

appointed day on the shore of the river. He wondered how the old woman could cross the stormy waters, which were in spring flood. The hermit appeared on the opposite shore, and she made the sign of the Cross over the roaring waves, then walked firmly over them. Zosima fell at her feet in amazement.

"Priest of God!" exclaimed Mary. "Are you lowering the Holy Gifts before a sinner?" With joy and peace she took communion. Then she wept and prayed the prayer of St. Simeon: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." "Now I have another favor to ask," she said to Zosima. "Next year come to the place where we first met. Come, and you will see me again, for God wishes it." Then again she passed over the water and disappeared into the desert. The next year, Zosima went again to look for Mary in the desert. When he came to the old place, he

saw her body lying on the sand. She was dead. Zosima felt very sad and knelt down beside her, weeping. After a little while, he began to wonder where he should bury her body. Near her head he noticed something written in the sand. He went up to it and read: "Father Zosima! On the night of the Lord's passion, Holy Thursday, I went to my Savior. Bury my body here, and pray for Mary of Egypt." Father Zosima sang the funeral service, but did not feel strong enough to bury her body. Just at that moment a lion came out of the wood and began to dig a deep grave with his mighty claws. So Zosima and the lion together buried Mary's body, which had lain for a year in the desert.

Then Zosima returned to the monastery and told the monks the story of Mary, who had suffered so much to make up for her sins and to whom God had finally shown His love.

LOOKING AHEAD

Wednesday, April 1:	6:30pm Liturgy of PG
Friday, April 3:	9:00am 9th Hour and Liturgy of PG
Saturday, April 4:	9:30am Liturgy 6:30pm Vigil
Sunday, April 5:	9:30am Liturgy 6:30pm Matins

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ST. SPIRIDON ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

400 Yale Ave., Seattle, WA 98109



WEEKLY PUBLICATION

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Tone 1. St Mary of Egypt. Hieromartyr Mark, Bishop of Arethusa, Martyr Cyril the Deacon, of Heliopolis, and others who suffered under Julian the Apostate (ca. 364). Ven. John, Anchorite, of Egypt (4th c.). St. Eustathius the Confessor, Bishop of Bithynia (9th c.).

ST. MARY OF EGYPT

In the early years of the Christian Church, there were many holy men who left the cities and comforts of life and went into the desert to pray in solitude. Here they tried to forget the world and their own desires and submit their lives entirely to God's will. Some of the most holy and wise men, who gave much to the early Church, were among these desert fathers.

There were also monks who would leave their monasteries and go into the desert during Lent. One monk, Zosima, left his monastery on the River Jordan and went deep into the desert in the hope of finding a very religious hermit, a man who had devoted all his life to fasting and prayer. He hoped this holy man would tell him of the highest form of self-sacrifice and devotion to God.

One day, while he was praying, he

caught sight of something that looked like a human form, with long, silver-gray hair. He realized that he had found one of the holy hermits of the desert, but the person began to run from him. "Stop!" he cried. "Please stop and give me your blessing." At this the person turned and said, "Father Zosima! Come closer!"

As he approached, he saw that he had found a woman about eighty year old, her skin burned by the sun and long hair gray with age. This old woman began to tell him her story.

"My name is Mary of Alexandria," she said. "When I was young I was very rich and beautiful and, of course, I was very vain. I did not believe in God or in any morals. I used to say, 'I shall do just as I like, and no one will stop me.' I did not care that I was cruel or bad or

mocking so long as I was having a good time.

"Once, when I and my friends were looking for new pleasures, we sailed to Jerusalem with some pilgrims going to the Exultation of the Cross. While I was there, I noticed a great crowd of people moving toward the church, and I was anxious to see where they were going. The church had been built over the tomb of Christ. All the pilgrims were going into the church, and I was walking long with them, when suddenly I felt a blow pushing me away from the door. Again I tried to enter, and again something seemed to push me back. But why could I not enter? I could not understand. Could it be that my many sins were preventing me from entering the House of God?

"The minute I thought of this, I began to change. I stopped and saw and icon of the Virgin Mary, and the expression on her face made me ashamed. How could I hope to enter the presence of God when I had done so many bad things? I had never before stopped to think about what I should do but had only done whatever I wanted. How different my life had been from that of the Virgin Mary." The hold woman shuddered and wept as she recollected her younger years.

"Now, suddenly, I was disgusted with all my past life," she went on.

"How could I make up for so many mistakes? It was not enough to give up the way I used to live and become a Christian; the thought of my sins tormented me. Crying bitterly I knelt before the icon of the Virgin and begged for a chance to make up for my sins. God's voice came to me and told me, 'Go into the desert beyond the River Jordan.' That was almost fifty year ago.

"At first life was very hard in the desert," Mary continued. "I kept remembering my past life, my friends, the good times we had together, all the food and drink and fine things I used to have. Here, in the desert, it was hard to find even a sip of water to drink. I was very hungry, and the heat was unbearable. I was often sick and almost died. When I yearned for the comforts of my old life, I would lie on the ground and, in tears, I would beg the Lord to help me. Finally I felt great peace in my soul; the Lord gave me what I wanted. I had mourned so much for my wicked past that God finally comforted me."

"And where did you learn the Holy Scripture?" asked Zosima, who had listened with great interest to her story.

"God sent me wisdom," Mary answered. "I have never studied anything and have seen no living person since I crossed the River

Tone 1 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

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 of mankind!"

Tone 8 Troparion *(St Mary of Egypt)*

The image of God was truly preserved in thee, O Mother,
for thou tookest up the Cross and didst follow Christ.
By so doing, thou taughtest us to disregard the flesh for it
passes away;
but to care instead for the soul, for it is immortal.//
Therefore thy spirit, O holy Mother Mary, rejoices with the
angels.

Tone 3 Kontakion *(St Mary of Egypt)*

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.

Jordan." She thought for a moment, do not go into the desert as you then turned to Zosima again. usually do, but on Holy Thursday

wait for me by the River Jordan with the Holy Gifts. Now, farewell, and you," she said. "I feel I am getting pray for me!" Then she disappeared old and have not much strength left. into the desert.

I have not taken communion since I crossed the River. Next year in Lent, A year later Zosima sat on the