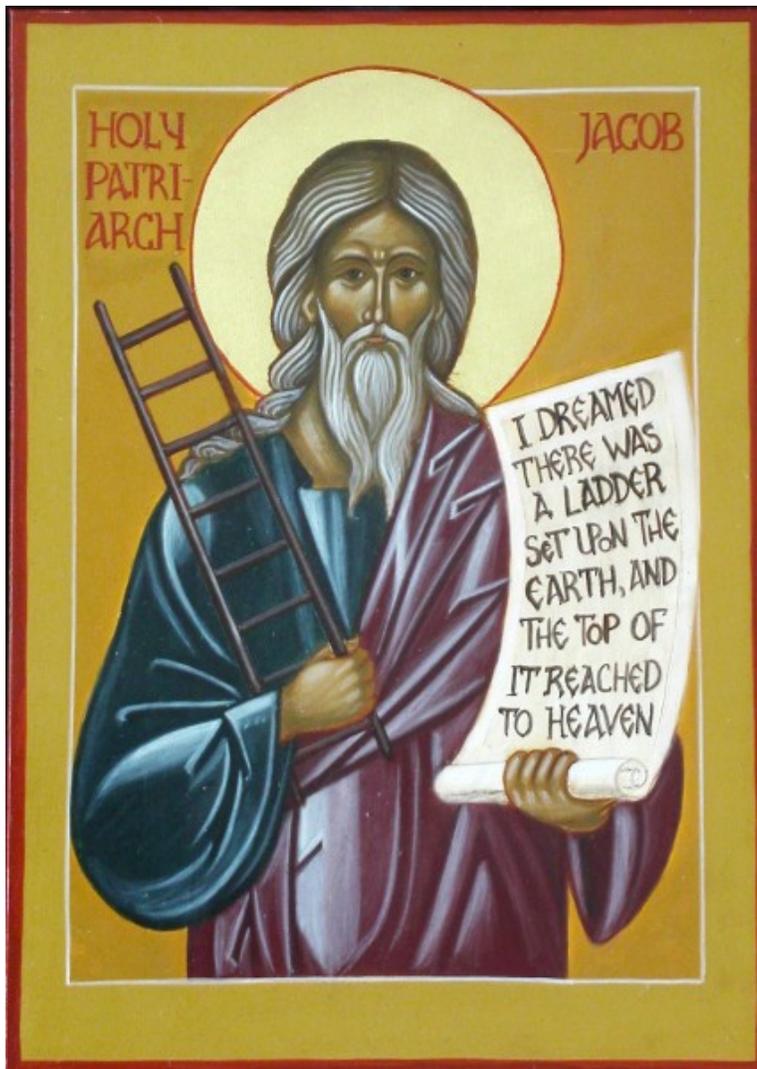


Ready in Every Way to Hear His Word

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



In the later part of Great Lent we read Genesis 46: 1-7. The passage tells the story of Jacob's journey to Egypt with his sons. God calls the aged Jacob, and makes a great promise to him, speaking to him in visions of the night: "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there." God also tells Jacob that his favorite son Joseph, presumed to be dead, will be the one to close the old man's eyes when he himself dies.

Having this assurance, Jacob and his sons set out: "They also took their cattle and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt."

This is a momentous journey, because it begins the history of the Hebrews first flourishing in Egypt and then, in the Book of Exodus, being enslaved by a new king "who did not know Joseph."

The king is worried that the Hebrews have become "too many and too mighty for us." After the harsh years of slavery he imposes on them, Moses will come forth to deliver them from their Egyptian bondage and lead them toward the Promised Land.

But what would have happened if Jacob wasn't ready to hear and do the word of God, and to begin this important journey? In preceding verses (Genesis 45: 21-26) we are told that Jacob's sons had returned from Egypt where, to their wonder, they met their brother

Joseph. He was not only alive, but had become the highest official in the Egyptian government. They relate this amazing news to Jacob, but "his heart fainted, for he did not believe them." (The Orthodox Study Bible translates the verse this way: "But Jacob's mind was completely stunned, for he could not believe them.") He only does believe when he sees the loads of "good things of Egypt" and "provision for his father on the journey" back to Egypt that Joseph has sent with the brothers.

Jacob was not ready for the good news that his beloved Joseph was alive; he was too stunned and faint of heart. He regained his senses, fortunately, and was able to carry out God's plan for him. That plan was more than just for a father to be reunited with a beloved and long-lost son. Jacob's journey would begin a whole new chapter in the history of salvation.

As Great Lent ends, this passage reminds us that we, too, will soon receive the good news that someone presumed to be dead is truly alive. Are we ready to hear that news? Will we do whatever God wants us to do as a result of hearing it, and take our own place in the history of salvation?