

*We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.*

# Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Dean Inferrera



**Sunday, April 2, 2017**

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

St. Mary of Egypt: Luke 7:36-50

**Tone 8**

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14

St. Mary of Egypt: Galatians 3:23-29

**5th Sunday of Great Lent: St Mary of Egypt**

Ven. Titus the Wonderworker (9th c.). Martyrs Amphianus (Apphianus) and Edesius (Aedesius) of Lycia (306). Martyr Polycarp of Alexandria (4th c.).

**Troparion – Tone 8**

*The image of God was truly preserved in you, 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, since it is immortal. / Therefore your spirit, holy mother Mary, Rejoices with the angels!*

**Kontakion – Tone 3**

*Having been a sinful woman, / you became through repentance a Bride of Christ. / Having attained angelic life, / you defeated demons with the weapon of the Cross. / Therefore, most glorious Mary, you are a Bride of the Kingdom!*



*5th Sunday of Great Lent: St Mary of Egypt*

**Prayer Requests**

**In Memory of:**

**Nikolai Taran, Sr.,** on his birthday, offered by the Dawson Family.

**Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity**

**St. Seraphim of Sarov: True and Wise Hope**

“If a man has no worries about himself at all for the sake of love toward God and the working of good deeds, knowing that God is taking care of him, this is a true and wise hope. But if a man takes care of his own business and turns to God in prayer only when misfortunes come upon him which are beyond his power, and then he begins to hope in God, such a hope is vain and false. A true hope seeks only the Kingdom of God... the heart can have no peace until it obtains such a hope. This hope pacifies the heart and produces joy within it”

**Orthodox Quote of the Day**

It is difficult for you, but think of how it was for the Savior on the Cross. The end is near; life passes quickly. We are guests on earth, migratory birds.

**Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Bogucharsk**

### *Liturgical Schedule*

#### **Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

9:30 am: No Sunday School  
9:40 am: Hours  
9:45 am: General  
Confession  
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

#### **Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Liturgy/  
Presanctified Gifts

#### **Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

#### **Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>**

9:40 am: Hours  
9:45 am: General  
Confession

#### **Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Liturgy/  
Presanctified Gifts  
Sacrament of Holy Unction

#### **Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>**

7 pm: Holy Friday Matins

#### **Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>**

11:30 pm: Holy Pascha Vigil  
Nocturns, Matins, Divine  
Liturgy

### ***Bulletin Sponsors***

***The Dawson Family***

### ***Readings:***

#### **The Prokeimenon in the 8<sup>th</sup> Tone:**

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord our God!  
(*Psalm 75:12*)

vs. In Judah God is known; His Name is great in Israel.  
(*Psalm 75:2*)

#### **Another, Tone 4 (St. Mary of Egypt):**

God is wonderful in His saints, the God of Israel.  
(*Psalm 67:35*)

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

**Brethren**, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

### **St. Mary of Egypt:** Galatians 3:23-29

**Brethren**, before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

#### **Alleluia in the 8<sup>th</sup> Tone:**

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!  
(*Psalm 94:1*)

vs. Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him  
with songs of praise! (*Psalm 94:2*)

#### **Another, Tone 1 (St. Mary of Egypt):**

I waited patiently for the Lord; He attended to me and heard my supplication.  
(*Psalm 71:6*)

### **Gospel:** Mark 10:32-45

**At that time**, Jesus taking the twelve again, he 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, 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."

### **St. Mary of Egypt: Luke 7:36-50**

**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."



### **5th Sunday of Great Lent: St Mary of Egypt**

Saint Zosimas (April 4) was a monk at a certain Palestinian monastery on the outskirts of Caesarea. Having dwelt at the monastery since his childhood, he lived there in asceticism until he reached the age of fifty-three. Then he was disturbed by the thought that he had attained perfection, and needed no one to instruct him. "Is there a monk anywhere who can show me some form of asceticism that I have not attained? Is there anyone who has surpassed me in spiritual sobriety and deeds?"

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Zosimas, you have struggled valiantly, as far as this is in the power of man. However, there is no one who is righteous (Rom 3:10). So that you may know how many other ways lead to salvation, leave your native land, like Abraham from the house of his father (Gen 12:1), and go to the monastery by the Jordan."

Abba Zosimas immediately left the monastery, and following the angel, he went to the Jordan monastery and settled in it.

Here he met Elders who were adept in contemplation, and also in their struggles. Never did anyone utter an idle word. Instead, they sang constantly, and prayed all night long. Abba Zosimas began to imitate the spiritual activity of the holy monks.

