



THE FORERUNNER

St John the Baptist Orthodox Church

211 Cable Avenue – East Pittsburgh, PA 15112
HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN GREGORY OF NYSSA
 American Carpatho-Russian Diocese-Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
 The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Joseph Fester
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 Subdeacon Gary Grysiak, Cantor; Reader Justin Rosco, Choir Director;
 Robert Perevuznik, Jr., Parish Council President

5 Sunday	6 Mon	7 Tuesday	8 Wednesday	9 Thurs	10 Friday	11 Saturday
9:00 Divine Liturgy Live Stream on FB		Annunciation 9am Vesperal Liturgy Live on FB	7pm Presanctified Liturgy Live Stream on FB		9am Presanctified Liturgy Live Stream on FB	Lazarus Saturday 9am Divine Liturgy 5pm Great Vespers for Palm Sunday Live Stream on FB

WE SAY- to all who are with us today at St. John's for the first time, ***you are welcome here!*** We pray that you will consider making St. John's your spiritual home. Please join us after Liturgy downstairs for fellowship.

OUR GIFTS TO THE LORD- Sometimes we miss a Sunday and the opportunity to offer our financial gift to the Lord. If we do, please catch up with your gifts. Whether we are here or not, our parish bills continue. Thanks, and God bless!

Sunday, March 29, 2020 - Attendance 4 - Weekly Offering, \$995 - Building Fund, \$90 - Membership Dues, \$122 - Patriarchal Pence, \$40 - Needy Envelopes, \$125 - Lenten Food Sales, \$16 - Easter Flowers, \$105 - Vigil Candles, \$156 - Total \$1649

IT WILL BE IMPORTANT- for us to keep our weekly donations to St. John's going while we all practice social distancing and follow the rules set forth by our Metropolitan Gregory and local government officials to limit direct participation in the Divine services to only essential persons. Please mail your offerings to the church address. You can also call the rectory with your Vigil intentions or mail in your requests.

ON TUESDAY- we will celebrate The **Annunciation** of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary at 9am with a Vesperal Liturgy. The service will be livestreamed on Facebook.

THIS WEEK- Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesday at 7pm and Friday at 9am. On Saturday, the Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy will be at 9am and Great Vespers with Litiya at 5pm for Palm Sunday. All services will be live streamed.

THE APRIL CALENDAR- can be viewed here https://sjbeastpitt.org/calendar/month_print.php

O Master Who loves mankind, illuminate our hearts with the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our mind to understand the teachings of Your Gospel. Instill in us also the fear of Your blessed commandments, that we may overcome all carnal desires, entering upon a spiritual life and understanding and acting in all things according to Your holy will. For You are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies, O Christ God, and to You we give glory together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, gracious and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Monday Isaiah 48:17-49:4 Gen 27:1-41	Prov. 19:16-25	Ven. Zacharias the Recluse of Egypt
Tuesday Hebrews 2:11-18	Luke 1:39-49,56	Feast of the Annunciation
Wednesday Isaiah 58:1-11 Gen 43:26-31,45:1-16	Prov. 21:23-22:4	Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel
Thursday Isaiah 65:8-16 Gen 46:1-7	Prov. 23:15-24:5	St Matrona of Thesalonica
Friday Isaiah 66:10-24 Gen 49:33-50:26	Prov. 31:8-31	Venerable John, Bp of Manglisi, Georgia
Saturday Hebrews 12:28-13:8	John 11:1-45	Lazarus Saturday
Sunday Philippians 4:4-9	John 12:1-18	Palm Sunday

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS – Thomas Planiczki, Josephine Sofelkanik, Michael Sterchak, John Edward Stagon, Kathryn Rogulin, Cathy Perevuznik, Fr. Michael and Matushka Susanne Senyo, Wally Perkins, Fr Lawrence Barriger, Gina Marie Gaspard, Dannette Wargo, Pani Marie Brancho, Rose Hollis, Marti and Cathilynn Baran, Aubrey Welch, Kalina Walker and the child, Malachi, born of her, Ashley Yeagers and the child Lincoln Carl born of her. Fr. John Dixon, Fr. Jonathan Tobias, Fr Daniel Prez (Joe Monde's brother), Michelle Clayton, Nicholas Hollis and all healthcare workers and for all sick with COVID-19 virus. Please keep Father Joseph informed on changes to anyone's health status so he can minister to them.

