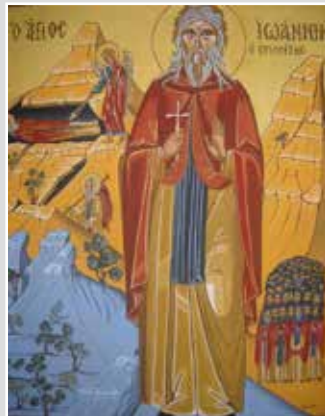




# SAINTS OF THE DAY

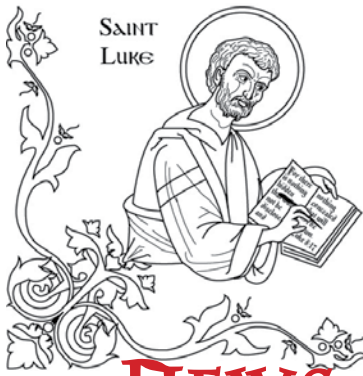
**Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026 • 5th Sunday of Lent  
Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt**

Martyrs Jonas and Barachisius, and companions, in Persia, under Shapur II (330): Abibus, Zanithas, Elias (Helias), Lazarus, Mares, Maruthas, Narses, Sabbas, Simiathos; Saint Mark the Confessor, Bishop of Arethusa (364); Hieromartyr Cyril, Deacon, of Heliopolis, and others, who suffered under Julian the Apostate (364); **Venerable John of Egypt**, anchorite (4th century); Saint Diadochos of Photiki, Bishop of Photike in Old Epirus, whose works are included in the Philokalia (ca. 486);



Venerable Hesychios the Sinaite, Abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai (7th century); Saint Eustathius the Confessor, Bishop of Kios in Bithynia (9th century); Martyr Secundus, a noble from Asti in Piedmont in Italy and an officer in the imperial army, beheaded under Hadrian (119); Saints Armogastes and Companions (c. 460); Saints Gwynllyw and Gwladys, parents of St. Cadoc (5th century); Saint Firminus, Bishop of Viviers in France (6th century); Saint Lasar, a nun in Ireland and niece of St Forchera (6th century); Saint Eustasius of Luxeuil, Abbot of Luxeuil (625); Venerable Jonah (1480), Mark (15th century), and Bassa of the Pskov-Caves Monastery; Saint Nicetas, desert-dweller of the Roslavl Forests, near Bryansk (1793); New Martyrs Priest Paul Voinarsky, and brothers Paul and Alexis Kiryan, of the Crimea (1919); New Hieromartyr Michael Victorov, Archpriest, of Boloshnevo, Ryazan (1933).

A detailed description of the cover icon can be found on our website,  
[www.stlukeanniston.org](http://www.stlukeanniston.org)



# ST. LUKE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America

1415 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, AL 36207

The Very Rev. Archpriest Father Basil Henry

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<https://stlukeanniston.org>

## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **We welcome our visitors.** Please join us for a potluck meal after Liturgy so you can get to know us. Communion is for prepared Orthodox Christians but everyone is welcome to the blessed bread an Altar Server will offer.
- Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things to all Thy servants who are celebrating birthdays, namesdays and anniversaries, and preserve them for **MANY YEARS!**
- May God grant Many Years to **Michaela** and **Gabriella**, **Maria** and **Michael** who received the Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation yesterday.
- This week is the last Presanctified Liturgy of the Lenten season. The **schedule** for **Holy Week** is on the back of the bulletin.
- We are having a **cleaning day** next Saturday after Liturgy to beautify our temple for Pascha.
- After Liturgy we will have a **pannikhida** for the anniversary of **Paul Goldman's** repose.
- Please look over the **sign-up sheets** in the dining room for Pascha and Holy Week preparations.

