

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church of Kansas City

2018 LENTEN STUDY SERIES

“THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT:
THIRTY STEPS TO HEAVEN”

Week 1 – February 21, 2018

Prayer Before Studying the Scriptures

O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of our hearts, that we may hear Your word, and understand and do Your will. Hide not Your commandments from us, but open our eyes, that we may perceive the wonders of Your law. Speak unto us, the hidden and secret things of Your wisdom. We set our hope on You. O God, enlighten our mind and understanding, with the light of Your knowledge, not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them. We offer praise and thanksgiving to the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, now, always and forever. Amen.

Reflection Image



Consider the image of a ladder and reflect on what comes to mind

Reflections from attendees:

- 1) the higher you go up, the scarier it can get
- 2) you can only take one step at a time
- 3) what you see from the top looking down is a totally different perspective from what you see looking from the bottom up

Reflect on the following two words:

Christ

- Selfless
- Immortal
- Creator
- Sinless
- Perfect

World

- Selfish
- Temporal/Transient
- Creation
- Sinful
- Broken

*Reflection words shared by attendees

First Step to Heaven – Renunciation

Christians **renounce** the world by living for something other than the world

World = All those things that are opposed to Christ and to our salvation

Christ-Centered vs. World-Centered

The Greek word for *Church* = “**Ekklesia**” which translates to “the called out”
As Christians, we are “the called out.” We are called **out of the world** to live for Christ.

This begins with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism where we
“renounce Satan, his armies, his deceitfulness...”

Passages for Reflection

1) St. Luke 9: 23-24

23 Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.**

Passages for Reflection

2) St. John 18:36

36 Jesus answered, “**My kingdom is not of this world.** If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now **My kingdom is not from here.**”

Passages for Reflection

3) St. John 15:19

19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet **because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**

Passages for Reflection

4) Romans 12:2

2 And **do not be conformed to this world**, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Renunciation – *Things to Remember*

- 1) *Innocence*: Christ reminds us to become like little children. Children, full of innocence, come to their loving father and mother, trusting them to completely take care of them, to protect them, to provide for them, to correct them when they are wrong, and to love and cherish them. Similarly, we come to the presence of the Heavenly Father and utterly depend on Him.
- 2) *Abstinence*: voluntarily keeping distance or staying completely away from in order to maintain focus
- 3) *Temperance*: internal restraint; the ability to resist the enticement/temptation of immediate pleasure

This Week...

- Re-read the passages we discussed today and continue to reflect on Christ's teaching and words on how to **live in the world** but **not to be of the world**
- Each day this week, reflect on your daily encounters with other people, your actions, your words, and **consider if/how they are Christ-centered or world-centered?**
- The things you may have identified as world-centered, consider how you can begin to **refocus your attention to Christ.**