

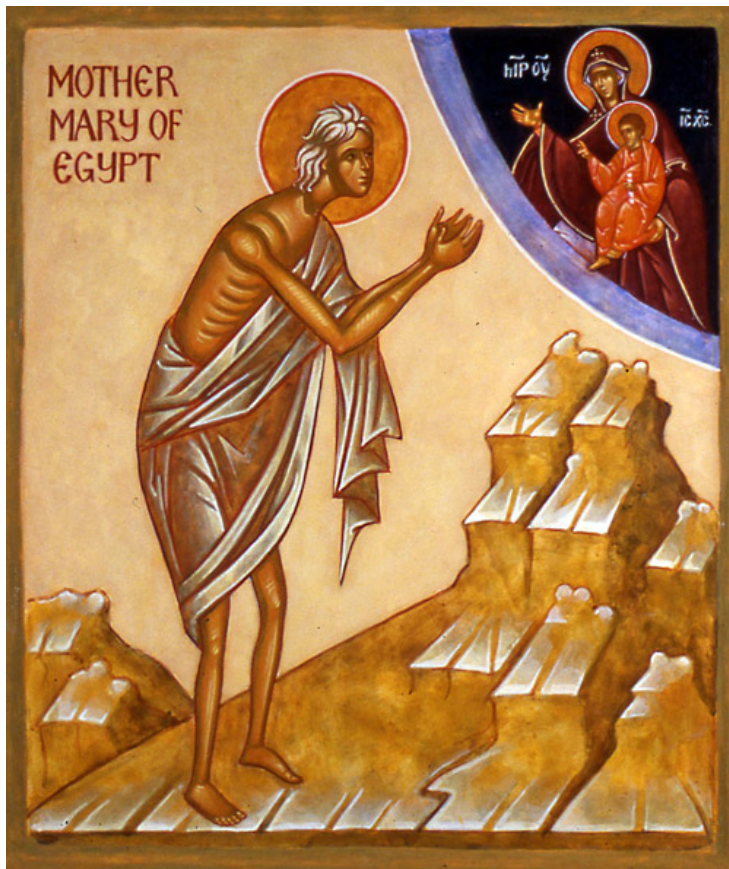


# THE MESSENGER

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
BANGOR, MAINE

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MARCH/APRIL 2015



## **The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent: The Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**

Our holy mother Mary was born in Egypt. She had left her parents at the age of twelve to go to Alexandria, where she spent the next seventeen years in debauchery and the greatest profligacy. Living on charity and linen-weaving, she nevertheless offered her body to any man, not being forced to it by dire necessity as were so many poor women, but as though she were consumed by the fire of a desire that nothing was able to appease.

One day, seeing a crowd of Lybians and Egyptians moving towards the port, she followed them and set sail with them for Jerusalem, offering her body to pay her fare. When they arrived in the Holy City, she followed the crowd that was thronging towards the Church of the Resurrection, it being the day of the Exaltation of the Cross. But, when she reached the threshold of the church, an invisible force prevented her entering in spite of repeated efforts on her part, although the other pilgrims were able to go in without hindrance.

Left alone in a corner of the narthex, she began to realize that it was the impurity of her life that was preventing her approaching the holy Wood. She burst into tears and smote her breast and, seeing an icon of the Mother of God, made this prayer to her: "O Sovereign Lady, who didst bear God in the flesh, I know that I should not dare to look upon thine icon, thou who are pure in soul and body, because, debauched as I am, I must fill thee with disgust. But, as the God born of thee became man in order to call sinners to repentance, come to my aid! Allow me to go into the church and prostrate before His Cross. And, as soon as I have seen the Cross, I promise that I will renounce the world and all pleasures, and follow the path of salvation that thou wilt show me."

She felt herself suddenly freed from the power that had held her and was able to enter the church. There she fervently venerated the Holy Cross and then, returning to the icon of the Mother of God, declared herself ready to follow the path that the Virgin would show her. A voice replied to her from on high: "If you cross the Jordan, you will find rest."

