



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 10—16 April 2022

SUNDAY 10 APRIL

5th Sunday of Lent, St Mary of Egypt, Mark 10: 32-45

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 6.30pm Vespers of Forgiveness at Parish of St Vasilios, Brunswick

2021 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am until Church dismissal.

We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment.

Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.

MONDAY 11 APRIL

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

TUESDAY 12 APRIL

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL

- 8.00am
Service of Pre-sanctified Liturgy
- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

THURSDAY 14 APRIL

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline
- 7.30—8.30pm

➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP

ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME

Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment.

: In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church

FRIDAY 15 APRIL

- 5.00pm
Service of Small Compline and Canon of Lazarus

SATURDAY 16 APRIL *Saturday of Lazarus*

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 17 APRIL

GOSPEL READING: John 12: 1-18
EPISTLE READING: Philip. 4: 4-9

Telephone Contact Numbers

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Website:
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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

"To repent is not to look downwards at my own shortcomings, but upwards at God's Love. It is not to look backwards with self-reproach but forward with trustfulness. It is to see not what I have failed to be, but what by the Grace of Christ I might yet become."



Saint John Climacus

Lazarus Saturday

"Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you have heard me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that you did send me.'

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth."

(John 11:38-44)

Saturday of Lazarus

On the Saturday before Holy Week, the Orthodox Church commemorates a major feast of the year, the miracle of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. Here, at the end of Great Lent and the forty days of fasting and penitence, the Church combines this celebration with that of Palm Sunday.

In triumph and joy the Church bears witness to the power of Christ over death and exalts Him as King before entering the most solemn week of the year, one that leads the faithful in remembrance of His suffering and death and concludes with the great and glorious Feast of Pascha.

Today is the fifth Sunday of Great Lent and we have before us the final week of the fast before Palm Sunday and Holy Week and the radiant feast of the Resurrection of our Lord. Just as a marathon runner, who can finally see the finish line, gains a renewed burst of strength – so let us renew and strengthen our resolve to spend the remaining days of this special and holy season of Great Lent with increased effort to discipline ourselves and with greater spiritual concentration

In today's Holy Gospel we have before us a conversation which takes place between Christ and His disciples as they prepare to go to Jerusalem. Our Lord knows that His time of suffering and sacrifice are at hand and He takes the opportunity to clearly foretell to the disciples that *'the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priest and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And on the third day He will rise again.'*

As we read this we think that nothing could be clearer... but, no, the disciples, who have witnessed Christ's great power and authority for the past three years cannot imagine that anything but the long-expected earthly kingdom and Christ's earthly triumph was at hand and so they began to jostle among themselves for the best seats next to the expected throne of Christ.

But what elevated place awaited our Lord in Jerusalem? The high place which awaited Jesus was upon the hill of Golgotha, being nailed upon a cross. Our Lord tells the disciples that they do not know what they are asking... *'are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'* This is the cup of sorrow and the baptism of blood.

Our Lord goes on to correct their thoughts and to once again teach them that the ways of heaven are not the ways of the world. He tells 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 as a ransom for many.'*

Our Lord tells us that if we wish to be great, we must become the servant of all. Christ's kingdom is surely not of this world, for it is the humble who shall be exalted, it is the meek who shall be glorified, it is he who loses his life that shall save it, it is he who would die to this world that might receive abundant life.

This repentant spirit is represented most clearly in the great saint whom we commemorate today, St Mary of Egypt. Those who were here for the services on Wednesday evening had the privilege of hearing her life, I will give a quick summary here.

St Mary lived in the latter half of the 4th century and was known throughout Alexandria as a notorious prostitute. One year, she joined a large group of people on board a ship heading to Jerusalem. Most of the passengers were pilgrims making their way to the Holy Land in preparation for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Mary's purposes for boarding the ship and being in the proximity of so many people were far less honourable. Having arrived, she persisted in her sinful ways and even joined the throngs of people heading toward the Church of Holy Sepulchre on the day of the feast. However, when she attempted to enter the threshold of the church, she was prevented from entering by some invisible force. She tried several times to cross the threshold of the church but was repelled by this force each time. This striking manifestation of her unworthiness due to her sins struck deep into the heart of St Mary and she retired into a corner of the courtyard where she wept bitter tears. She realized her shame and sin and pleaded with the Most Holy Mother of God that if she would be permitted to enter into the church to venerate the precious wood of the Holy Cross, she would spend the rest of her life in repentance and service to God. She approached the threshold again and, this time, was able to enter without any hindrance at all. She venerated the Holy Cross and, afterwards, retired into the desert to work out her salvation.

St Mary lived alone and in obscurity for nearly fifty years as a hermit in the wilds of the desert. Only the Lord knows of her prayers and tears throughout this time. At the end of her life, a priestmonk by the name of Zosimas happened upon St Mary and learned from her of her life. St Mary asked St Zosimas to bring to meet her in that same spot on the upcoming Holy and Great Thursday of that year, bringing to her the sacraments of our Lord's Body and Blood, that she might receive the joy of communion. St Zosima did bring her the Holy Gifts and St Mary received the Body and Blood of our Lord. When St Zosimas returned to this spot a year later, he discovered the body of St Mary, who had reposed shortly after receiving Holy Communion a year before.

St Mary of Egypt took that road of humility and repentance. From a worldly point of view, she had vanished into obscurity. But from the vantage point of heaven, she had indeed become great and her name is forever remembered among the faithful of the Church as a model of repentance and humility.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ... May we cultivate within ourselves at least a portion of that spirit of humility, having the courage to throw aside our masks of confidence and self-reliance and realizing that we are indeed simple servants of God, trusting in Him for divine strength. The more we focus on repentance, on humility, on serving others – God and our neighbours – the less aware and preoccupied we are with ourselves. And this selflessness is the beginning of our spiritual growth and life in Christ.

Our life here on earth is so very brief. It is given to us by the generous love of God so that we may use this time, not to acquire anything earthly, but to acquire and cultivate love – for God and for others – that we may finally stand before God as one of His own. Love recognizing love. May God, through the prayers of our holy Mother Mary of Egypt, grant us the courage of humble repentance that is the seed to our spiritual growth.

The Life of St Mary teaches us many things

Perhaps the first and most obvious lesson we can learn from her is that we should never judge, never pre-judge. Who will be saved? It is impossible to answer this question, for it is never too late to repent, even for us. Humanly speaking, when we consider the life of Mary until her twenty-ninth year, we might think that salvation had become impossible for her. And yet the service to her calls her 'the greatest of saints'. Humanly speaking, we are condemned; but by the grace of God everything, including the height of repentance, is possible. No man has the right to judge another.