### This Week's Fasting, Services and Scripture Readings Schedule

Mon., 3/30	Tues., 3/31	Wed., 4/1	Thurs., 4/2	Fri., 4/3	Sat., 4/4	Sun., 4/5
<b>Great Lent</b>						<b>Holy Week</b>
					Divine Liturgy, 9 a.m.	Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.
		Presanctified, 4 p.m.		Great Vespers, 4 p.m.	Great Vespers, 4 p.m.	Procession w/ Palms
Genesis 27:1-41	Genesis 31:3-16	Genesis 43:26-31, 45:1-16	Genesis 46:1-7	Genesis 49:33-50:26	Hebrews 12:28-13:8	Philippians 4:4-9
Prov. 19:16-25	Proverbs 21:3-21	Prov. 21:23-22:4	Prov. 23:15-24:5	Proverbs 31:8-31	John 11:1-45	John 12:1-18
Isaiah 48:17-49:4	Isaiah 49:6-10	Isaiah 58:1-11	Isaiah 65:8-16	Isaiah 66:10-24		

Service times are subject to change. Any questions, text Subdeacon Nicholas @ (256) 343-1141 or [nmbailey@me.com](mailto:nmbailey@me.com).

You can also visit [stlukeanniston.org](https://stlukeanniston.org) for the latest schedule.

# Divine Liturgy

of St. Basil the Great

## Troparia/Kontakia

REFER TO PAGE 6 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

### Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 1)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, \* while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, \* Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, \* granting life to the world. \* The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: \* “Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! \* Glory to Thy Kingdom! \*\* Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou Who lovest mankind!”

### Troparion to St. Luke the Evangelist (Tone 5)

The Holy Apostle, the all-hymned Luke, \* who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ \* as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles \* and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ, \* let us praise with sacred hymns \* as a Physician who healeth the infirmities of man \* and the ailments of nature, \* who cleanseth spiritual wounds \*\*\* and prayeth unceasingly for our souls.

### Troparion for St. Mary of Egypt (Tone 8)

The image of God was truly preserved in you, O Mother, \* for you took up the Cross and followed Christ. \* By so doing, you taught us to disregard the flesh for it passes away; \* but to care instead for the soul, for it is immortal. \*\* Therefore your spirit, O holy Mother Mary, rejoices with the angels.

### Kontakion to St. Luke the Evangelist (Tone 2)

Thou becamest a disciple of God the Word, \* with Paul thou didst enlighten all the world, \* casting out its darkness \*\*\* by composing the Holy Gospel of Christ.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...*

### Kontakion for St. Mary of Egypt (Tone 3)

Having been a sinful woman, \* thou becamest through repentance a bride of Christ. \* Having attained angelic life, \* thou didst defeat demons with the weapon of the Cross. \*\* Therefore, O most glorious Mary, thou art a bride of the Kingdom.

*Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

### Kontakion for our Steadfast Protectress (Tone 6)

Steadfast Protectress of Christians, \* constant Advocate before the Creator; \* despise not the entreating cries of us sinners, \* but in thy goodness come speedily to help us who call on thee in faith. \* Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, \*\* O Theotokos, for thou dost always protect those who honor thee!



# Scripture Readings

REFER TO PAGES 7-9 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

## Prokeimenon

**Tone 1**

*(for the Resurrection)*

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on Thee!

*V. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!*

**Tone 4**

*(for St. Mary of Egypt)*

*V: God is wonderful in His saints, the God of Israel.*

## The Epistle Reading

**Hebrews 9:11-14**

*(for the Resurrection)*

*Brethren*, Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

**Galatians 3:23-29**

*(for St. Mary of Egypt)*

*Brethren*, before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

## Alleluia

**Tone 1**

*(for the Resurrection)*

*V. God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me.*

*V. He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever.*

**Tone 1**

*(for St. Mary of Egypt)*

*V: I waited patiently for the Lord, and He attended to me and heard my supplication.*

## The Gospel Reading

**Mark 10:32-45**

*(for the Resurrection)*

*At that time:* Jesus taking the twelve again, began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock

him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise.” And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant of James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Luke 7:36-50

*(for St. Mary of Egypt)*

*At that time:* One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house, and took his place at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “What is it, Teacher?” “A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more.”

