

**SERMON**  
**Fourth Sunday of Lent (Mk 9:17-31)**  
**22 March 2026**

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Today's Gospel Reading speaks of another miracle of Christ: it is the healing of a young man, who has probably been suffering from epilepsy since his childhood. According to the sacred text, it is a situation attributed to a demonic influence that leads to the terrible state of the young man. The unfortunate father of this person brings him to the Disciples. They are unable to carry out the healing, and finally the father takes refuge in the Lord Himself. Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit and gives health to the young man.

This healing is one of the many that Christ performs during His public activity, but in this case, it is not the miraculous event itself, which our Church invites us to focus on, but on something different, without of course meaning that the event itself is of no importance. The heart of the whole narrative lies in the conditions set by the Lord Himself for this miraculous healing, and in the explanation given to the question of why the Disciples are unable to perform the miracle.

Very clearly, Christ poses the basic question to the father of the young man, who is desperately seeking healing for his child tormented since his early years. The question is: *"do you believe"*? And the unfortunate man answers, *"I believe, Lord."* He does not simply say, *"Yes, I believe."* He calls Christ *"Lord,"* *"yes,"* he says, *"I believe, Lord, that You are the One we are waiting for, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Son of God, but strengthen this little faith of mine, help my unbelief."*

The Father vacillates between faith and unbelief, and it is logical because the Disciples were not able to help beforehand. He may have been disappointed, he was momentarily timid, but he did not give up, he ran to the Lord, even with some hesitation. Christ understands this doubt and strengthens the Father's faith: *"If you believe, all things are possible"*, he tells

him with certainty, and performs His miracle. Of course, this miraculous healing causes the Disciples to reasonably wonder about their previous failure to perform the healing themselves.

Christ raises the issue of faith to them again, in an indirect but absolutely clear way. Demonic forces can only be overcome through deep faith, which is manifested and certified through fasting and prayer. One cannot say that he believes, and not pray or fast. Without fasting and prayer, that is, without asceticism, the human person's faith is inactive, atrophic, weak; ascesis in Christ, as handed down by our holy Church, makes our faith work miracles, and this is the faith that Christ asks of each of us. Faith is the absolute prerequisite for a miracle.

It is such a model of faith and ascetic life that the Fathers remind us today with the memory of Saint John of Sinai, the author of the book of the Ladder. The feast of this great saint of our Church is very aptly placed on this Sunday, not only because he wrote this great ascetic and spiritual manual, which we all know, the famous "Ladder", but because he himself, with his most ascetic life, hypostasises the evangelical virtues of prayer and fasting, to which the Lord exhorts us. May we also imitate Saint John of the Ladder so that our faith may not be merely emotional and psychological, but miraculous.