Thus much time passed, and the holy Forty Day Fast approached. There was a certain custom at the monastery, which was why God had led Saint Zosimas there. On the First Sunday of Great Lent the Igumen served the Divine Liturgy, everyone received the All-Pure Body and Blood of Christ. Afterwards, they went to the trapeza for a small repast, and then assembled once more in church.

The monks prayed and made prostrations, asking forgiveness one of another. Then they made a prostration before the Igumen and asked his blessing for the struggle that lay before them. During the Psalm "The Lord is my Light and my Savior, whom shall I fear? The Lord is defender of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 26/27:1), they opened the monastery gate and went off into the wilderness.

Each took with him as much food as he needed, and went into the desert. When their food ran out, they ate roots and desert plants. The monks crossed the Jordan and scattered in various directions, so that no one might see how another fasted or how they spent their time.

The monks returned to the monastery on Palm Sunday, each having his own conscience as a witness of his ascetic struggles. It was a rule of the monastery that no one asked how anyone else had toiled in the desert.



Abba Zosimas, according to the custom of the monastery, went deep into the desert hoping to find someone living there who could benefit him.

He walked into the wilderness for twenty days and then, when he sang the Psalms of the Sixth Hour and made the usual prayers. Suddenly, to the right of the hill where he stood, he saw a human form. He was afraid, thinking that it might be a demonic apparition. Then he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, which removed his fear. He turned to the right and saw a form walking southward. The body was black from the blazing sunlight, and the faded short hair was white like a sheep’s fleece. Abba Zosimas rejoiced, since he had not seen any living thing for many days.

The desert-dweller saw Zosimas approaching, and attempted to flee from him. Abba Zosimas, forgetting his age and fatigue, quickened his pace. When he was close enough to be heard, he called out, “Why do you flee from me, a sinful old man? Wait for me, for the love of God.”

The stranger said to him, “Forgive me, Abba Zosimas, but I cannot turn and show my face to you. I am a woman, and as you see, I am naked. If you would grant the request of a sinful woman, throw me your cloak so I might cover my body, and then I can ask for your blessing.”

Then Abba Zosimas was terrified, realizing that she could not have called him by name unless she possessed spiritual insight.

Covered by the cloak, the ascetic turned to Zosimas: “Why do you want to speak with me, a sinful woman? What did you wish to learn from me, you who have not shrunk from such great labors?”

Abba Zosimas fell to the ground and asked for her blessing. She also bowed down before him, and for a long time they remained on the ground each asking the other to bless. Finally, the woman ascetic said: “Abba Zosimas, you must bless and pray, since you are honored with the grace of the priesthood. For many years you have stood before the holy altar, offering the Holy Gifts to the Lord.”

These words frightened Saint Zosimas even more. With tears he said to her, “O Mother! It is clear that you live with God and are dead to this world. You have called me by name and recognized me as a priest, though you have never seen me before. The grace granted you is apparent, therefore bless me, for the Lord’s sake.”

Yielding finally to his entreaties, she said, “Blessed is God, Who cares for the salvation of men.” Abba Zosimas replied, “Amen.” Then they rose to their feet. The woman ascetic again said to the Elder, “Why have you come, Father, to me who am a sinner, bereft of every virtue? Apparently, the grace of the Holy Spirit has brought you to do me a service. But tell me first, Abba, how do the Christians live, how is the Church guided?”

Abba Zosimas answered her, “By your holy prayers God has granted the Church and us all a lasting peace. But fulfill my unworthy request, Mother, and pray for the whole world and for me a sinner, that my wanderings in the desert may not be useless.”

The holy ascetic replied, “You, Abba Zosimas, as a priest, ought to pray for me and for all, for you are called to do this. However, since we must be obedient, I will do as you ask.

The saint turned toward the East, and raising her eyes to heaven and stretching out her hands, she began to pray in a whisper. She prayed so softly that Abba Zosimas could not hear her words. After a long time, the Elder looked up and saw her standing in the air more than a foot above the ground. Seeing this, Zosimas threw himself down on the ground, weeping and repeating, “Lord, have mercy!”

Then he was tempted by a thought. He wondered if she might not be a spirit, and if her prayer could be insincere. At that moment she turned around, lifted him from the ground and said, “Why do your thoughts confuse you, Abba Zosimas? I am not an apparition. I am a sinful and unworthy woman, though I am guarded by holy Baptism.”

Then she made the Sign of the Cross and said, “May God protect us from the Evil One and his schemes, for fierce is his struggle against us.” Seeing and hearing this, the Elder fell at her feet with tears saying, “I beseech you by Christ our God, do not conceal from me who you are and how you came into this desert. Tell me everything, so that the wondrous works of God may be revealed.”