And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

## Theotokion

*(for the Liturgy of St. Basil)*

REFER TO PAGES 21-22 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

*All of creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace:  
the assembly of Angels and the race of men.  
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,  
the glory of virgins,  
from whom God was incarnate and became a Child:*

*our God before the ages.  
He made thy body into a throne,  
and thy womb He made more spacious than the heavens.  
All of creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace!!  
Glory to thee!*

## *Can Ye Drink of the Cup That I Drink of?*

**Mark 10:32b-45**

From *The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Mark*  
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

**32-34. And they were on the road 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.**

Why does He foretell the things that will happen to Him? To prepare and to calm the minds of the disciples, so that having heard of these things beforehand they would more easily endure them, and not be overwhelmed all at once in their anguish. He also foretold these things so that they would know that He suffered them of His own will. Although He knows these things beforehand, and is able to flee from them, He does not do so, thus making it abundantly clear that He willingly gives Himself over to His sufferings. The Lord takes the disciples aside privately to speak with them alone. For His Passion is a mystery to be revealed only to those closest to Him. And this is why on the road He leads the way before them all, wanting to separate His disciples from the rest of the crowd. But also, by leading the way, He shows that He hastens to His Passion, and does not evade His death which is for our salvation. Although He lists all these sorrowful things that will happen, yet there is one consolation, that He will rise on the third day.

**35-39. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we want that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask. And He said unto them, What do ye want 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.**

Another Evangelist says that the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Christ (Mt. 20:20). It is likely that both events took place. The apostles were embarrassed, and had their mother go first, and then they themselves approached Christ in private. This is what the Evangelist means here when he says that they *come unto Him*, that they approach Him in private, apart from the others. Let us learn what it was they asked. They thought that His going up to Jerusalem meant that He was going to ascend the throne of an earthly kingdom, and that after He had become king He would suffer those things which He said He would suffer. With this understanding, they are asking to sit at His right hand and His left. This is why the Lord rebukes them for asking for something foolish. *Ye know not what ye ask*, He says. You are thinking that My kingdom is an earthly kingdom, and you are asking for an earthly throne. But it is not so; rather, these things are beyond your understanding. To sit at My right hand is something so great that it goes beyond what even the angelic hosts can do. You are craving honor and glory, but I am calling you to die. By baptism and cup He means the cross. For a cup of wine is something a man gladly accepts, and it quickly puts him to sleep. And baptism is something which is done to cleanse sins. But James and John gave their promise without understanding what He said, thinking that He was speaking of an actual cup of wine, and the washing of the body which the Jews performed before they ate.



**39-40. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized with shall ye be baptized: but to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.**

Martyrdom, He is saying, will be yours, and you will die for Truth's sake. (For bold confession of the Truth James was beheaded in Jerusalem in 45 AD, and John was cruelly tortured in Rome and then exiled to the island of Patmos. Tr.) But to sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to give. Two questions may be asked: first, has it been prepared for anyone to sit there? Second, is the Master of all unable to bestow this seat? In answer we say that no one will sit at His right or at His left. Although in many places of Scripture you hear mention of sitting upon a seat in heaven (Mt. 19:28, Lk. 13:29, Eph. 2:6, etc.), understand that this refers to great honor, not a chair. *It is not Mine to give* has this meaning: it is not for Me, the Just Judge, to bestow this honor as a favor, for that would not be just. Instead, this honor has been prepared for those who have contested and struggled for it. It is as if a just king had set a day for a contest of athletes, and then some of his friends come to him and say, "Give us the crowns." The king would say, "The crowns are not mine to give; rather, a crown is prepared for that contestant who shall compete and win." So too with you, O sons of Zebedee, you shall be martyrs for My sake; but if there is one who, along with martyrdom, exceeds you in every virtue, he shall precede you in honor.

