



*"As many as have been Baptised into Christ have put on Christ: Alleluia!"*

# ORTHODOX FAMILIES' NEWSLETTER



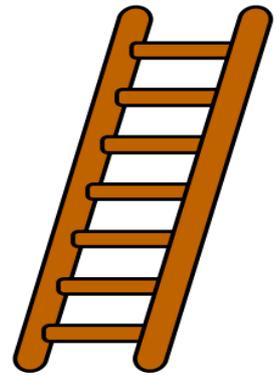
Welcome to the quarterly newsletter for families of the Louth and Grimsby parishes. Issue No. 9: Mar, Apr, May 2014



We've started this newsletter to help us keep in touch with all our families, and give them support when raising children in the warmth of the Orthodox Church family.

## CLIMBING THE LENT LADDER

On the fourth Sunday in Great Lent (this year March 30th), we celebrate a saint who is very dear to the Church. St John Climacus, which means St John of the Ladder, wrote a book about our attempts to be better people called **The Ladder of Divine Ascent**. This is about climbing up a ladder with 30 rungs, step by step, away from the wrong things we do; and by becoming more like the people God wants us to be, getting closer to Him. This isn't an easy thing to do, and St John knows that it is a hard battle that we have to fight. Sometimes it is easy to do the right thing, sometimes it is the hardest thing in the world, and St John describes this as like climbing up a step one day, and falling back a step another day. But he is very encouraging: he wants us to succeed and he says **'Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you, will honour your patience.'**



During Lent we make a special effort to get as near to the top of the ladder as we can, so that when Pascha comes, we can truly rejoice that 'Christ is Risen'. One thing that you could do in the family is to draw a big ladder with 30 steps, on a sheet of paper, and every time a little battle is won, mark it on the ladder.

What sort of battles do we have to fight each day? Happily helping to clear the table after a meal instead of moaning about it is an easy one to understand. Not telling lies, even when telling the truth can get us into trouble. Helping our friends when they need it. Helping a grown up when they need it. Giving up something that we want when someone else needs it – giving some of our pocket money to charity, for example.

During Lent grown ups try to fast, which means not eating meat, fish, cheese, and eggs. But it is usually recognised that small children need to eat a balanced diet while they are growing. But it can be a good idea to not eat some of our favourite things which are not important for our health: sweets, chocolate, crisps: you know the sort of things. Doing this helps us up another step on the ladder because it means that we think more carefully about what we really need, and remember all the people in the world who really are in need. So, may your climb up the ladder be a happy one; remember that the higher you climb, the better the view will be and the closer you will be to our Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

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**AN ANNOUNCEMENT!** We know that when we want to grab someone's attention, we say that we have 'an announcement'. This icon on the Holy Doors of the screen in our churches, is doing just that - telling us something important. It shows Mary, the Most Holy Mother of God, listening to the Angel Gabriel. The angel, which means messenger, has come to tell her something amazing, that she has been chosen to be the mother of Jesus Christ. She will carry this baby just like any other mother, and she will bring him up and look after him. And he will grow up to be the Saviour of the world! **We celebrate this Feast of the Annunciation on March 25<sup>th</sup>.**

**Holy Pascha and western Easter are on the same date this year which is April 20<sup>th</sup>. This means that Pascha is in the school holidays, which gives families a chance to prepare for this Feast of Feasts and to come to the special services leading up to the day, as well as on the feastday itself. So do take the opportunity to bring children to some of the Holy Week services which take us through the days leading up to Christ's crucifixion and Resurrection. Details of all the services will be in the Newsletters, so be sure to make a note of them on your calendar.**

Orthodox Churches of St Aethelheard, Louth and St Marina & St Kenelm, Grimsby

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**PASCHA EGGS, ENGLISH STYLE** The colouring of eggs for the Feast at Pascha is an age-old tradition in Orthodox countries. Did you know that England too has a tradition of colouring eggs, found mostly in the northwest parts of the country? They are called **PACE EGGS** which is an old way of saying 'pascha'. Some spring flowers, especially primroses are put face down over the surface of the eggs, which are then wrapped in onion skins (using red ones makes for a deeper colour). Each one is then wrapped in cloth, or several layers of good quality kitchen towel, and tied with string and boiled in water to which a little vinegar has been added. When the egg parcel is unwrapped, there will be a lovely mottled brown egg with primrose patterns on it. Give it a try. If you want more ideas for using natural colourings for Pascha eggs, have a look at this website.



<http://www.4us2be.com/uncategorized/natural-egg-dye-recipes/>

**A SPECIAL OCCASION** On the weekend of **17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> May** we are looking forward to the visit to our churches in Grimsby and Louth of Metropolitan Ignatios. He is the Antiochian Archbishop who looks after churches in France, but he is coming here to celebrate the Liturgy and to help us by ordaining a Deacon at each service. They will be lovely services to come to, as there will be other priests and deacons there and they and the Metropolitan will be in their best vestments. We will sing a special greeting to him, in Greek, which means 'Many Years to you Master'. Listen out for it! We will feast afterwards, so come to one of these Liturgies, meet Metropolitan Ignatios and ask for his blessing.



**SAINT HELEN AND SAINT CONSTANTINE** When we become members of the Church we are given a saint's name, and two saints whose names are carried by several people in our parishes at Louth and Grimsby are Saints Helen and Constantine. We remember them on May 21<sup>st</sup> and they are so important to us that they are called 'Equal to the Apostles'.

Constantine succeeded his father as co-emperor with Maxentius, in charge of Britain and Gaul and the west, in the year 306, at a time when Christians were being horribly persecuted across the Roman Empire. But the cruelty of Maxentius soon sickened Constantine and he decided to overthrow him in battle. He prayed to what he thought was the most powerful god, the sun, because at that time he was not a Christian. But a bright flaming vision of a cross appeared to him, with the words **'In this sign, conquer'**. Constantine talked to the Christian priests in his camp who explained to him that Christ was calling him to believe in Him, and by the River Tiber near Rome, he fought and conquered his enemy. He entered Rome in triumph and so began a time of tolerance of the Christian faith. He personally paid for churches to be built; he supported 'Sunday' as the holy day of worship for Christians; he gave to the poor and did all he could to build a Christian empire, including founding a new capital in the east, Constantinople. His mother Helen also became a Christian, and she went to the Holy Land and saw that churches were built in places associated with Christ's life on earth. She found the True Cross, and it was set up in the church in Jerusalem, above the site of the empty tomb. This is why the Cross features in these saints' icon. During all this time, Constantine was still not a baptised Christian, but when he fell ill, and was nearing the end of his life, he cast off his imperial clothes, and put on the white robe of Baptism.



**We thank God for his achievements in defending the Faith and for the mother who gave him birth.**