She replied, “It distresses me, Father, to speak to you about my shameless life. When you hear my story, you might flee from me, as if from a poisonous snake. But I shall tell you everything, Father, concealing nothing. However, I exhort you, cease not to pray for me a sinner, that I may find mercy on the Day of Judgment.

“I was born in Egypt and when I was twelve years old, I left my parents and went to Alexandria. There I lost my chastity and gave myself to unrestrained and insatiable sensuality. For more than seventeen years I lived like that and I did it all for free. Do not think that I refused the money because I was rich. I lived in poverty and worked at spinning flax. To me, life consisted in the satisfaction of my fleshly lust.

“One summer I saw a crowd of people from Libya and Egypt heading toward the sea. They were on their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I also wanted to sail with them. Since I had no food or money, I offered my body in payment for my passage. And so I embarked on the ship.

“Now, Father, believe me, I am very amazed, that the sea tolerated my wantonness and fornication, that the earth did not open up its mouth and take me down alive into hell, because I had ensnared so many souls. I think that God was seeking my repentance. He did not desire the death of a sinner, but awaited my conversion.

“So I arrived in Jerusalem and spent all the days before the Feast living the same sort of life, and maybe even worse.

“When the holy Feast of the Exaltation of the Venerable Cross of the Lord arrived, I went about as before, looking for young men. At daybreak I saw that everyone was heading to the church, so I went along with the rest. When the hour of the Holy Elevation drew nigh, I was trying to enter into the church with all the people. With great effort I came almost to the doors, and attempted to squeeze inside. Although I stepped up to the threshold, it was as though some force held me back, preventing me from entering. I was brushed aside by the crowd, and found myself standing alone on the porch. I thought that perhaps this happened because of my womanly weakness. I worked my way into the crowd, and again I attempted to elbow people aside. However hard I tried, I could not enter. Just as my feet touched the church threshold, I was stopped. Others entered the church without difficulty, while I alone was not allowed in. This happened three or four times. Finally my strength was exhausted. I went off and stood in a corner of the church portico.

“Then I realized that it was my sins that prevented me from seeing the Life-Creating Wood. The grace of the Lord then touched my heart. I wept and lamented, and I began to beat my breast. Sighing from the depths of my heart, I saw above me an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Turning to Her, I prayed: “O Lady Virgin, who gave birth in the flesh to God the Word! I know that I am unworthy to look upon your icon. I rightly inspire hatred and disgust before your purity, but I know also that God became Man in order to call sinners to repentance. Help me, O All-Pure One. Let me enter the church. Allow me to behold the Wood upon which the Lord was crucified in the flesh, shedding His Blood for the redemption of sinners, and also for me. Be my witness before Your Son that I will never defile my body again with the impurity of fornication. As soon as I have seen the Cross of your Son, I will renounce the world, and go wherever you lead me.”

“After I had spoken, I felt confidence in the compassion of the Mother of God, and left the spot where I had been praying. I joined those entering the church, and no one pushed me back or prevented me from entering. I went on in fear and trembling, and entered the holy place.

“Thus I also saw the Mysteries of God, and how God accepts the penitent. I fell to the holy ground and kissed it. Then I hastened again to stand before the icon of the Mother of God, where I had given my vow. Bending my knees before the Virgin Theotokos, I prayed:

“O Lady, you have not rejected my prayer as unworthy. Glory be to God, Who accepts the repentance of sinners. It is time for me to fulfill my vow, which you witnessed. Therefore, O Lady, guide me on the path of repentance.”

“Then I heard a voice from on high: ‘If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest.’

“I immediately believed that this voice was meant for me, and I cried out to the Mother of God: ‘O Lady, do not forsake me!’

“Then I left the church portico and started on my journey. A certain man gave me three coins as I was leaving the church. With them I bought three loaves of bread, and asked the bread merchant the way to the Jordan.

“It was nine o’clock when I saw the Cross. At sunset I reached the church of Saint John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan. After praying in the church, I went down to the Jordan and washed my face and hands in its water. Then in this same temple of Saint John the Forerunner I received the Life-Creating Mysteries of Christ. Then I ate half of one of my loaves of bread, drank water from the holy Jordan, and slept there that night on the ground. In the morning I found a small boat and crossed the river to the opposite shore. Again I prayed that the Mother of God would lead me where She wished. Then I found myself in this desert.”

Abba Zosimas asked her, “How many years have passed since you began to live in the desert?”

“I think,” she replied, “it is forty-seven years since I came from the Holy City.”

Abba Zosimas again asked, “What food do you find here, Mother?”

And she said, “I had with me two and a half loaves of bread when I crossed the Jordan. Soon they dried out and hardened. Eating a little at a time, I finished them after a few years.”

Again Abba Zosimas asked, “Is it possible you have survived for so many years without sickness, and without suffering in any way from such a complete change?”

