



**Orthodox Mission of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Grieving Over Our Sins
April 10, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

We have reached the fifth Sunday in Great Lent, the final Sunday before the beginning of Great and Holy Week. From early times, this Sunday has been a Sunday of remembrance of our Mother Among the Saints, Mary of Egypt. Perhaps you remember the story? St. Mary of Egypt was born in Alexandria Egypt in the fifth century AD and lived most of her life in the desert, in continual repentance and struggle against the passions that had driven her from her home when she was only twelve years old. She fell asleep in the Lord in the sixth century, in the year 522 AD.

Having run away from home when only twelve, St. Mary lived for seventeen years in sexual promiscuity, traveling when she was in her late twenties across the Mediterranean Sea for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross to Jerusalem; to get there, she “worked her way across” by means of prostitution: *(I am amazed, Father, [St. Mary confesses to Fr. Zosimas who meets her in the wilderness] how the sea stood our licentiousness, how the earth did not open its jaws, and how it was that hell did not swallow me alive, when I had entangled in my net so many souls.)* After repeated tries to enter the Church of the Holy Resurrection in Jerusalem and bow before the Cross of our Lord, she prays to the Mother of God and vows repentance if allowed to enter. Having been granted the supplication of her prayer, she enters and bows before the Cross, and then proceeds to fulfil her vow. She follows the direction of the Mother

of God and begins her forty-seven years of repentance and prayer in the desert. She tells her story to the priest Zosimas and it is written down by Patriarch St. Sophronius about a hundred years later and retold to generations of believers during the fifth week of Great Lent each year.

One can certainly imagine many mothers and grandmothers relating this story to their daughters and granddaughters as a reminder of the danger of sin, as a warning to resist temptation and turn from it to a life of virtue. But the story has another purpose as well. It illustrates not only the ugliness of sin, but the dangerous fruit, the ugly ramification, of sin as well. Just as the fruit of faith is love, so the fruit of sin is destruction, hurt, harm to oneself and others. Just as a stone thrown into a pond sends small waves of ever widening concentric circles, so too does sin affect oneself and others broadly and hurtfully. One can only imagine the anguish of St. Mary's parents when she left home to pursue a life of debauchery; likewise, one can almost feel the regret of those led into sin by St. Mary's licentious activity with them. St. Mary of Egypt understood this when she repented, and thus lived the major portion of her life in solitude in the wilderness, not only in repentance, but in that form of blessed mourning for her sin and its effect on the lives of others, praying without cease for those whom she had led astray. This is the power and meaning of the third beatitude of our Lord, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." St. Mary of Egypt lived her life in blessed mourning for those whom she had sinned against, ultimately realizing and demonstrating to all who read her story that all sin against others is sin against God, and that, conversely, all sin against God is sin against others as well.

The Holy Fathers remind us, Brothers and Sisters, that we should grieve for our sin even after we repent. Since our sins separate us from God and hurt not only ourselves but others as well, each of us should remember how we have hurt one another and pray on behalf of those whom we have hurt in our sinful thoughts, words and deeds. This, I daresay, was much of what St. Mary of Egypt did in her forty-seven years in the wilderness: prayer for those whom she had hurt. This is true intercessory prayer and none of us should ever cease praying for those whom we have hurt through our own sinful behaviors, whatever those behaviors might have been.

Reconciliation with God in the Sacrament of Penance is given to all who are sorry for their sin and who turn away from their sin in repentance. But remember, Brothers and Sisters, that whatever our sins have been, they have hurt not only ourselves but others as well. Thus, each of us should follow the example of our Mother Among the Saints, St. Mary of Egypt, and pray for those whom we have hurt throughout the entire course of our lives. May each of us, like her, follow the example of blessed mourning as our Lord reminds us in the third beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Let us never forget those whom we have hurt in our sin and let us seek reconciliation when possible and pray for them throughout our entire lives.

Fr. Elias

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