

OUR LADY OF VICTORY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION CHAPEL

# LENT



Behold the Lamb of God,  
Who takes away the sins of the world.

JOHN 1:29

## ADORER NEWS

**Come Holy Spirit...** As a special act of charity during Lent, we invite OLV adorers to pick up a prayer card in the basket in the Chapel bearing the name of a Confirmand, RCIA Candidate, or Catechumen. These are the names of all those preparing for Confirmation or entrance into the Catholic Church this spring from Greene and Columbia Counties. Please remember in your prayers and sacrifices the individual named on the card, especially in your visits to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. May their life-long spiritual journey be strengthened by our intercession for abundant grace and mercies!

**Bring a Friend to Adoration:** Would you consider inviting a friend who may not have experienced Eucharistic Adoration to the Chapel with you? What a beautiful Lenten act of evangelical friendship this could be, to gently invite someone with you to sit in the Presence of Christ. You might follow it up with coffee or a light meal, just as Jesus did so often when He spent time with friends. Your invitation to adore may be the very solace and strength they didn't know they needed. Let the Holy Spirit guide you!

**Nocturnal Adorers Needed:** We have an immediate need for adorers during the late-night and overnight hours on Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesdays. Those who have experienced Adoration during these hours love the silence, the intimacy, and the deep sense of sanctity in being alone with Jesus Christ during the wee hours. Many saints have attested to the power of prayers offered during the night, when the world is darkened and Jesus awaits someone to console Him.

**Candle Memorials Available:** Openings are available for the 4 altar candles that flank the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel. If you would like to reserve a month for a loved one or a special intention, contact Debbie at 518-249-7035 or Rebecca at 518-799-5535.

**Lenten Events at St. Mary's:** Be aware that there will be various special Lenten events and services that may coincide with your Adoration time. These will include Stations of the Cross and several retreats. The Chapel will remain open for its regular schedule throughout unless otherwise noted.

*Cover art: "Ecce Homo". Juan de Juanes.*



## The Small Number of the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

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Jesus has many lovers of His heavenly kingdom,  
but few that are willing to bear His cross.  
He has many that are desirous of comfort, but few of tribulation.  
He finds many companions at His table,  
but few of His abstinence.  
All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to suffer with Him.  
Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread,  
but few to the drinking of the chalice of His passion.  
Many reverence His miracles,  
but few follow the ignomy of His cross.  
Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity.  
Many praise Him and bless Him as long as they receive  
consolation from Him.  
But if Jesus hides Himself, and leaves them for a little while,  
they either fall into complaints or excessive dejection.  
But they that love Jesus for Jesus' sake and not for any comfort  
of their own, bless Him no less in tribulation and anguish  
of heart than in the greatest consolation.  
And if He should never give them His comfort, yet they would  
always praise Him and always give Him thanks.

*-St. Thomas a Kempis, "The Imitation of Christ".*



12th century Sinai icon depicting The Ladder of Divine Ascent.

# The Ladder of Divine Ascent

The image of a ladder has deep roots in Scripture, and this ancient icon makes good use of it as a path one travels to reach Heaven. At the end of the 6th century, St. John Climacus, Abbot of Sinai, wrote a treatise entitled "The Ladder of Divine Ascent" for the edification of monks, in which a ladder of 30 rungs corresponded to its 30 chapters dealing with degrees of spiritual perfection. The monastic traditions of spiritual vigilance, inner responsibility, and opposing evil have been revered for centuries in the Church.

In this icon, written to reflect Climacus' treatise, the monks climbing the ladder reveal various levels of inner strength as they ascend - some falling into the clutches of waiting, deformed demons who grab them with ropes or shoot arrows at them. Yet the monks are not without assistance - choirs of angels stand in prayerful witness to their efforts, as do the monks who remain below, interceding for their brethren. Despite the near-comedic portrayal of the demons, there is nothing funny about losing your soul to eternal damning fire. The icon makes its sobering point.

There is yet a further perspective on this image worth considering. We speak of aiming for the height of Heaven, but there is also a depth to that goal illustrated by the ever-deepening concentric circles from which Christ appears to welcome the monks into His glory. The deepening colors signify the ever-deeper mysteries of God, which are revealed to us as we continue to grow closer to Him in the afterlife. For even in that age to come, our souls will continue to move into deeper awareness because God is infinite, so the ladder of Divine Ascent will actually extend into Heaven's depths, eternally.

St. Irenaeus expressed this truth when he stated, "Even in the age to come, God will have new things to teach us, and we will have new things to learn." Our God will always be a God of surprises, and our salvation will be an unending journey to unimaginable joys.