Leaving the church, she bought three loaves with the alms a pilgrim had given her, discovered which road led to the Jordan and arrived one evening at the Church of Saint John the Baptist. After having washed in the river, she received Communion in the Holy Mysteries, ate half of one of the loaves and went to sleep on the riverbank. The next morning, she crossed the river and lived from that time on in the desert, remaining there for forty-seven years without ever encountering either another human being or any animal.

During the first seventeen years, her clothes soon having fallen into rags, burning with heat by day and shivering with cold by night, she fed on herbs and wild roots. But more than the physical trials, she had to face violent assaults from the passions and the memory of her sins and, throwing herself on the ground, she implored the Mother of God to come to her aid. Protected by God, who desires nothing but that the sinner should turn to Him and live, she uprooted all the passions from her heart by means of this extraordinary asceticism, and was able to turn the fire of carnal desire into a flame of divine love that made it possible for her to endure the implacable desert with joy, as though she were not in the flesh. After all these years, a holy elder called Zosimas (April 4), who, following the tradition instituted by Saint Euthymios, had gone into the desert across the Jordan for the period of the Great Fast, saw one day a human form with a body blackened by the sun and with hair white as bleached linen to its shoulders. He ran after this apparition that fled before him, begging it to give him its blessing and some saving words. When he came within ear-shot, Mary, calling by name him whom she had never seen, revealed to him that she was a woman and asked him to throw her his cloak that she might cover her nakedness.

At the urging of the monk, who was transported at having at last met a God-bearing being who had attained the perfection of monastic life, the Saint recounted to him with tears the story of her life and conversion. Then, having finished her account, she begged him to come the following year to the bank of the Jordan with Holy Communion.

When the day arrived, Zosimas saw Mary appearing on the further bank of the river. She made the sign of the Cross and crossed the Jordan, walking on the water. Having received Holy Communion weeping, she said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2:29). She then took leave of Zosimas, asking him to meet her the following year in the place where they had first met.

When the year was past, Zosimas, going to the agreed spot, found the Saint's body stretched on the ground, her arms crossed and her face turned towards the East. His tearful emotion prevented him from noticing at once an inscription traced on the ground by the Saint, which read: "Abba Zosimas, bury here the body of the humble Mary; give what is of dust to dust, after having prayed for me. I died on the first day of April, the very night of the Passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, after having partaken in the Holy Eucharist." Consoled in his grief by having learned the Saint's name, Zosimas was amazed to discover that she had, in several hours, covered a distance of more than twenty days' march. After having vainly tried to break up the earth with a stick, he suddenly saw a lion approaching Mary's body and licking her feet. On the orders of the Elder, the beast dug a hole with its claws, in which Zosimas devoutly placed the Saint's body.

On his return to the monastery, he recounted the marvels that God had wrought for those who turn away from sin and move towards Him with all their hearts. From the hardened sinner that she had been, Mary has, for a great many souls crushed under the burden of sin, become a source of hope and a model of conversion. This is why the Holy Fathers have placed the celebration of her memory at the end of the Great Fast as an encouragement for all who have neglected their salvation, proclaiming that repentance can bring them back to God even at the eleventh hour.

Dear Fellow Members of the Saint George Family,

The Orthodox Church has entered the Ecclesiastical Period known as Great Lent. During these forty days please keep Saint George close to your hearts. There are many beautiful services during Lent, which provide us, as parishioners, the opportunity to worship and grow in the Spirit of the Lord. Each of us has many responsibilities in our secular lives that pull us away from church and prayer, let us make a special effort this year not to let this happen. With the trial now behind us, we must make every effort to embrace this special time of the year with prayer and reflection.

As an altar boy, my priest Father Philip Gialopsos used to tell me that "Lent is a time for prayer; Lent is a time for fasting; Lent is a time for almsgiving; and Lent is a time to strengthen us in our struggle against evil, for everyone practicing evil hates the light and loves the darkness." Christ is our salvation and his Resurrection is the light!