“Believe me, Abba Zosimas,” the woman said, “I spent seventeen years in this wilderness (after she had spent seventeen years in immorality), fighting wild beasts: mad desires and passions. When I began to eat bread, I thought of the meat and fish which I had in abundance in Egypt. I also missed the wine that I loved so much when I was in the world, while here I did not even have water. I suffered from thirst and hunger. I also had a mad desire for lewd songs. I seemed to hear them, disturbing my heart and my hearing. Weeping and striking myself on the breast, I



remembered the vow I had made. At last I beheld a radiant Light shining on me from everywhere. After a violent tempest, a lasting calm ensued.

“Abba, how shall I tell you of the thoughts that urged me on to fornication? A fire seemed to burn within me, awakening in me the desire for embraces. Then I would throw myself to the ground and water it with my tears. I seemed to see the Most Holy Virgin before me, and She seemed to threaten me for not keeping my vow. I lay face downward day and night upon the ground, and would not get up until that blessed Light encircled me, dispelling the evil thoughts that troubled me.

“Thus I lived in this wilderness for the first seventeen years. Darkness after darkness, misery after misery stood about me, a sinner. But from that time until now the Mother of God helps me in everything.”

Abba Zosimas again inquired, “How is it that you require neither food, nor clothing?”

She answered, “After finishing my bread, I lived on herbs and the things one finds in the desert. The clothes I had when I crossed over the Jordan became torn and fell apart. I suffered both from the summer heat, when the blazing heat fell upon me, and from the winter cold, when I shivered from the frost. Many times I fell down upon the earth, as though dead. I struggled with various afflictions and temptations. But from that time until the present day, the power of God has guarded my sinful soul and humble body. I was fed and clothed by the all-powerful word of God, since man does not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding from the mouth of God (Dt 8:3, Mt.4:4, Luke 4:4), and those who have put off the old man (Col 3:9) have no refuge, hiding themselves in the clefts of the rocks (Job 24:8, Heb 11:38). When I remember from what evil and from what sins the Lord delivered me, I have imperishable food for salvation.”

When Abba Zosimas heard that the holy ascetic quoted the Holy Scripture from memory, from the Books of Moses and Job and from the Psalms of David, he then asked the woman, “Mother, have you read the Psalms and other books?”

She smiled at hearing this question, and answered, “Believe me, I have seen no human face but yours from the time that I crossed over the Jordan. I never learned from books. I have never heard anyone read or sing from them. Perhaps the Word of God, which is alive and acting, teaches man knowledge by itself (Col 3:16, 1 Thess 2:13). This is the end of my story. As I asked when I began, I beg you for the sake of the Incarnate Word of God, holy Abba, pray for me, a sinner.

“Furthermore, I beg you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, tell no one what you have heard from me, until God takes me from this earth. Next year, during Great Lent, do not cross the Jordan, as is the custom of your monastery.”

Again Abba Zosimas was amazed, that the practice of his monastery was known to the holy woman ascetic, although he had not said anything to her about this.

“Remain at the monastery,” the woman continued. “Even if you try to leave the monastery, you will not be able to do so. On Great and Holy Thursday, the day of the Lord’s Last Supper, place the Life-Creating Body and Blood of Christ our God in a holy vessel, and bring it to me. Await me on this side of the Jordan, at the edge of the desert, so that I may receive the Holy Mysteries. And say to Abba John, the Igumen of your community, ‘Look to yourself and your brothers’ (1 Tim 4:16), for there is much that needs correction. Do not say this to him now, but when the Lord shall indicate.”

Asking for his prayers, the woman turned and vanished into the depths of the desert.

For a whole year Elder Zosimas remained silent, not daring to reveal to anyone what he had seen, and he prayed that the Lord would grant him to see the holy ascetic once more.

When the first week of Great Lent came again, Saint Zosimas was obliged to remain at the monastery because of sickness. Then he remembered the woman’s prophetic words that he would not be able to leave the monastery. After several days went by, Saint Zosimas was healed of his infirmity, but he remained at the monastery until Holy Week.

On Holy Thursday, Abba Zosimas did what he had been ordered to do. He placed some of the Body and Blood of Christ into a chalice, and some food in a small basket. Then he left the monastery and went to the Jordan and waited for the ascetic. The saint seemed tardy, and Abba Zosimas prayed that God would permit him to see the holy woman.

Finally, he saw her standing on the far side of the river. Rejoicing, Saint Zosimas got up and glorified God. Then he wondered how she could cross the Jordan without a boat. She made the Sign of the Cross over the water, then she walked on the water and crossed the Jordan. Abba Zosimas saw her in the moonlight, walking toward him. When the Elder wanted to make prostration before her, she forbade him, crying out, “What are you doing, Abba? You are a priest and you carry the Holy Mysteries of God.”

