or the impious, of those freed from the passions and those caught up in them, of the educated or the illiterate, the healthy or the sick, the young or the very old. He is like the outpouring of light, a glimpse of the sun, which is the same for everyone, “for God is no respecter of persons” (Romans 2:11).

An impious man is a rational being, one that must die, who willingly chooses to run away from life and refuses to believe in the existence of his own everlasting Creator.

A Christian is an imitator of Christ in thought, word and deed so far as this is humanly possible and believes rightly and blamelessly in the Holy Trinity.



A friend of God is one who does not neglect to do whatever good he can.

Do whatever good you can. Speak evil of no one. Rob no one. Tell no lie. Despise no one and carry no hatred towards anyone. Go to Church. Show compassion to the needy. Do not be a cause of scandal to anyone. Stay away from the bed of another and be satisfied with your wives. If you do all this, you will not be far from the Kingdom of God.

Those who submit to the Lord with simplicity of heart will run the good race.

The fact is that just as an evil person is two-faced – one thing in public and another in private – so a simple person is not two-faced, but someone whole.

Repentance is the renewal of our baptism and is a fresh start in life; it is critical awareness and a sure watch over oneself, the daughter of hope and the refusal of despair. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the doing of good works that are the opposite of the sins committed.

Prayer is by nature a dialogue and a union with God. Prayer is action without end, a fountain of virtues, a source of grace, food for the soul and the enlightenment of the mind. It is a mirror of progress, evidence of one’s condition and a sign of glory.

Prayer is tarnished when we stand before God, our minds seething with irrelevancies; and it disappears when we are led off into useless cares.

A soul prays with sensitivity when it has overcome anger. There is no greater obstacle to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us than anger.

Faith gives wings to prayer.

Let your prayer be completely simple: for both the publican and the prodigal son were reconciled to God by a single phrase. Try not to talk excessively in your prayer, so that your mind is not distracted by your search for words. In your prayers, there is no need for high-flown words. Brevity makes for concentration.

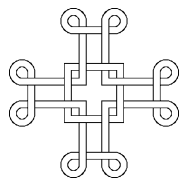
Before all else, let us list sincere thanksgiving first on the scroll of our prayer. On the second line we should put confession and heartfelt contrition of soul. Then let us present our petition to the King of all. This is the best way of prayer.

Where there is no light, everything is in darkness. Where there is no humility, everything is rotten. Just as darkness retreats before light, so all anger and bitterness disappears before the fragrance of humility.

Love, by its very nature, makes a human being like God, in so far as this is possible for a human being. The soul is intoxicated by the effects of it. Love's characteristics are a fountain of faith, an abyss of patience, an ocean of humility. When someone is completely permeated with the love of God, the brightness of his soul is reflected by his whole personality as if in a mirror.

Love is the complete repudiation of any unkind thought about one's neighbor, since "love thinks no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Therefore, the person who loves God also loves his brother or sister. Indeed, the second love is proof of the first. A person who claims to love the Lord but is angry with his neighbor is like someone who only dreams he is running.

***In the life of the Church, the memory of St. John of the Ladder is celebrated on March 30<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent each year.***



***Saint of God, pray for us!***