



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

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***Grieving for our Sin: Mary of Egypt
April 21, 2024***

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

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

Each year we devote the entire fifth week of Great Lent to the remembrance of a 5th century saint named Mary of Egypt. Any of us who have been Orthodox for any length of time know her story: How she left her parents at a very young age to enter into a life of fornication; how she misled multiple youths into that very life, how she worked herself across the Mediterranean Sea from Egypt to Jerusalem so she could attend the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. By then, a fully grown woman, she tried to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and was prevented from doing so for an unseen force multiple times. Then, bowing in repentance before God and praying to the Theotokos whose icon hung in the outside courtyard, she was permitted to enter and thus began her long life of repentance. Traveling to the Transjordan she continued to grieve for her sin and eventually met the good priest Zosimus, told him her story and received Holy Communion before her death at a venerable old age.

The story is moving and unforgettable, and we hear it in this last week before final week when we begin our final preparations to walk with our Lord on His journey from Bethany to Jerusalem and cross.

It was our Lord Himself who taught in the Beatitudes which we sing each and every week: “Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.” Blessed are those who grieve for their sin, the Holy Fathers teach us; blessed are those who are aware of the ramifications of their separation from God; for only in repentance, will there be comfort through the merciful forgiveness given by our Lord.

The life of Mary of Egypt illustrates this with great power! Agonizingly aware that the wages of sin is death, that her actions have misled countless individuals along the path to perdition, that her many sinful actions and choices brought sorrow and suffering upon countless individuals, she became the very example of what we so quickly forget: that any thought, word or deed that we think, say or do in rebellion to God’s will, revealed in the Commandments, the teachings of the Prophets and the very example of true blessedness, the life, preaching, actions, self-giving death and resurrection of our Lord – any thought, word or deed in opposition to the will of God leads only to self-defeating anguish and pain for ourselves and countless people around us! St. Paul summarized it so very clearly when he said, “The wages of sin is death!”

Our brief six-week journey in Lent is a journey of remembrance that our sin leads us to only one place: anguish, hurt and ultimately death. It is because of our collective human sin that our Lord, the eternal preexistent Word of God, became incarnate, taking on our humanity, so that we might take on His divinity. It was to be the One, Eternal Sacrifice, His Own to Himself in our place, that God in His Incarnate Humanity suffered and died on the cross, and it was as the perfect sign of salvation and hope that He rose from the dead, the first fruits of all who have died since the creation of the world.

These are the very things that we are to remember in Lent; they are indeed the essence of the season that culminates in Pascha, and as such, the essence of the Faith of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. This, Brothers and sisters, is what we are about and it is so very powerfully shown in the life of our Mother among the Saints, Mary of Egypt!

To Jesus Christ be all honor and glory forever! Amen!

Fr. Elias

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