*“Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Joy of all the Sorrowful” founded in 1966*

Reaching the shore, she said to Abba Zosimas, “Bless me, Father.” He answered her with trembling, astonished at what he had seen. “Truly God did not lie when he promised that those who purify themselves will be like Him. Glory to You, O Christ our God, for showing me through your holy servant, how far I am from perfection.”

The woman asked him to recite both the Creed and the “Our Father.” When the prayers were finished, she partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Then she raised her hands to the heavens and said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

The saint turned to the Elder and said, “Please, Abba, fulfill another request. Go now to your monastery, and in a year’s time come to the place where we first time spoke.”

He said, “If only it were possible for me to follow you and always see your holy face!”

She replied, “For the Lord’s sake, pray for me and remember my wretchedness.”

Again she made the Sign of the Cross over the Jordan, and walked over the water as before, and disappeared into the desert. Zosimas returned to the monastery with joy and terror, reproaching himself because he had not asked the saint’s name. He hoped to do so the following year.

A year passed, and Abba Zosimas went into the desert. He reached the place where he first saw the holy woman ascetic. She lay dead, with arms folded on her bosom, and her face was turned to the east. Abba Zosimas washed her feet with his tears and kissed them, not daring to touch anything else. For a long while he wept over her and sang the customary Psalms, and said the funeral prayers. He began to wonder whether the saint would want him to bury her or not. Hardly had he thought this, when he saw something written on the ground near her head: “Abba Zosimas, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust what is dust. Pray to the Lord for me. I reposed on the first day of April, on the very night of the saving Passion of Christ, after partaking of the Mystical Supper.”

Reading this note, Abba Zosimas was glad to learn her name. He then realized that Saint Mary, after receiving the Holy Mysteries from his hand, was transported instantaneously to the place where she died, though it had taken him twenty days to travel that distance.

Glorifying God, Abba Zosimas said to himself, “It is time to do what she asks. But how can I dig a grave, with nothing in my hands?” Then he saw a small piece of wood left by some traveler. He picked it up and began to dig. The ground was hard and dry, and he could not dig it. Looking up, Abba Zosimas saw an enormous lion standing by the saint’s body and licking her feet. Fear gripped the Elder, but he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, believing that he would remain unharmed through the prayers of the holy woman ascetic. Then the lion came close to the Elder, showing its friendliness with every movement. Abba Zosimas commanded the lion to dig the grave, in order to bury Saint Mary’s body. At his words, the lion dug a hole deep enough to bury the body. Then each went his own way. The lion went into the desert, and Abba Zosimas returned to the monastery, blessing and praising Christ our God.

Arriving at the monastery, Abba Zosimas related to the monks and the Igumen, what he had seen and heard from Saint Mary. All were astonished, hearing about the miracles of God. They always remembered Saint Mary with faith and love on the day of her repose.

Abba John, the Igumen of the monastery, heeded the words of Saint Mary, and with the help of God corrected the things that were wrong at the monastery. Abba Zosimas lived a God-pleasing life at the monastery, reaching nearly a hundred years of age. There he finished his temporal life, and passed into life eternal.

The monks passed on the life of Saint Mary of Egypt by word of mouth without writing it down.

“I however,” says Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem (March 11), “wrote down the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt as I heard it from the holy Fathers. I have recorded everything, putting the truth above all else.”

“May God, Who works great miracles and bestows gifts on all who turn to Him in faith, reward those who hear or read this account, and those who copy it. May he grant them a blessed portion together with Saint Mary of Egypt and with all the saints who have pleased God by their pious thoughts and works. Let us give glory to God, the Eternal King, that we may find mercy on the Day of Judgment through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom is due all glory, honor, majesty and worship together with the Unoriginate Father, and the Most Holy and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”



**Bulletin Sponsor:** Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

**Memorial Candles:** Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

**Private Confessions:** Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

**General Confession:** Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.



**Pannikhida Service:** The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

**Special Announcements** for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

[OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com](mailto:OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com) ; [reader.charles@hotmail.com](mailto:reader.charles@hotmail.com) or [rsub-deacon.vlashi@outlook.com](mailto:rsub-deacon.vlashi@outlook.com)

**The Living Clean Group** of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

**The Grey Book Step Meeting Group** of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



### *Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News*

***McClintock, Bodulow & Inferreras' would like to invite all the parishioners and their families of Mother of God Church to attend the Baptism Of Mishavonna***

***Lucielle McClintock Sunday April 9, 2017 and the celebration after church.***

***Thank you  
Luba Bodulow  
any questions call 856.297.5364***

### *The Protection of the Mother of God Sisterhood News:*

The Sisterhood will be raffling off a traditional Paschal basket on Sunday April 9th. The basket will contain many delicious holiday items. If you wish to contribute an item to the basket, please see the sign-up sheet in the community room. Raffle tickets are \$1.00, and each parishioner is asked to sell 10 tickets. Please see Lore Stefy for tickets.

