

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church
4419 Leonardtown Road
Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor
(703) 532-8017

fredgington@gmail.com

www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesday in Great Lent: Liturgy
of Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

Friday: Mol. to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

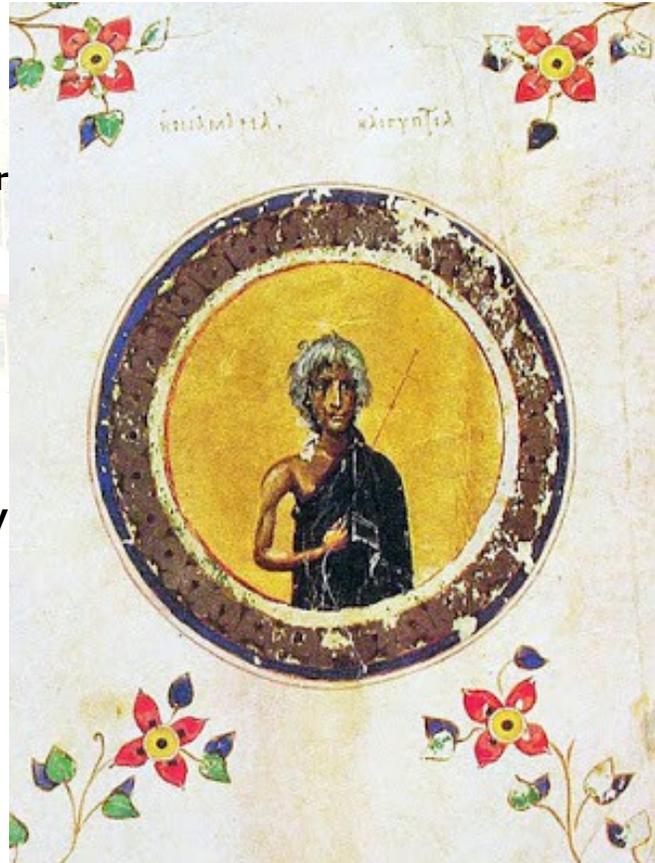
***Please note that attendance is
currently limited by restrictions
dictated by local response to the
COVID-19 pandemic; if you are**

**currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact
outreach@apostlethomas.org for information on when you may attend.**

April 18, 2021 | St. Mary of Egypt (5th Sunday in Lent)

When she was only twelve years old, she slipped away from her parents and went to Alexandria, where she lived a life of prodigality for seventeen years. Then, moved by curiosity, she departed for Jerusalem with many pilgrims, in order to be present at the Exaltation of the Precious Cross. During the voyage, she gave herself over to every kind of licentiousness and immorality and enticed many into the pit of perdition.

Wishing to enter the Church, on the day when the Cross was being elevated, three times, four times, she sensed an invisible force that prevented her from entering, whereas the crowd of people with her was entering without any hindrance. Smitten in her heart by this, she resolved to change her life and to propitiate God through repentance; and thus, on returning to the Church, she entered it with ease. After venerating the Precious Cross, she departed from Jerusalem that same day, crossed the Jordan, and went into the inner recesses of the desert, where, for forty-seven



years, she lived a life that was very severe and superhuman, praying alone with God.

Near the end of her life, she encountered a hermit named Zosimas and, after recounting her life from the beginning, she besought him to bring her the immaculate Mysteries so that she might receive communion. He did so the following year, on Great Thursday. When Zosimas returned a year later, he found her dead, stretched out on the ground, with a note near her, which read: “O Abba Zosimas, bury the body of humble Mary in this place. I reposed on the same day that I communed the immaculate Mysteries. Pray for me.” (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 9:11-14

Brethren, Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 10:32-45

At that time, they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.” Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, “We are able.” So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared.” And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over

them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren and fathers, because winter has passed and spring has arrived, we see creation flourishing again; the plants are flowering, the earth is growing green, the birds are singing and everything else is being renewed; and we take pleasure in all this and we glorify God the master craftsman who transforms and changes creation year by year, and it is reasonable to do so. "Ever since the creation of the world His eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things He has made" [Rom. 1:20].

It is our duty not just to stay where we are, but to advance further and to examine carefully for ourselves the logic of creation. How? Because this renewal has winter as its cause. It would not have reached its prime had it not first undergone snows and rains and winds. And so it is with the soul; unless it is first snowed on by afflictions, troubles and difficulties, it will not flower, it will not fruit; but by enduring, it bears fruit and partakes in a blessing from God, as it is written: "Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, partakes in a blessing from God" [Heb. 6:7].

