

In today's Gospel, Mark 9:17-31, a father of an ill son, who had a dumb spirit, came and beseeched Jesus Christ to help him because the disciples were not able to cast out the spirit and heal the boy. After great explanation, Jesus Christ said to the father that if he believes, all things are possible. The father replied to Him, "I believe; help my unbelief!" The boy was healed.

Dearest ones, the father in this Gospel reading took a step towards God in faith. Saint John Climacus who wrote the work Ladder of the Divine Ascent celebrated today speaks about rungs on a ladder with each rung representing a Christian virtue that we should strive towards. As we have said, the father moved closer to God, let's say up a rung of the ladder, when he in faith asked Jesus Christ to help his unbelief. And as his faith got stronger, he moved even closer to God.

As the icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent shows, we all must strive to climb, work, and toil, to develop a stronger relationship with God moving up the ladder. What do we do to nurture this relationship? Do we pray? Do we fast? Do we give alms? There are many ways in which our faith can be strengthened and thus moving us closer to God—up the ladder. This is a continual journey in our lives with our goal being complete union with God—theosis!

Let the words "I believe; help my unbelief!" resonate within us all in order to bring us in a closer relationship with our loving God Who through the Cross, destroying death by death, brought joy to all the world, that of eternal life with Him in the Highest, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever, amen.