

**Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church**  
*971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905*  
**Rev. Presbyterian Dragan Vukovic**  
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**The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent**  
**(04.06.2025.)**

**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)**

## **The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent St. Mary of Egypt**

God's Holy Church has come to the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent. The time of Great Lent is rapidly approaching the conclusion. In another week, Great and Holy Week will arrive.

St. Mark's Gospel for today describes the harsh treatment Jesus would receive that would conclude with His death. Jesus' Resurrection is mentioned in St. Mark's Gospel and is the basis of hope that guides believers through Great Lent.

Repentance is the primary theme and expectation for believers in the Church during Great Lent. Wise and faithful believers welcome Great Lent as the opportunity to invest in the Kingdom of God.

Great Lent is the time each year to seriously repent and draw closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lenten journey is the time to grow in Jesus Christ. Believers are to firmly unite and remain united with Jesus Christ.

St. Mary of Egypt is commemorated on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent each year. St. Mary is a model of repentance. Her life of sin was cast aside and firmly rejected. She embraced full renewal in Jesus Christ through repentance.

St. Mary of Egypt moved from being a blatant sinner to becoming a saint in God's Holy Church. St. Mary's life is proof that new life in Jesus Christ is certainly possible.

St. Mary of Egypt is an enduring symbol of hope for believers fighting with sinfulness and desiring to become "new" in Jesus Christ. Sinners in every century draw inspiration from St. Mary's repentance.

The remaining days of Great Lent are valuable moments of time to be used in ways beneficial to the soul and to the glory of God. Each day believers can turn to Jesus Christ in prayer and repentance. Each day believers can seek God's mercy.

The Divine services of the Church lead believers throughout Great Lent. The Divine services nourish and instruct believers. The Holy Gospel proclamations and the Precious Body and Blood of Christ nourish and strengthen believers.

During Great Lent believers are to examine their hearts, minds and souls and determine if they are filled with Jesus Christ. Sin is to be firmly repudiated during Great Lent. Jesus Christ is to be embraced, confessed and glorified in life.

The hunger in the soul welcomes Great Lent. The hunger in the soul is nourished in Great Lent. Beseeking the intercessory prayers of St. Mary of Egypt is a way to facilitate personal repentance.

Today is the day to repent. Now is the time to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. Reach out in confidence to the Lord. Cry from the depths of the heart and soul for God's mercy.

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**The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent. St. Mary of Egypt. Venerable Father Zachariah the Recluse.; St. Irinej of Backa. Forefeast of the Annunciation. March 24/April 6, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## LAUDATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS



*Schema-Igumen Ignaty (Kryukov)*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Today, on the Saturday of the fifth week of Lent, the Holy Church praises the Most Holy Theotokos in a special, solemn way. The service of this day is different from any other one. Those who attended Matins yesterday heard the reading and singing the [Akathist hymn to the Mother](#)

of God, alternated with kathismas and the Canon. This festal service includes the solemn singing of the Akathist to the Mother of God, which is why the service is called the “Laudation of the Most Holy Theotokos”.

What is an akathist hymn? The Greek word “akathistos” translates as “unseated,” “standing,” that is, a hymn sung standing. The appearance of this akathist is traditionally associated with events that took place in Constantinople in the seventh century A.D. The city was surrounded by foreigners, and it seemed that nothing could help its inhabitants. Feeling the insufficiency of their strength, people turned to God and the Queen of Heaven in prayer, and help was not long in coming—the enemy was miraculously defeated.

In memory of the victory, the God-loving residents of the city of Constantinople celebrated thanksgiving; they sang hymns of praise in honor of the Mother of God all night long (before that, they used to sit while singing the hymn). From that time on, in memory of that great miracle, the feast of the Praise of the Most Holy Theotokos was established. The miraculous deliverance of the inhabitants of Constantinople took place during Lent, which is why the Akathist composed later was prescribed to be sung on the fifth Saturday of Lent. This first and most perfect of the akathists was composed at the same time—in the seventh century, on the basis of earlier kontakia, which celebrated the events of the Annunciation of the Mother of God and the Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Holy Church established a service to celebrate and give praise to the Most Holy Theotokos while standing. Since then, this Akathist hymn has been read during Lent at services for the affirmation of the penitents, in the hope of the intercession of the Mother of God, Who, by delivering us from visible enemies, is all the more willing to help us in the fight against invisible foes.

