

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent (04.02.2023.)

Mark 10:32-45

And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. **(KJV)**

St. Mary of Egypt Luke 7:36-50

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church has come to the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent. The Church is moving with certainty to Holy Week and to Pascha. Believers around the world are called to repentance and to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Mark's Gospel for today describes the Lord Jesus Christ's persecution, death and resurrection. Believers are always to be mindful of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.

Daily life is to be guided by and founded in Christ's love demonstrated on the Cross and His glorious Resurrection. Earthly life is not sufficient in length for believers to learn from and appreciate Christ's love, suffering and resurrection.

St. Mark's Gospel for today is a lesson for believers to be servants. Jesus Christ's words on being servants have lasting instructive value for believers to actively serve others in love. Jesus is the exemplary example of being the Servant.

The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent is always dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt. St. Mary is a lasting example of the possibility and way of repentance. St. Luke's Gospel verifies and teaches of Jesus' power to forgive sins for those who repent.

The remaining days of Great Lent offer every person the opportunity to repent and follow Jesus Christ. St. Mary of Egypt's life is an enduring example of the possibility of repentance when a person has sinned extensively.

There is always hope for salvation in Christ regardless of the extent of personal sin. Jesus Christ looks at the heart, the mind and the soul to determine the sincerity of the believer's repentance.

God's Holy Church encourages repentance throughout life as persons continue to sin and benefit from always returning to Christ to begin again. Heaven rejoices when persons repent of their sins.

The Divine services of the Church nurture and strengthen believers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. Confession and Communion unite the believer with Christ.

The saints and martyrs are ordinary persons having taken Jesus Christ most seriously. Each person can follow Christ in a similar fashion. Great Lent fosters and encourages complete repentance.

Through the prayers of St. Mary of Egypt, believers can draw strength and inspiration to repent. St. Mary established the definitive example to place resolute hope in Jesus Christ.

The remaining days of Great Lent hold life-changing value for all persons. Believers baptized into Christ can restore the healthy relationship with Christ by repenting.

**The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent. St. Mary of Egypt. March 20/April 2, 2023.
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

ST. MARY OF EGYPT. A HOMILY BY ST. TIKHON, PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW

St. Mary was born in Egypt in the second half of the 5th century. She did no wrong while she lived with her parents. But soon she found this life fatiguing, and her parents' loving efforts to bridle her will seemed unbearable. The young girl possessed natural beauty, which is often the first to tempt to into sin. Mary was no exception. At the age of twelve the girl ran away from her parents to the city of Alexandria; she was driven by irrepressible passions. What happens to a tiny, featherless baby bird when it suddenly imagines it is as strong as other birds and decides to leave the nest, where the mother has lovingly kept and cherished it? It inevitably falls out of the nest and dies. The same happened to Mary. It is not difficult to imagine how easily and with what strength the passions and temptations of the large city seized the young girl, who did not have anyone to instruct her or anything to restrain her, alone among strangers. Mary insatiably yielded to the allurements of city life. Soon, without any shame or fear, she rushed onto the path of evil and became notorious for her brazen unchastity. She spent seventeen years in this filth, gradually descending into the abyss of sin. She seemed to have lost even the merest hope for salvation. But the One Who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to seek one that has gone astray did not leave this sinner. The Grace of God watched the perishing woman, following her at every step, and tried to find any chance for her transformation. What seemed for her the end, the Wisdom of God turned into salvation.

Once Mary saw a crowd of people standing by the sea. Living in never ending pursuit of pleasures, an inveterate partaker in various entertainments, she hastened to the crowd to learn they were on their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the [Exaltation of the Holy Cross](#). As there were many young men in the crowd, Mary took it as an opportunity to sate her passion—she begged them to let her on board. She set off to Jerusalem remaining as sinful as she had been, defiling the sea just as she had defiled the earth. Finally, she arrived in Jerusalem. Here is Golgotha—each piece of the land is imbued with sanctity in this holy city. This should be the place where all passions fade away! However, Mary did not give up her dissolute living even here, she did not cease to ruin both herself and the others. But this was her last sacrifice to hell.