### *Church School News:*

This year we will be having a Paschal basket raffle just for kids! The basket will include items that will bring holiday happiness to any child. Tickets are not for sale, but can be earned each week your child attends church and church school. One ticket with the child's name on it will be placed in the raffle jar for each Sunday the child is in attendance during Great Lent. One winner will be drawn on Palm Sunday, April 9th.

### **Services of Great Lent 2017**

April 8	Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers, Panikhida for the departed to follow
April 9	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Entry into Jerusalem
April 12	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts Sacrament of Holy Unction – Healing Sacrament, open to all Orthodox Christians
April 14	Friday: 7 pm Holy Friday Matins
April 15	Saturday: 11:30 pm Holy Pascha Vigil Nocturns, Matins, Divine Liturgy



### *NY/NJ Diocese News*

#### **ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL: Visit to India**

His Eminence, Archbishop Michael traveled to Kerala, India on 2 February 2017 to be the Keynote Speaker and the Guest of Honor at the Centennial of the Diocesan Convention of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in the Diocese of Thumpamon. Presiding over the five-day convention was His Holiness, Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II, Catholicos of the East and



the Supreme Head of the Indian Orthodox Church. He was assisted by numerous Metropolitans of the Holy Synod of the Indian Church. His Holiness is the successor to Saint Thomas the Apostle, who brought the Gospel to India in the mid-first century.

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is one of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which separated from the Eastern Orthodox Church in the mid-fifth century over the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, promulgated at the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon (451 A.D.). The Oriental Churches do not accept the dogmatic teaching that Jesus Christ is one Divine Person with two distinct natures, one divine and one human.

Even though our Churches are not in sacramental communion, the Orthodox Church in America and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church have a special relationship. Many of the Indian Orthodox clergy have been educated either at St. Tikhon’s Seminary or St. Vladimir’s Seminary. And Zechariah Mar Nicholovos, Metropolitan of the Northeast Diocese of the Indian Church, meets frequently with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, as the Indian Orthodox Centre is in Muttontown, NY, not at all far from the OCA headquarters in Syosset.

The Centennial Convention is an annual gathering of the Catholicos, hierarchs, clergy and faithful from all over a given area of India to renew their Orthodox Faith through divine services, Scripture study, presentations on the teachings of the Church, and Christian fellowship. This theme of this year’s Convention was “Christ in You” – from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians 1:27 – and the gathering drew thousands of people from Kerala, the southwest region of India. The Convention was hosted by His Grace, Kuriakose Mar Clemis, the Metropolitan of the Diocese of Thumpamon. It took place at the spacious complex of St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Makkamkundu, Pathanamthitta.

Following the Sunday morning Hierarchical Liturgy, which was concelebrated by five metropolitans of the Indian Church, with hundreds of clergy and nearly 5,000 faithful in attendance, Archbishop Michael was given the honor of opening the Centennial Convention by lighting the traditional ceremonial candle.

Over the course of the Convention, His Eminence offered three presentations on the theme “Christ in You” – a Scriptural analysis, a patristic commentary, and a practical application – the final one addressed to a crowd of almost 12,000 faithful. His Holiness, the metropolitans, the clergy and faithful were very receptive to his reflections, which will be published in Malayalam, the language of the Indian Orthodox Church, in the Commemorative Journal marking the Centennial Convention.

An interesting detail of the Convention is that it was held during the time when we observe the Week of the Publican and Pharisee and do not fast. The Indian Church does not have that practice of a fast-free week, and then a week of giving up meat, and then finally giving up dairy. At the same time as we observe the Week of the Publican and Pharisee, they observe a “mini Lent” – a time of strict fasting, penitential services and prostrations, in honor of the prophet Jonah and the fasting and repentance of the Ninevites. During the time of the Convention, no meat, fish or dairy products were eaten.

Throughout the rest of his week-long stay, Archbishop Michael traveled to various centers of the Orthodox Church in India. His schedule was set up by Fr. Abraham Thomas, the Secretary of the Department of Ecumenical Relations for the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He was personally assisted by Deacon Kuriakose (Alex) Abraham. Both Fr. Abraham and Dn. Alex are graduates of St. Vladimir’s Seminary.