**41-45. 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 thought to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.**

The disciples are still subject to human weaknesses, and here they are stung with envy. This is why the ten were displeased with the two. When did they begin to be indignant? When they realized they had not been received by the Lord, and thought they had been pushed away. As long as the ten were shown honor by the Lord, it did not bother them that the Lord held these two in special honor. But here when they see these two asking for honor, the others could no longer endure it. Although they act in this imperfect way now, later you will see each one of them conceding the first place of honor to the other. Christ heals them, first calming them by calling them to Himself, and then showing them that to grasp for honors and to desire the chief place is the behavior of Gentiles. For the Gentile princes lord it over others in a tyrannical and domineering manner. But it is not so with My disciples, He says; instead let him who would be great serve all the others, for the mark of a great soul is to endure all things and to serve everyone. The example of this is near at hand: the Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve, and, what is even greater, He came to give His life as a ransom for many. What could be greater and more marvelous than a man who not only serves, but even dies for the sake of the one he serves? Yet the Lords serving and His humble lowering of Himself to be with us has become the exaltation and the glory of Him and all creation. Before He became man, He was known only to the angels; but after His incarnation and crucifixion, His glory is even greater and He reigns over all the earth.

## ***Christ's Sacrifice***

### **Hebrews 9:11-14**

From *The Explanation of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews*  
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

**9:11. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come.** "The ancient worship did not usher us into heaven. *But Christ being come*, he entered into the sanctuary once and for all." That is the complete thought. Paul does not say, "*Christ having become an high priest*," but, *being come an high priest*, meaning,

“he came for this very purpose.” He did not first *come*, and then just happen to become *an high priest*. The goal of his *coming* to earth was his priesthood. Paul also does not say, “an high priest of sacrifices,” but, of good things to come. Words cannot accurately express the whole of it, so Paul simply and indiscriminately calls it “good things that *coming* to earth was his priesthood. Paul also does not say, “*an high priest of sacrifices*,” but, *of good things to come*. Words cannot accurately express the whole of it, so Paul simply and indiscriminately calls it “*good things* that will come to us.” Moreover, they are *good things to come* in relation to the time of the law, just as Paul refers to *the time then present*, so now he refers to the time of Christ as *coming*, either in contrast to Christ, or to the mysteries that shall be revealed to us in the age *to come*. **By a greater and more perfect tabernacle.** Here Paul speaks of Christ’s flesh, *greater* even as God the Word and all the power of the Spirit that dwells within it is *greater: God giveth not the Spirit by measure.* (JOHN 3:34) It is *more perfect* in that it achieves *more perfect* things. **Not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation.\*** The heretics pounce on this passage, claiming that Christ’s body is heavenly and ethereal. But if the apostle thought that it was heavenly and ethereal, why did he say: *not of this creation?* Heaven is not outside of the realm of creation. So what does he mean? He means that the *hands* of Bezalel’s craftsmen *made* the old tabernacle, but the tabernacle of God the Word was composed by the Spirit. That is why Paul says that it is *not of this creation*, meaning, “not of these created things, but spiritual and divine. No created thing has within itself God the Word *in person* [*kath hypostasin*]; but that tabernacle is *joined in hypostatic union* [*kath hypostasin henoto*] with him. In terms of its material, then, the body of the Lord was like us and shared our nature. In terms of its composition, though it defies our understanding, it was formed from the immaculate blood of the holy Virgin and *joined in hypostatic union* [*kath hypostasin henoto*] with God the Word.” Alternatively, since the material of the ancient tabernacle was wood, animal skins, gold, silver, bronze, and various kinds of cloth, the apostle could be referring to that when he says: “*not of this creation*, which the ancient tabernacle required.” At any rate, Paul casts this as a comparison, showing how Christ is superior. He regularly refers to Christ’s body as a *tabernacle* [*skene*], as he does here, because the only-begotten came to *dwelt* [*skenoo*] in it, and as a “veil,” because it conceals his divinity. He refers to heaven with the same terms: “tabernacle,” because that is where the high priest is, and a “veil,” because it separates us from the holy place.