Let us be both mindful of this icon's warning and heartened by its promise during our Lenten journey, always remembering the hope of salvation ahead of us.

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*St. Anthony of Egypt said, "I saw the enemy spread out over the world and I said, groaning, 'What can get through such snares?' Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility.'"*



# THE THREE FALLS OF CHRIST



*At the very first step on the way to Calvary, Jesus stumbles and falls. He is down on His knees in the dirt! What has happened to this man? this man who just now declared himself to be king of a spiritual world with legions of angels at his command, who has been known to hold back the overwhelming force of the storm and still the raging sea by an act of his will, who by a mere touch of his hand caused a living fig tree to wither, and has fallen now under the purely material weight of the cross he so lately welcomed?*

Yes, Christ prostrate there under the cross, lives through the humiliations and bewilderment of those who seem to fail at the start... If we have failed before others, if we have fallen openly, making ourselves objects of derision and contempt, it is still more difficult; our humiliation is the more bitter because we have not only betrayed ourselves to ourselves, but we have made fools of ourselves before men. They will watch us now that they know our weakness; they will watch our "heroics" as we try to start again, and they will mock us!

Christ, who chose to be an ordinary man on the Via Crucis, chose to feel as ordinary men feel... Because Christ identifies with us, because He suffers the humiliation of the first fall in us, His love transforms it. The very wound can heal us.

The first fall is the first real self-knowledge. Now we know our weakness, we know our helplessness before the difficulties of life, our total inability to shoulder our responsibilities...we realize now that we are wholly dependent on Christ, dependent on Him to act in us, to lift Himself up in us and to lift us up in Him. His weakness is our strength. No longer do we seek to carry the burden with our own hands, but with His. No longer do we try to walk in His footsteps, we tread the way with His feet.



*Hardly has Veronica wiped the dirt from His face then Christ is down in the dust again. Christ is thrown down onto the ground...This second fall is harder than the first; He is nearer the end of His tether now, more dependent on others to help Him get up and go on. It may have been something trifling, almost absurd, that threw Him down. He is unable to get up until others come forward to heave the cross up from off His back, and perhaps help Him to His feet again.*

The crushing weight of circumstances today makes the Christian life a cross which, even though it is a redeeming cross, is hard to carry: the economic conditions; the weight of public opinion - the contempt for those who choose the hard way because it is Christ's way; the weight of material hardship - the weight that grows heavier and heavier as those who must carry it come nearer and nearer to the end of the journey. If something as trifling as a pebble in the road or a false step could throw Christ down on the road, so may a tiny provocation, a sudden temptation, a mocking word - a fragment that adds to the struggle - bring the man struggling under the cross down: the servant is not greater than his master.

Everyone who labors to lift the burden of material misery from the backs of the poor gives his hands to free Christ from the crushing burden. Everyone who concerns himself to change public opinion and to make Christ-life honored in the world helps Christ to His feet again. Everyone who forces himself against the indifferent mob, against the unthinking multitude who see nothing but folly in Christ and His Cross, helps to drag the great burden from His exhausted body, Everyone who approaches Christ fallen under the cross, coming to Him in friendship and love, to relieve Him of the burden of the Christian

life lived in isolation and loneliness in opposition to the whole modern environment, helps Christ to His feet and sets Him on His way.



*For the third and last time, Jesus falls under the cross! This is the worst fall of all. It tears open all the wounds in His body; the shock dispels the last ounce of strength that He had mustered to go on. It shatters the last hope, the last remnant of faith, in nearly everyone in the crowd. It is triumph for His enemies, heartbreak for his friends.*



The last fall is the worst fall. In it Christ identified Himself with those who fall again and again, and who get up again and again and go on - those who even after the struggle of a lifetime fall when the end is in sight; those who in this last fall lose the respect of many of their fellow men, but who overcome their humiliation and shame; who, ridiculous in the eyes of men, are beautiful in the eyes of God, because in Christ, with Christ's courage, in his heroism, they get up and go on... In the third fall, the showing of Christ's is this: He does not indwell only in the virtuous,

only those who are successful in overcoming temptation, only those who are strong and in who His power is made manifest to the world; He chooses to indwell those who seem to fail, those who fall again and again, those who seem to be overcome even when the end is in sight. In them, if they will it, He abides; in them He overcomes weakness and failure, in them He triumphs; and in His power they can persevere to the end, abject before men but glorious with Christ's glory before God.

*-Excerpted from "The Way of the Cross". Caryl Houselander.*