Therefore, brethren, let us also endure every affliction, every trouble, every trial which assails us both visibly and invisibly. The fast we are drawing out as we hunger and thirst and are otherwise made wretched, so that we may bear fruit and partake of God's blessing; and not only that, but that we may nourish and welcome Jesus as our guest. For just as we enjoy the sight of creation, so He too enjoys the ripe beauty of our souls. What are the fruits? "Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-mastery" [Gal. 5:22]. By these He is nourished, by these He is entertained. And blest the one who nourishes Him, because he will be nourished by Him with eternal good things; and blest the one who receives Him as his guest, because he will be received by Him as his guest in the kingdom of heaven! Indeed! So if someone is to receive a king as his house guest, he rejoices and is extremely glad; how much more then someone who receives the King of kings and Lord of lords as his house guest. That he is received is clear from what He himself has said: "I and my Father will come and make our abode with him" [Jn 14:23]. And again: "One who has My commandments and keeps them, is the one who loves Me; the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and manifest Myself to him" [Jn 14:21].

Therefore, since such are the promises, let us not only bear, but let us endure with joy all things, both those that are present, those that are whispered about, and those that are expected, as we listen to the Apostle when he says: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the Church" [Col. 1:24]. And again Saint James who says: "My brethren, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" [James 1:2-4]. Do you see then that in trials there is joy, and in tribulations gladness? For these are the things that are exchanged where God is concerned; and this is how the saints led their lives; this too how we, by doing violence to ourselves and yet greater violence, and by living our life in their footsteps, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and might, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and to the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Theodore the Studite, *Homily on the Fifth Sunday in Lent*

The Fifth Sunday in Great Lent Before the Fourteenth Century

by John Sanidopoulos

Just as with the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, when we commemorate St. John Climacus, so also on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate St. Mary of Egypt due to the fact that her primary feast day is on April 1st, and it was moved to the nearest Sunday because during the lenten period the celebration of saints is forbidden on weekdays (Canon 51, Synod of Laodicea) - although there are notable exceptions, such as the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste which falls on March 9th. Besides this, special attention is given on this Sunday to St. Mary of Egypt because her life is read during the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete which is chanted on the Thursday of the Fifth Week. In this she also shares something in common with St. John Climacus, whose book the *Ladder* is read especially in monasteries during the entire lenten period. This attention is focused on her because she is the ultimate model of repentance, which is what Great Lent is primarily all about, and in her life it is recorded that St. Zosimas encountered her during his excursion into the desert for Great Lent, which indicates to the reader the time her life should be reflected on, and she reposed on Holy Thursday after receiving the Divine Eucharist.

The first time we encounter the celebration of St. Mary of Egypt (whose life was first recorded in the seventh century by St. Sophronius of Jerusalem) on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent is in a manuscript from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the

year 1201, and slowly by the end of the fourteenth century we start seeing it in many other manuscripts. Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, it seems like St. Mary of Egypt was firmly established to be celebrated by all Orthodox on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent.

Prior to this time, however, the primary focus of the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent was on the Gospel reading dedicated to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:-19-31). This is probably due to the fact that it speaks of the necessity of repentance and showing mercy before death, since after death there is no repentance. The oldest manuscripts of the *Triodion* testify that this parable was the focus for this Sunday, as well as the fourteenth century homily (Homily 13) of St. Gregory Palamas, which indicates that St. Mary of Egypt was not commemorated in Thessaloniki in his time, or at least she is not mentioned even though the homily is focused on fasting. A reference to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus can still be observed in the Matins service, right before the Canon to St. Mary of Egypt is chanted. It seems like in the fifteenth century the Gospel reading for this Sunday changed to Mark 10:32-45, which speaks of Jesus going to Jerusalem and predicting His death to His disciples. The change probably took place due to the emphasis on the Gospel of Mark during the Sundays of the lenten period (the Gospel of Luke used to be emphasized on the Sundays of Lent), and it falls chronologically in line with the events of Holy Week. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today: Venerable John, disciple of Venerable Gregory of Decapolis

Saint John was born at the end of the eighth century. At a young age he became a disciple of Saint Gregory of Decapolis (November 20) and accepted monastic tonsure from him at a monastery in Thessalonica. Under the guidance of this experienced teacher, St John attained great spiritual perfection. When the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820) renewed the persecution against Orthodox Christians because they venerated the holy icons, St Gregory of Decapolis and Saint Joseph the Hymnographer and his disciple St John went from Thessalonica to Constantinople, to raise opposition to the Iconoclast heresy. In spite of persecution, Saints Gregory and John fearlessly defended Orthodoxy for several years, and preached the veneration of icons. After many hardships St Gregory died (c. 820), and soon after, his faithful disciple John also departed to the Lord. Saint Joseph the Hymnographer transferred the relics of Saints Gregory and John and placed them in the church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker. *(from oca.org)*

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbyteria Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Nicholas Pavlik, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Sandy Tucker, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectaros & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)