**9:12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood.** Observe how Christ’s sacrifice is different and superior, as much as divine *blood* is greater than that of the animals with who the high priest under the law would enter. **He entered in once into the holy place.** That means, “*into* heaven.” **Having found\*\* eternal redemption for us.** “He did not secure temporary purification, like the high priests under the law, but *eternal redemption* for the sins of our souls.” Alternatively, it could mean: “When *he entered in once*, by his single *entrance* he secured an *everlasting* benefit for us.” Note that Paul says he *found eternal redemption*, using the term for when a thing happens unexpectedly. For our deliverance was impossible, but he *found* it nonetheless.’

**9:13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.** Paul knows

that many people might consider it implausible that Christ could offer eternal redemption through a single sacrifice and one shedding of blood, so he builds a case for it here and shows that it corresponds plausibly to the Jews’ own beliefs: “If you already believed that you could be *purified* by *sprinkling of the blood of an heifer* and by its *ashes* mingled with water (for the *ashes* were kept for cleansing the *unclean*, meaning, ‘the impure’), then why should the *blood* of Christ not be able to *purify* your souls?” Observe his discretion: he

does not say that *the blood of goats* “purifieth,” but rather, *sanctifieth*. Paul does not share their opinions about the law he is merely trying to achieve his ends: “If *the blood of a goat* could grant *purification*, as you believe, then how much more will the *blood of Christ* grant *sanctification* [*hagiazō*]!” Paul is not saying this to elevate Jewish beliefs—note how he continues: *to the purifying of the flesh*. “It was *holy* [*hagios*] not for *purifying* the soul, but *the flesh*.”

**9:14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.** “It was not just any high priest who *offered Christ*, but rather he *offered himself*. Not *through* fire, like the heifers, but *through the eternal Spirit*, that he might make his grace and redemption *eternal* as well. Moreover, he *offered himself without spot*, meaning, ‘without sin,’ even as the heifer in the Old Testament was required to be *without spot*. (NUM 19:2) **Purge your conscience from dead works.** Before, Paul had merely said that the blood *sanctifieth*, and added, *to the purifying of the flesh*. But here he says, *purge*, immediately making it plain that it is superior. Moreover, it *purges your conscience*, meaning, “the inner man.” This was also not present before; back then, whoever touched a dead body could be *purged*, but now, we are *purged from dead works* that can truly defile us and draw us away from God. **To serve the living and true\*\*\* God?** “So the one who touches *dead works* does not *serve the living and true God*, but makes a *god* out of the *works* that he has chosen. In this way, the glutton makes a *god* out of his own belly. (PHIL 3:19) *Dead works* are those that are not only alien to eternal life, but are detestable to practice in and of themselves. They are false, for they entice us by appearing sweet, when they are not really so.”

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\* KJV: building. The word *ktisis* can refer to “construction” or “creation”.

\*\*KJV: *obtained*.

\*\*\* KJV: *the living God*. Textual variant.

## *Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt*

**The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt, one of the Church’s most powerful examples of repentance.** Her feast day is actually April 1st, but we commemorate her on this Sunday because her life shows us what Lent is really about.

Mary’s story is extreme. She left home in Egypt at twelve and spent seventeen years in Alexandria living as a prostitute. She didn’t charge money. She just wanted the sin itself. When pilgrims headed to Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, she went along, paying for her passage by seducing the sailors. She had no interest in the holy sites. She just wanted more men.

But something happened at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. She tried to enter with the crowd and couldn’t. An invisible force held her back while everyone else walked through. Three times she tried. Three times she failed.

She saw an icon of the Theotokos near the door and it hit her: she was filthy, and she couldn’t enter because of what she’d become. She prayed to the Mother of God, weeping, promising to change her entire life if she could just venerate the Cross. She tried the door again. This time she walked right in.

After venerating the Cross, she heard a voice telling her to cross the Jordan and she’d find rest. She received communion at a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, bought three loaves of bread, and walked into the Judean desert. She stayed there forty-seven years.