In the May 2013 edition of the Orthodox Observer Dr. George Stavros wrote about a concept called *Dianoia*.

"Dianoia is the human ability to reason, to make sense of things in an intellectual way, to find meaning in the events and situations of everyday life. Healthy dianoia is realistic, with an ever-present hopefulness. It finds meanings which are intellectually sound while still remaining open to mystery. Unhealthy dianoia either insists on absolute and rigid explanations for events, or gives up any hope that there is life-giving meaning to be found."

Let us be wary and alert at all times. The Resurrection of our Lord is coming soon-Be Joyful!

Enjoy Greek Independence Day on March 25th. We welcome and offer great thanks to Father Robert Athas for his spiritual guidance during our Holy Season.

Please feel free to contact me at any time to offer your wisdom or guidance. Should any of you ever have any questions about the operations of the Parish please do not hesitate to inquire. The Parish Council strives to maintain a culture of respect, peace, love and order through transparency.

Yours in the love of Our Lord,

Lee P. Speronis  
President, Parish Council 2015

*In cooperation with his Eminence Metropolitan Methodios, Chancellor Fr. Ted Barbis and our own parish council, the services of Dr. Philip Mamalakis, counselor and Professor of pastoral care at Holy Cross Seminary, are being made available to the members of St. George community to assist with healing and moving forward after the recent events and verdict against former priest Adam Metropoulos. We thank Dr. Mamalakis for coming here to Bangor to be with us on such short notice on the Sunday following the trial.*



**Underwriting *The Messenger***

We invite parishioners to help subsidize our newsletter. You can support publication of ***The Messenger*** in the following ways:

Sponsor the Monthly Dedication Page @\$75.00 per month.

Become a Messenger Patron @ \$50.00 for the year.

**2014 Church Financial Report**

<b>2014</b>	Revenues	\$ 96,033.32
	Expenses	95,003.90
	Net	1,029.42
	Budget	94,350.00
<b>2014</b>	Pledges	88 Family Units
	Pledged Amount	\$ 54,695.00
	Received	52,600.00
	Budget	51,000.00

**ST. GEORGE PARISH COUNCIL 2014**

- Lee Speronis, President.....942-7822**
- George Lealos, Vice-President.....989-2166**
- Kathy Fitzpatrick, Secretary.....942-7532**
- Ambrose Smitherman, Treasurer.....866-7717**
- George Brontas..... 989-4987**
- Kevin Cox.....667-6257**
- Christopher Limberis..... 942-9243**
- Jack Montgomery.....945-6022**
- Donna Walter.....576-0765**
- Tim Kulikowski.....(607)-237-4399**

## **HOLY COMMUNION FOR SHUT-INS**

On Holy Friday morning, (April 10<sup>th</sup>) Fr. Bob will be available to visit those parishioners in nursing homes, hospitals, or shut-in at home to administer the Sacrament of Holy Communion and Holy Unction. Please contact Fr. Bob by Palm Sunday (April 5<sup>th</sup>) with names of those who desire a visit.

## **SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION**

Fr. Bob will be available to administer the Sacrament of Holy Confession by appointment only, prior to Holy Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **AGAPE VESPERS READERS**

On Pascha, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm, the Vespers of Agape will be celebrated. Anyone who is able to read a foreign language and would to participate in the Vespers by reading the Gospel selection please notify Fr. Bob no later than Holy Wednesday.

## **EASTER OFFERING**

Enclosed is a familiar envelope. It is a request for your traditional Easter donation to the church. The spiritual needs of the church are met by all our prayers, but the physical and material needs of the church of St. George can only be met by your generous gift. At this Holy Pascha season remember the gift which has no price, which God gave to us on that first Pascha and then in thanksgiving for all the many blessings received throughout the year remember your church with your heart and with both hands.