April Birthdays - Kristopher Carlisle 4/14 Brian White; Sr. 4/14 Garrett Skidmore 4/27 Mary Lou Begey 4/28 DeBorah Hutnyan 4/30 Cindy Sterchak 4/30

April Memorial – Newly departed:

Perpetual: John & Anna Sabo, Harry & Mary Tucker, Julia Wazso, Michael & Mary Sivack, John Kalita, John, Mary & George Sabol, Magdalena Sadvary Sabol, George & Helen Kusik, Thomas Planiczki, Michael Yakubik, Pauline Sabo
 John Zura, Anna Chokla, John Hrenko, Sr., Michael Billi, Michael Kostik, Julia Waszo, Maria Muchaj, George Oleksuk, Anna Rel, Michael Suvak, Mary Regrut, Michael Tabak, John Zebra, William Floder, Xenia Marchak, Mary Harajda, John Uram, Marie Ziatyk, Nicholas Kosarich, Helen Kravec, John Geras, George Perevuznik, Nicholas Muchkaj, William Weidenhof, Magdalena Sabol, William Geezer, Florence Skuby, John K Horsak, Stanley Majawski, Helen Evansky-Gabor, Henry Michael Beben, Andrew Kuzemka, Rose Fester and for all victims of the COVID-19 virus

Words of Metropolitan Hilarion of ROCOR: *"Perhaps before we did not sufficiently treasure the opportunity to pray in church, missing the divine services through our laziness and carelessness, or were so swallowed up by our affairs that we practically never saw our families, never prayed, never read anything of spiritual value, never prepared for the feasts, and never observed the fasts. General quarantine is a gift from God, which drives man into the depths of himself, forcing him to reexamine his attitude toward life, to think and to care about what is most important."*

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

Well, another week has come and gone in the days of our isolation as we do our part to slow down and eventually stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

It looks as if we will be in the physical distancing regime for at least another 4 weeks, and probably longer, we better just get used to it and make the most of it. This will mean that we will need to continue to not only keep our physical distance from each other but, sadly from attending church services in person. But for those who can, we can participate via the Internet and pray along at home. For those who don't have the Internet, then getting out our prayer books and Bibles is just as good.

Holy Week and Pascha will be an "Internet" observance. Directives from Johnstown this past week also instructed parishes not to hand out palms and pussy willows. So, keep the ones who have from last year! Also no blessing of Paschal foods and baskets this year.

Like last week we have some good news. Ashley Yeagers gave birth this week to son, Lincoln. It was a difficult delivery and Ashley had some challenges, so please keep her and Lincoln in your prayers.

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Today, on the 5th Sunday of Great Lent, our thoughts turn to St. Mary of Egypt. The Life of Our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt was written down in the seventh century by Saint Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, some 100 years after the repose of the holy Mary, who fell asleep in the Lord April 1, 522.

In her early life, Mary's life choices were those of moral impurity as a prostitute. She used her God-given beauty in ungodly ways. As the story of her life goes, she lived in Alexandria where she plied her trade with great enthusiasm for 17 years. One day she saw a crowd of men gathered near the docks by the sea. She ventured there to see what was going on. She learned that a ship was soon leaving for Jerusalem carrying passengers including those on pilgrimage to the Holy City. Mary, seeing an opportunity asked if she could also go. She had no money for the passage but figured that she could sell herself for food, board and passage and thus make the trip. And so, she did. Nonetheless, God used her decision to go to Jerusalem for her good, even though at that time she didn't know it!

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem was for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The boat arrived a few days before the Feastday and Mary continued in her shameful ways and amused herself with the men she found in Jerusalem. When the day of the Feast finally arrived, Mary made her way to the Church where the Life-giving Cross was being displayed and Elevated. Years later, looking back on her life, while living in isolation in the desert beyond the Jordan, Mary told the Elder Zosima who happened upon her in the desert, the story of what happened at the Church in Jerusalem.