The first seventeen years were hell. She was tormented by memories of her former life, by the same passions that had ruled her in Alexandria. She survived on wild herbs. Her clothes disintegrated. But she prayed constantly, and slowly the passions lost their grip. The last thirty years brought peace she'd never imagined possible.

An old monk named Zosimas found her during one of his Lenten retreats into the wilderness. He saw a figure in the distance, dark from the sun, hair white and wild. When he approached, she asked him to throw her his cloak because she was naked. Then she told him her name and asked him to pray for her. She knew who he was without being told. She recited the Creed and the Lord's Prayer perfectly, though she'd never learned to read and hadn't seen another human in decades.



She asked Zosimas to return the next year on Holy Thursday and bring her communion. He did. She met him at the Jordan, made the sign of the cross, and walked across the water to receive the Holy Mysteries. Then she walked back across and disappeared into the desert.

When Zosimas returned the following year, he found her body prostrate in prayer, already dead. Next to her, written in the sand: "Abba Zosimas, bury the body of humble Mary here. I died on the very day I received the Holy Mysteries." The date she'd written was April 1st. A lion appeared and helped him dig her grave.

We read this whole story during Lent, usually on the Thursday evening before the Fifth Sunday when we sing the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. Then on Sunday we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil and remember her again. It's a lot of Mary of Egypt in one week, and that's intentional.

Her life answers the question every one of us carries into Lent: Can I really change? We're not talking about minor adjustments. We're talking about the kind of transformation that seems impossible. Seventeen years of deliberate, chosen sin, and then forty-seven years of repentance so complete that she became a saint. If that's possible, then none of us is beyond hope.

The Church puts her story right here, in the final stretch before Holy Week, because we need to see what repentance actually looks like. It's not feeling bad about yourself. It's not making promises you'll break by Pascha. It's a total reorientation of your life toward God, sustained over years, through suffering and temptation and the slow work of grace.

Mary shows us that the door is never locked. She couldn't enter the church because of her sins, but the moment she turned to the Theotokos in genuine repentance, the door opened. That's how it works. God doesn't bar the door. We do, by clinging to our sins. And the moment we let go, we're in.

If you've never heard her full story read aloud, try to make it to the service when we sing the Great Canon. Fr. Thomas Hopko has a wonderful podcast about her on Ancient Faith Radio if you want to hear more ([https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/st\\_mary\\_of\\_egypt/](https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/st_mary_of_egypt/)). Her life is long and strange and beautiful, and it'll change how you think about Lent.

We're almost to Holy Week. St. Mary of Egypt walked into the desert with three loaves of bread and stayed forty-seven years. We can make it another couple of weeks.,

<https://stmichaeltx.org/orthodox-101/the-church-calendar/what-is-the-sunday-of-st-mary-of-egypt/>

# HOLY WEEK 2026

St. Luke Orthodox Church • Anniston, Alabama



## LAZARUS SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH

Divine Liturgy 9 am

Great Vespers 4 pm

## PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 5TH

Divine Liturgy 10 am

## HOLY MONDAY, APRIL 6TH

Bridegroom Matins 9 am

## HOLY TUESDAY, APRIL 7TH

Bridegroom Matins 9 am

## HOLY WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8TH

Bridegroom Matins 9 am

## HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 9TH

Vesperal Liturgy 8 AM

*The Last Supper*

12 Passion Gospels 4 PM

*The Crucifixion*

## HOLY FRIDAY, APRIL 10TH

Royal Hours 8 am

Vespers w/Procession 3 pm

*The Burial*

Lamentations 4 pm

*The Praises*

## HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 11TH

Vesperal Liturgy 8 AM

Holy Pascha 11<sup>:30</sup> PM

*Nocturns, Matins & Divine Liturgy*

*followed by blessing of*

*Pascha Baskets & Feast*

## HOLY PASCHA, APRIL 12TH

**NO MORNING LITURGY!**

Agape Vespers 3 PM

*followed by Picnic & Egg Hunt*