His Eminence was able to visit the headquarters of the Church, the residence and office of the Catholicos, in Kottayam. He was the guest of the senior hierarch of the Holy Synod of India, His Grace, Thomas Mar Athanasios, the Metropolitan of Chengannur, at his diocesan residence and headquarters. Archbishop Michael visited two men’s monasteries and one women’s monastery. All three have schools and orphanages attached to them, where not only Orthodox boys or girls are taught and cared for, but Hindus and Muslims as well.

One of the highlights of Archbishop Michael’s travels was his veneration of the relics of Saint Thomas, the Apostle to India. Known by most as the “doubter” among the disciples, it was Saint Thomas who made the greatest profession of faith; he was the first to call Christ “God” – “My Lord and My God” (John 20:28).

The other highlight of His Eminence’s travels was his visit to the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, where he addressed the faculty and students. He spoke on the important need for the spiritual formation and theological education of clergy in today’s world; he encouraged the students to work hard and seek the will of God in their service of Him. After his presentation, he fielded questions from the 140 seminarians in residence. He also had an opportunity to share dinner with the Seminary community and to speak to a number of the students individually.

His Eminence is grateful for the kindness and hospitality of the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the Indian Orthodox Church over the course of his week-long stay in Kerala. He was the recipient of numerous awards and gifts, but most importantly the prayers of countless individuals whom he met.



## ***Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News***

### **In Memoriam: Archpriest Orest Olekshy**

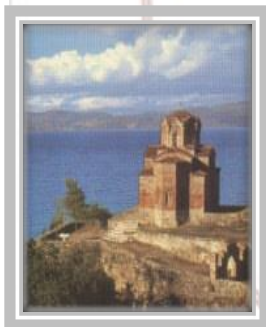
Melville, SK, Canada [OCA]

Archpriest Orest Olekshy, Pastor Emeritus of Holy Resurrection Church, Saskatoon, SK, fell asleep in the Lord after suffering a heart attack at his home on March 28, 2-17.

Born in Calmar, AB, the son of the late Stefan and Evdokia [Fuhr] Olekshy, Father Orest was a 1963 graduate of Saint Andrew's College at the University of Manitoba, from which he received a Bachelor of Theology degree. He continued his studies at the University of Winnipeg. In 1965, he married the former Oksana Onufrijchuk. He was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood the following year by Metropolitan Ilarion [Ohienko] of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada and served several rural parishes in Alberta. In 1975, he was instrumental in the establishment of Holy Resurrection Church, Saskatoon, SK in 1975, which was received into the Archdiocese of Canada of the Orthodox Church in America in 1986. He also served as Dean of the Saskatchewan Deanery and as a member of the Archdiocesan Council. After the repose of his beloved Matushka Oksana 1997 and his retirement, he served Saint Elijah Parish near Lennard, MB.

Additional information and service times will be posted as they become available.

May Father Orest's memory be eternal!



### ***Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, I:***

*Who is that staring at me through all the stars in heaven and all the creatures on earth?*

*Cover your eyes, stars and creatures; do not look upon my nakedness. Shame torments me enough through my own eyes.*

*What is there for you to see? A tree of life that has been reduced to a thorn on the road, that pricks both itself and others. What else-except a heavenly flame immersed in mud, a flame that neither gives light nor goes out?*

*Plowmen, it is not your plowing that matters but the Lord who watches.*

*Singers, it is not your singing that matters but the Lord who listens.*

*Sleepers, it is not your sleeping that matters but the Lord who wakens.*

*It is not the pools of water in the rocks around the lake that matter but the lake itself.*

*What is all human time but a wave that moistens the burning sand on the shore, and then regrets that it left the lake, because it has dried up?*

*O stars and creatures, do not look at me with your eyes but at the Lord. He alone sees. Look at Him and you will see yourselves in your homeland.*

*What do you see when you look at me? A picture of your exile? A mirror of your fleeting transitoriness?*

*O Lord, my beautiful veil, embroidered with golden seraphim, drape over my face like a veil over the face of a widow, and collect my tears, in which the sorrow of all Your creatures seethes.*

*O Lord, my beauty, come and visit me, lest I be ashamed of my nakedness—lest the many thirsty glances that are falling upon me return home thirsty*

### ***Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, CI:***

#### **III. Us and Our Neighbors**

#### **How to Relate to the Sins of Others**

One who strictly prosecutes the misdemeanors of others will find not condescension towards his own.

**St. John Chrysostom, On the Statutes, 3.6**





### *The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon*

#### **The Knowledge of God**

*The knowledge of God in the Old Testament, and the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ*

We converts have to be careful that we do not allow ourselves to carry into our Orthodoxy, baggage from our protestant past. Those from a protestant background often miss the subtleties and nuances of our faith by taking everything literally, missing entirely the mystical truths as revealed in our Orthodox faith.