On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, when myriads of people inundated the Church of Resurrection. Mary, driven by a mere interest, followed them and rushed inside. Something strange happened when she tried to enter the church—she was barred from doing so by an unseen force. At first she took it for a mere accident, but after she saw the others enter the Holy Sepulcher without any barriers while all her attempts remained futile, Mary began thinking it over. The Grace of God found the key to her soul at this very moment. Her conscience, which had been sleeping for so long, finally awoke—it dawned on her that it was not the crowd that barred her from venerating the holy place, but her own sins. She realized how disgusting she was. Mary began recalling all her sins, crying and striking herself on breast in terror.

Mary was crying and weeping bitterly, until she looked up to see an icon of the Theotokos on the wall. She instantly turned to the Mother of God with a fervent prayer, imploring her to let her come into the church and venerate the Holy Cross, promising that she would abandon her dissolute life forever. Full of hope and faith, Mary easily entered the church after the prayer and venerated the Life-Giving Cross. Mary glorified the Holy Virgin for the miracle and, guided by a voice from on high, headed for the Jordan desert.

Her life in the desert was extremely tough at the beginning. Mary had only three loaves of bread when she had come. As she lived in absolute solitude and had no other food but herbs, she suffered from hunger. But she missed the abundance of delicious, sweet food she had savored in Egypt. Here she was suffering and dying from thirst. Her tongue was attuned to repeat the lewd songs that had given her joy then. She recalled the uncontrolled pleasures she had been having. Mary toiled courageously to resist the filthy thoughts and evil inclinations, and repel various tempting images. Sometimes she fell down upon the earth exhausted; weeping, she begged the Holy Theotokos for intercession until she finally rose to her feet, until the heavenly light permeated her soul, instilling quietude. She lived seventeen years in these afflictions and suffering. After this came the time of spiritual peace, but St. Mary spent thirty more years fasting and praying in the desert. Reconciliation with the Lord and her own conscience, full purification of the soul and spiritual transformation ensued after the many years of *podvig*. Saint Zosimas, who by the Providence of God was to discover St. Mary in the desert, found her in the flesh that scarcely assimilated our hard bodies. Mary could cross the Jordan walking on the water, she ascended to the air when praying, and she was endowed with the gift of clairvoyance and could foresee the future.

St. Mary peacefully reposed on April 1, 522, after partaking the Holy Mysteries of Christ. The life of St. Mary teaches us that there is no sin that could overcome the mercy of God, there is no abyss of dissoluteness that we could not rise from by the grace of God and by taking the path of faith and repentance. What we need is to be attentive to hear the voice of divine grace that calls us to transformation. We should follow the saving thought of abandoning sin and giving up our sinful life wherever and whenever it embraces us. We will obviously not leave for a desert, as St. Mary did (the example of her life is truly wonderful), but we should fight our sins and passions despite everything. May St. Mary of Egypt, through her prayers, help us succeed!

Archimandrite Tikhon (Bellavin)

Services this Week

- ❖ **Friday (April 07th) The Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary - 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy - Confession**
- ❖ **Saturday (April 8th) Lazarus Saturday – Vrbica – Vesper Service - Sanctification of palms and pussy willows and procession following Vespers. 06:00 PM**
- ❖ **6th SUNDAY OF THE LENT (April 9th) - ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN JERUSALEM- PALM SUNDAY - 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

Donations March 26, 2023

Offering - \$ 985.00 Candles - \$49.00
Dues \$50 Donations - \$100.00

Large Candles

In Memory of Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich
In Memory of Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
In Memory of Vinny Czubak from Jeannette Czubak
In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell
In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak
In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas

Last Fish Fry!!!!!!
Friday, April 7, 2023
Please see Donna or Suzette for the work schedule!

CHOIR NEWS

The choir will be selling homemade posno soup and pogaca throughout Lent every Sunday for \$10 (Quart of soup & a pogaca) Bowls of soup are also available following Divine Liturgy for a donation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, April 9th – Palm Sunday

Sunday, April 16th – PASCHA!

Sunday, May 21st – Anniversary Celebration

Polka-Fest June 2-4, 2023

Band of Brothers – July 13-15 & 19-22, 2023

Taste of Serbia – August 12, 2023

Slavic Fest – September 15-16, 2023