## **EASTER EGGS**

We ask people to sign up on the bulletin board downstairs to bring in eggs dyed red for distribution at the end of the Divine Liturgy on the night of the Resurrection and at the conclusion of the Agape vespers. Bring them to church by Saturday morning (April 11<sup>th</sup>) so we can wrap them in the tulle and ribbon after the morning Divine Liturgy.

## **LENTEN NEEDS LIST**

Please sign up on the bulletin board downstairs or talk to someone in the office to donate towards the Lenten needs.

## 2014 LENTEN NEEDS LIST FOR THE CHURCH

Please contact the Church Office if you wish to donate one or more of the items listed below:

April 19th AKATHIST FLOWERS: \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

LENTEN INCENSE: \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

April 7th THE VENERATION OF THE CROSS:

Tray of 50 Daffodils \$75.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Festal Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

April 27th & 28th SATURDAY OF LAZARUS & PALM SUNDAY:

Palms for Crosses \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Lazarus Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Palm Sunday Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

April 28th-May 5th HOLY WEEK NEEDS:

Flowers for Nymphios Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies for Holy Unction \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Last Supper Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Candles for the 12 Gospels \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Crown of Flowers \_\_\_\_\_ Helen Brontas \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Crucifixion Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Candles for Altar \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Candles for Cross \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

White Wreath at Foot of Cross \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Vigil Candle at Base of Cross \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Basket of Rose Petals \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Kouvouklion \$500.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Kouvouklion Candles (24 x \$5) \$120.00 (\$5 each) \_\_\_\_\_

Rose Water for Blessing \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Holy Friday Altar Boy Candles \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Shroud for Body of Christ \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Basket of Bay Leaves \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Vigil Candle Empty Tomb \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for Resurrection Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Flowers for St. George Icon \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Paschal Candle for Priest \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Altar Boy Candles for Pascha \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Wreath on Resurrection Banner \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Altar Candles for Pascha \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Easter Lillies (12 x \$25) \$300.00 (\$25 each) \_\_\_\_\_

Clear Plastic Covers for Altar  
& Kouvouklion \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

ICONOSTASIS FLOWERS:

Icon of Christ \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Icon of Theotokos \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Icon of St. John the Baptist \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Icon of St. George \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

## HOLY WEEK CALENDAR - 2015

- April 4th      SATURDAY OF LAZARUS  
9:00 a.m.      Orthros & Divine Liturgy  
Pancake Breakfast following.  
Help is needed to make Palm Crosses
- April 5th      PALM SUNDAY  
9:00 a.m.      Orthros & Divine Liturgy  
Palm Sunday luncheon following  
7:00 p.m.      Service of the Bridegroom (Nymphios)
- April 6th      GREAT AND HOLY MONDAY  
7:00 p.m.      Service of the Bridegroom (Nymphios)
- April 7th      GREAT AND HOLY TUESDAY  
7:00 p.m.      Service of the Bridegroom (Nymphios)  
Troparion of Kassiane
- April 8th      GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY  
3:30 p.m.      Sacrament of Holy Unction  
7:00 p.m.      Orthros of Holy Thursday (anointing follows)
- April 9th      GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY  
9:00 a.m.      Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil  
6:00 p.m.      Service of the 12 Gospels -  
The Passion & Crucifixion of our Lord
- April 10th     GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY  
9:00 a.m.      Service of the Hours  
3:30 p.m.      Descent from the Cross (The Apokathelosis)  
7:00 p.m.      Orthros of Holy Saturday (Lamentations)
- April 11th     GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY  
9:00 a.m.      Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil  
Help is needed to wrap eggs  
11:30 p.m.     Orthros & Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection  
Resurrection Reception in the Church Hall following Divine Liturgy
- April 12th     HOLY PASCHA (EASTER)  
1:00 p.m.      Vespers of Agape Service ( If you wish to read the Gospel in a foreign  
language please let Fr. Bob know)

**ST. GEORGE GREEK  
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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**This issue of *The Messenger*  
is sponsored by  
Frances D. Vardamis  
In Loving Memory of  
Alex A. Vardamis**