



Orthodox Church of the Annunciation The 4th Sunday of Great Lent, April 18th, Tone 4, Mark 10:32-45

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt

Troparion of the Resurrec- tion, Tone 4

When the women disciples learned from the angel, the joyous message of Thy Resurrection. They cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the Apostles: death is overthrown, Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy.

Troparion for St. Mary of Egypt, Tone

Having been a sinful woman, you became through repentance a Bride of Christ. Having attained angelic life, you defeated demons with the weapon of the Cross! Therefore, O most glorious Mary, you are a Bride of the Kingdom!

The Lenten Fast

The Lenten season is inaugurated in the Church with the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:15-17). The message is proclaimed in the midst of the congregation: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord".

On this day, the fifth Sunday of Great Lent, we celebrate the memory of our holy and venerable Mother, Mary of Egypt.

The recorder of the life of this wonderful saint is St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. A hieromonk, the elder Zossima, had gone off at one time during the Great Fast on a twenty-days' walk into the wilderness across the Jordan. He suddenly caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body and with hair as white as snow, who fled in its nakedness from Zossima's sight. The elder ran a long way, until this figure stopped at a stream and called, "Father Zossima, forgive me for the Lord's sake. I cannot turn around to you, for I am a naked woman." Then Zossima threw her his outer cloak, and she wrapped herself in it and turned around to him. The elder was amazed at hearing his name from the lips of this unknown woman. After considerable pressure on his part, she told him the story of her life.

She had been born in Egypt and had lived as a prostitute in Alexandria from the age of twelve, spending seventeen years in this way of life. Urged by the lustful fire of the flesh, she one day boarded a ship that was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she attempted to go into one of the churches to venerate the Precious Cross, but some unseen power prevented her from entering. In great fear, she turned to an icon of the Mother of God that was in the entrance and begged her to let her go in and venerate the Cross, confessing her sin and impurity and promising that she would then go wherever the Most Pure One led her. She was then allowed to enter the church.

After venerating the Cross, she went out again to the entrance and, standing in front of the icon, thanked the Mother of God. Then she heard a voice saying, "If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace." She immediately bought three loaves of bread and set off for the Jordan, arriving there the same evening. She received Holy Communion the following morning in the monastery of St. John the Baptist, and then crossed the river. She spent the next forty-eight years in the wilderness in the greatest torments, in terror, in struggles with passionate thoughts like gigantic beasts, feeding only on plants. Later, when she was standing in prayer, Zossima saw her lifted up in the air. She begged him to bring her Holy Communion the next year on the bank of the Jordan, and she would come to receive it.

The following year, Zossima came with the Holy Gifts to the bank of the Jordan in the evening and stood in amazement as he saw her cross the river. He saw her coming in the moonlight and, arriving on the further bank, make the sign of the Cross over the river. She then walked across it as though it were dry land. When she had received Holy Communion, she begged him to come again the following year to the same stream by which they had first met.

Announcements and Activities

Lenten Vespers— Tuesday, at 6PM.

Presanctified Liturgy- will be served on Wednesday, April 21st at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their noon meal.

Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday/ church cleaning- Saturday, at 9AM

Great Vespers for The Feast of the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)— Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Baptism of Alex B. and Evan P; and the Chrismation of Rose Marie: it is with joy that we will celebrate these receptions into the Holy Orthodox Church on Sunday, at 9AM.

Divine Liturgy for the Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hours— Mike T. and Michael M. this week. Next week, Faiza F.

Confessions— Many of you have already scheduled and made your Lenten Confession. For those who have not, Confession is part of our Lenten preparation for PASCHA. Fr. Lawrence will be available before and after Divine Services until Wednesday of Holy Week. He is also available by appointment and through phone when needed.

Parish Council— met last Sunday. Thank God that with the Fundraiser and several large donations, we were able to almost get back to a balanced budget, year-to-date (under \$200 in the red). We are mindful that we have had some unexpected expenditures through replacing both the oven and the water heater in the parish home. Those two items cost us about 2K. We appreciate your hard work and generosity: your stewardship in the donation of Time, Talent and Resources.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)—battling cancer. **Natalia**—Olga's friend. Sunday's broth-

The next year Zossima went and found her dead body there on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: "Abba Zossima, bury in this place the body of the humble Mary. Give dust to dust. I passed away on April 1, on the very night of Christ's Passion, after Communion of the Divine Mysteries." For the first time, Zossima learned her name and also the awe-inspiring marvel that she had arrived at that stream the previous year on the night of the same day on which she had received Holy Communion - a place that he had taken twenty days to reach. And thus Zossima buried the body of the wonderful saint, Mary of Egypt. When he returned to the monastery, he recounted the whole story of her life and the wonders to which he had been an eyewitness. Thus the Lord glorifies repentant sinners. She entered into rest in about the year 530. St. Mary is remembered today, as we reach the end of the Great Fast, to arouse the energy of the slothful and to urge sinners to repentance, imitating her example. She is also commemorated on April 1. The Righteous Zossima, who buried St. Mary, is commemorated on April

O Christ our God, through the intercessions of our venerable Mother Mary of Egypt, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

(taken from, The Lenten Synaxarion)

HOLY MARTYR JOHN THE NEW OF IOANNINA

John was born in Ioannina, once the capitol city of the King Pyrrhus. When his impoverished parents died, the young John moved to Constantinople and there continued his occupation, for he was a craftsman. Not long before, the Turks had surrounded Constantinople, and many Christians, out of fear, had denied Christ and embraced the Islamic faith. St. John had his workshop in the midst of these converts to Islam. The more the young John burned with love for Christ the Lord, the more openly he exposed himself as a Christian before these traitors of Christ. He began to argue with them about the Faith and, finally, rebuked them for their betrayal of Christ. They dragged John before the judge and falsely accused him, alleging that he had earlier embraced Islam, and that he had again reverted to Christianity. After he was tortured and beaten with rods and iron flails [ramrods], they cast him into prison. The next day was the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, and again they brought him out for further torture. John emerged, singing: "Christ is risen from the dead!" To his torturers, he bravely said: "Do what you want, so as to send me as soon as possible from this transient life to eternal life. I am Christ's slave; I follow Christ; for Christ I die that I may live with Him!" After that, John was bound in chains and brought to the place of burning. Upon seeing a large fire prepared for him, John ran and leaped into the flames. His torturers, seeing how he sought death in the fire, removed him from the fire and sentenced him to be beheaded. After they beheaded him, they threw his head and body into the fire. Later on, Christians sifted through the ashes and gathered some of the remains of his honorable and wonder-working relics, which they interred in the Great Church [Hagia Sophia - Church of the Holy Wisdom] in Constantinople. Thus St. John of Ioannina died a martyr's death and received a glorious martyr's wreath on April 18, 1526 A. D.

Taken from the Prologue of Orchrud, by St. Nikolai Velimorovich

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)