"I had at last squeezed through with great difficulty almost to the entrance of the temple, from which the lifegiving Tree of the Cross was being shown to the people. But when I trod on the doorstep which everyone passed, I was stopped by some force which prevented my entering. Meanwhile I was brushed aside by the crowd and found myself standing alone in the porch. Thinking that this had happened because of my woman's weakness, I again began to work my way into the crowd, trying to elbow myself forward. But in vain I struggled. Again, my feet trod on the

doorstep over which others were entering the church without encountering any obstacle. I alone seemed to remain unaccepted by the church. It was as if there was a detachment of soldiers standing there to oppose my entrance. Once again I was excluded by the same mighty force and once again I stood in the porch. Having repeated my attempt three or four times, at last I felt exhausted and had no more strength to push and to be pushed, so I went aside and stood in a corner of the porch. And only then with great difficulty it began to dawn on me, and I began to understand the reason why I was prevented from being admitted to see the life-giving Cross. The word of salvation gently touched the eyes of my heart and revealed to me that it was my unclean life which barred the entrance to me. I began to weep and lament and beat my breast, and to sigh from the depths of my heart.

"And so, I stood weeping when I saw above me the ikon of the most holy Mother of God. Not taking my eyes off her, I said, `O Lady, Mother of God, who gave birth in the flesh to God the Word, I know, O how well I know, that it is no honour or praise to thee when one so impure and depraved as I look up to thy icon, O ever-virgin, who didst keep thy body and soul in purity. Rightly do I inspire hatred and disgust before thy virginal purity. But I have heard that God Who was born of thee became man on purpose to call sinners to repentance. Then help me, for I have no other help. Order the entrance of the church to be opened to me. Allow me to see the venerable Tree on which He Who was born of thee suffered in the flesh and on which He shed His holy Blood for the redemption of sinners and for me, unworthy as I am. Be my faithful witness before thy son that I will never again defile my body by the impurity of fornication, but as soon as I have seen the Tree of the Cross I will renounce the world and its temptations and will go wherever thou wilt lead me.' Thus, I spoke and as if acquiring some hope in firm faith and feeling some confidence in the mercy of the Mother of God, I left the place where I stood praying. And I went again and mingled with the crowd that was pushing its way into the temple. And no one seemed to thwart me, no one hindered my entering the church. I was possessed with trembling and was almost in delirium.

"Having got as far as the doors which I could not reach before -- as if the same force which had hindered me cleared the way for me -- I now entered without difficulty and found myself within the holy place. And so, I saw the lifegiving Cross. I saw too the Mysteries of God and how the Lord accepts repentance. Throwing myself on the ground, I worshipped that holy earth and kissed it with trembling. Then I came out of the church and went to her who had promised to be my security, to the place where I had sealed my vow. And bending my knees before the Virgin Mother of God, I addressed her with these words: `O loving Lady, thou hast shown me thy great love for all men. glory to God Who receives the repentance of sinners through thee. What more can I recollect or say, I who am so sinful? It is time for me, O Lady to fulfil my vow, according to thy witness. Now lead me by the hand along the path of repentance!' And at these words I heard a voice from on high: `If you cross the Jordan you will find glorious rest.' Hearing this voice and having faith that it was for me, I cried to the Mother of God: `O Lady, Lady, do not forsake me!' With these words I left the porch of the church and set off on my journey.

Thus began Mary's life in the desert, across the Jordan. As much as she had indulged her flesh in her former life, she refused to indulge it living in the isolation of the desert where she prayed and fasted and deprived herself of all earthly pleasures except the divine communication with her Savior, the Mother of God, and the Saints.

It was in this state of blessed repentance and conversion of her life that the Elder Zosima, himself departing his monastery in the desert during the Great Fast, to find solitude in prayer, that he met Holy Mary and where she told him of her life. From that time forward, until the repose of St Mary, the Elder would bring her Holy Communion once-a-year until one year he made his journey across the Jordan River and found the holy remains of Mary, reposed. St. Sophronios writes about the last trip of Elder Zosima into the desert to see Mary:

And when another year had passed, he again went into the desert. he reached the same spot but could see no sign of anyone.