As mentioned above, the sublime, poetic, divinely inspired virtue of the Akathist is apparently explained by the fact that it is based on more ancient kontakia and Patristic traditions that sing of the Mother of God. We do not know what kind of kontakia they were, but there is a surviving historical document in which praises are rendered to the Most Holy Theotokos with amazing power. It is a letter from a disciple of the Apostle Paul, Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite, addressed to the Apostle Peter.

He wrote that when he was introduced to the supreme presence of the Virgin and saw Her radiant face, his heart was filled with such inexplicable joy and fullness of bliss, that if he had not been well instructed in the basics of the true faith, he would have considered Her a deity. The author says that if the contemplation had lasted a little longer, his soul would have separated from his body. He partook fully of the bliss of the age to come, and this was only a momentary contemplation of the Most Pure Virgin.

And as if continuing this contemplation in our time, one Church author and preacher, telling us about this event, exclaimed, “What a great reward St. John the Theologian received at the Cross from the Lord Who said, *Behold thy Mother* (Jn. 19:27), that in subsequent years he was always close to Her, protected Her, took care of Her, and was therefore always worthy to contemplate

Her Most Pure Face; he always heard Her voice, which has the ability to soften hearts and raise even the most inveterate sinners to eternal life.”

Brothers and sisters, on this day it becomes us to read the Akathist hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos with special zeal and reverence, and offer praise and thanksgiving to the Most Pure Virgin in words taken from it. Everyone can find words that resonate in their hearts. For example, here are words from Ikos 7:

Rejoice, Thou Who gavest birth to the Guide of those astray!

Rejoice, supplication before the Righteous Judge:

Rejoice, forgiveness of many sinners!

Rejoice, robe of boldness for the naked:

Rejoice, love that vanquisheth all desire!

Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded!

Or Kontakion 1:

To Thee, the Champion Leader, we Thy servants dedicate a feast of victory and of thanksgiving as ones rescued out of sufferings, O Theotokos: but as Thou art one with might which is invincible, from all dangers that can be do Thou deliver us, that we may cry to Thee: Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!

Amen.

*Schema-Igumen Ignaty (Kryukov)*

# Services this Week

- **Monday (04.07.2025.)**
  - **The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
- **Lazarus Saturday – (04.12.2025.)**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
  - **Vrbica – Vesper Service –**  
**Sanctification of palms and procession**  
**following Vespers 06:00 PM.**
- **6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – Palm Sunday (04.13.2025.)**
  - **Entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.*

**Donations March 30, 2025**

**Offering – \$1,398.00      Candles – \$67.00      Dues – \$50**

**Large Candles**

**IMO Jeffrey Smith – 42 years of marriage from wife, Mariam Smith  
IMO Shawn Novatny from Joe & Rose Novatny  
IMO Shawn Novatny from Mike & Lindy Bakos  
IMO Shawn Novatny from Tom & Carole McAllister  
IMO Natalie Ofsanko from Olga Bulich  
IMO Linda Palmer from Olga Bulich**

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**Nut and Apricot, and Rolls are available! – \$15**

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**Thanks to all our WONDERFUL volunteers at the Fish Fry  
Please see Suzette to sign up for your Fish Fry Slot**

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**Sarma Sale!!!!**

**Please fill-out the order form located in the church hall  
or see Suzette for more information.**

**\$15/ ½ dozen – \$30/ dozen**

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**LENTEN VESPERS  
TODAY, SUNDAY APRIL 6<sup>th</sup>  
5:00 PM  
Lenten Dinner to follow**

# **UPCOMING EVENTS**

## **Lenten Fish Fries**

Friday, March 7th to Friday April 11, 2025

## **Lenten Vespers**

**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – St. Mary of Egypt**

Sunday, April 6, 2025 – 5:00 PM

**\* Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 13, 2025**

**\* PASCHA! – Sunday, April 20, 2025**

**\* St. Nicholas Anniversary Celebration–**

Sunday, May 18, 2025

**\* Polka Fest – May 30, – June 1, 2025**

**\* Band of Brothers – July 10–12 & 16–19,2025**

**\* Taste of Serbia – Saturday, August 9, 2025**

**\* Johnstown Slavic Festival –**

September 19–20, 2025