Many stories and accounts of the Bible are not necessarily to be taken literally, but were meant to impart spiritual truths. Yet sometimes a fundamentalist past predisposes us to a literalistic interpretation of biblical truths that are meant to transport us into a mystical encounter with the Living God. This encounter with God is meant to help us transcend this fallen world, and be made whole.

The Orthodox East gives us a vision of a faith that transforms us, not by legalistic rules, but by a mystical encounter with the living God, Who changes us interiorly. The canons and traditions, according to the Mind of the Church, are meant to bring about healing, not simply covering over our sin and fallen nature, but by transforming us into God's image and likeness.

In ancient times there was a sense of evil that dominated everyday life that was the result of the Israelites enemies murdering their women and children. Because the Israelites were under constant threat from their pagan neighbors, their perception was that God was ordering them to respond in like manner, instructing them to dash the infants of their enemies against the rocks. Yet the full revelation of who God really is was revealed by Christ, who required us to love our enemies, and to do good to those who would persecute us.

The Church Fathers recognized this historical fact, and were less interested in taking literally the Psalmists suggesting God told His people to dash the heads of the enemies of Israel's babies against the rocks, as literally an historic fact. What they did look for in these accounts was the truth that the Old Testament people were encountering God, and getting to know him for the first time. With each step in this encounter they were learning more about God's love and mercy. The Old Testament people were just learning to know this God, but the complete knowledge of God would only come with the entrance of the Messiah into the world. It was this Messiah, the Christ, Who first told them they should address this God as Father. Those of the Old Testament would never dare to even speak the name of God, let alone call him Father.

We know more about sin, redemption, and God's love and mercy for us, than did the people of the Old Testament. This is the very reason God chose to incarnate as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, taking on the flesh of His creation, and joining Himself to us. It was this very Christ Who said to His disciples that He and the Father were one, and that those who looked upon Him saw the Father. That was a very different image of God than the ancients saw depicted in the Old Testament, yet this God was the very same God that was worshiped in the Temple in Jerusalem.

We should worry less about taking literally the images of God as depicted in the Old Testament narrative, and seek to embrace the God of love and mercy that we've encountered in our relationship with the Co-Suffering Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. The God who revealed Himself throughout the Old Testament was none other than the preincarnate Word, Jesus Christ.



#### *Daily Reflection*

#### **Can't Start a Fire Without a Spark**

*“...And Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I have no husband?’ And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born*

*will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” (Lk 1: 34-37)*



The unsung hero of this story, I think, is the Holy Spirit. It is He Who enables a teen-aged virgin from Nazareth, despite Mary's questions and confusion in the face of the strange news of the archangel, to conceive and give birth to the eternal Word of God in this world.

Now, please forgive me for some unconventional thoughts on this central moment in Salvation History. But it reminds me in general of our human, creative process. It is impossible to conceive, and give birth to, anything good in this world, I think, without that "spark" of the Holy Spirit. As Bruce Springsteen notes in his profound song about his own writing-process (Dancing in the Dark): "I ain't nothing but tired," he says, "Man I'm just tired and bored with myself / ...I could use just a little help / You can't start a fire without a spark..."

As we praise and magnify the Most-Holy Theotokos today, on this wonderful Saturday of the Akathist, let me embrace the Holy Virgin's openness to, and faith in, the Holy Spirit, with Whom "nothing will be impossible." I reconnect with Him today, in heartfelt prayer, as I approach my work, rather than isolate myself from God's creative energies in self-reliance, being "bored with myself." Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. Amen!

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### *Holy Orthodox Quotes*

"Just as the end of life is the beginning of death, so also stopping in the race of virtue marks the beginning of the race of evil."

- St. Gregory of Nyssa

#### **2 Peter 1:2-11**

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,† as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,† by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.† But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,† to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.† For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.† Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.†

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### *The Philokalia: Daily Readings*

The person who gives himself over to evil thoughts cannot keep his outer self-free from sin.

- St Philotheos of Sinai, 40 Texts on Watchfulness

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### *Ancient Christian Wisdom*

What is the Church, if not a place where the sick meet their physician? Those sick from sin come to confess their sickness to God the Physician, and to find medicine and healing from Him who is the true Healer from all human suffering and weakness, and the Giver of all good things. Do the healthy go to hospital, to boast of their health to the doctor?

+ St. Nikolai Velimirovich

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### *Wisdom of the Church Fathers*

"You don't become holy by fighting evil. Let evil be. Look towards Christ and that will save you. What makes a person saintly is love!"

Saint Porphyrios the Kapsokalivite "Grandpa" (1906-1991)