So, raising his eyes to heaven as before, he prayed: "Show me, O Lord, Thy pure treasure, which Thou hast concealed in the desert. Show me, I pray Thee, the angel in the flesh, of which the world is not worthy." Then on the opposite bank of the river, her face turned towards the rising sun, he saw the saint lying dead. Her hands were crossed according to custom and her face was turned to the East. Running up he shed tears over the saint's feet and kissed them, not daring to touch anything else. For a long time he wept. Then reciting the appointed psalms, he said the burial prayers and thought to himself: "Must I bury the body of a saint? Or will this be contrary to her wishes?" And then he saw words traced on the ground by her head: "Abba Zosima, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust that which is dust and pray to the Lord for me, who departed in the month of Fermoutin of Egypt, called April by the Romans, on the first day, on the very night of our Lord's Passion, after having partaken of the Divine Mysteries." Reading this the elder was glad to know the saint's name. He understood too that as soon as she had partaken of the Divine Mysteries on the shore of the Jordan she was at once transported to the place where she died. The distance which Zosima had taken twenty days to cover, Mary had evidently traversed in an hour and had at once surrendered her soul to God. Then Zosima thought: "It is time to do as she wished."

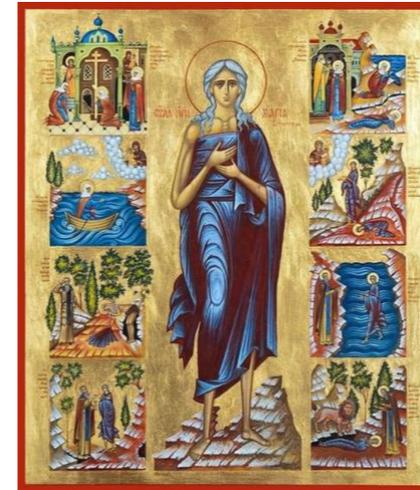
The life of St Mary of Egypt can teach us many things, especially as we, like her, are living in isolation. Of course, our current isolation doesn't compare with the self-imposed isolation of Mary living in the desert. But having chosen a life of isolation she devoted herself to communing with God in prayer and fasting. Through God's grace she was blessed to accomplish great feats of spiritual wisdom. For us, now being asked to isolate, we too have the chance to increase our prayer life. We too have the chance to fast more. We can bemoan our situation of having our lives disrupted or we can view it as an opportunity to grow closer to God. There is nothing stopping us from growing closer to God, from feats of spiritual wisdom and greatness.

We will soon be entering the holiest days of the year. We will have to make a great effort this year not being able to physically be present at church services. No palms and pussy willows this year. No processions on Holy Friday and Pascha. The Paschal services will be simple but, God-willing still full of joy. This year, no blessing of Paschal foods after Paschal Liturgy. But, consider this; St. Mary of Egypt never had these things either. Nonetheless, she had Christ and the fullness of His life because although isolated from other people in her solitary life, she was never really alone for she walked with God and God walked with her. May we also walk with God and never be alone.

Yours in Christ,

Father Joseph

Sundays of Great Lent – The Sunday of St Mary of Egypt



In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Week after week we feel that we are coming closer and closer to the glorious Resurrection of Christ. And it seems to us that we are moving fast, from Sunday to Sunday as it were, to the day when all horrors, all terrors, will have disappeared.

And yet so easily do we forget that before we reach the day of the Resurrection we must, together with Christ, together with His apostles, tread the road of the Crucifixion. 'So we are ascending to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall crucify Him, and the third day He will rise'. All we notice is that He will rise. But do we ever think of the way in which the disciples went to Jerusalem, knowing that the Crucifixion was at hand? They were moving in fear. They were not yet mature enough to be those who would give their lives for the message to be spread. They were moving in fear. When Christ told them that they would go now to

Jerusalem, return to the city which had then renounced Christ, put Him into danger of His life, they said to Him, 'Let us not go.' And only one disciple, Thomas, said, 'No. Let us go with Him, and die with Him.'

This disciple is the one whom, foolishly I believe, we call the Doubter: the one who was not prepared to give his trust to God, his faith, his life, his blood, without certainty. But his heart was unreservedly given to Christ. How wonderful to be such a man! But the other disciples would not desert Christ. They walked towards Jerusalem.

And we have today another example of one who went through a tragedy before they met Christ. It is Mary of Egypt. She was a sinner. She was a harlot. She was unfaithful to God in her soul and in her body. She had no reverence for this body which God had created and this soul. And yet she was tragically confronted with the fact that there was no way for her into the temple of God unless she rejected evil and chose purity, repentance, newness of life.

Let us reflect on the disciples who almost begged Christ not to return to Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was a city where all prophets had died; and they did not want Christ to die, and they were afraid. Let us ask ourselves how much we resemble them. And let us ask ourselves freely today how do we resemble, or not, Mary of Egypt - Mary who had lived her life according to her own ways and desires, followed all temptations of her body and soul; and one day realised that as she was, she could not enter the temple of God.

So easily do we enter the divine temple, forgetting so easily that the church into which we come is a small part of a world that has chosen to be alien to God, that has rejected God, lost interest in Him; and that the few believers have created for God a place of refuge - yes, the church is the fullness of Heaven, and at the same time a tragic place of refuge, the only place where God has a right to be

because He is wanted. And when we come here, we enter into the divine realm. We should come into it with a sense of awe, not just walk into it as into a space but walk into it as a space which is already the divine Kingdom.

If we were in that mood we would, when we come to the doors of the church, be, however little, like Mary of Egypt. We would stop and say, 'How can I come in?' And if we did that with our whole heart, broken-heartedly, with a sense of horror of the fact that we are so distant from God, so alien, so unfaithful to Him, then the doors would open and we would see that we are not simply in a big space surrounded with walls but we are in a space which is God's Heaven come to earth.

Let us therefore learn from this experience what it means to go step by step towards the Resurrection, because in order to reach the Resurrection we must go through Calvary, we must go through the tragedy of Holy Week and make it our own, partaking with Christ and His disciples and the crowds around in the horror, the terror of it; and also experience it as a scorching fire that will burn in us all that is unworthy of God and make us clean. And perhaps one day, when the fire will have burnt everything which is not worthy of God, each of us may become an image of the burning bush, aflame with divine fire and not consumed, because only that which could survive the fire of God would have remained is us. Amen.

Metropolitan Anthony Surozh
Sunday of St Mary of Egypt
16th April 2000

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March 29 Candle Intentions

Health

Bires, Alice - Benjamin
Bires, Alice - Kalina, Sean, Mila and Malachi Child
Bires, Alice - Pani Illeana & Unborn sons
Bires, Alice - Scott & Sharon
Bires, Alice - Wally
Bires, Alice - Ron Raible
Bires, Alice - Coronavirus victims
3/22 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Paul & Family
3/22 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Rebecca & Matthew
3/22 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Neil & Family
3/22 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Ned, Wally, J.E. Stagon
3/22 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Josie, Marti, Joan
3/29 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Paul & Family
3/29 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Rebecca & Matthew
3/29 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Neil & Family
3/29 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Ned, Wally, J.E. Stagon
3/29 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Josie, Marti, Joan
3/29 Chuprinko, Marilyn - Malachi Walker
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Benjamin

Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Luke & Alexis
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Irene & Basil
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Janet
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Deborah
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Burkett Family
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Josie Sofelkanik
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Bob & Miryam Knutson
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Mitzi Conroy
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Wally Perkins
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - John E. Stagon
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Anthony Macchiaroli
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Kevin Henry
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Fr. John Dixon
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Marti Baran
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Kalina, Sean, Mila & Malachi
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Virus Victims
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Healthcare and Grocery Workers
Stagon, George - Fr. Matthew, Pani Eleni, Seraphim, Luka, Harikila, Xenia
Stagon, George - Jeffery, Nicole, Jillina Payton
Stagon, George - Connie and Tyler
Stagon, George - Barbara
Stagon, George - All Virus victims

Special Intentions

Alice Bires

Memory

Bires, Alice - Parents
Bires, Alice - Brother-in-law
Bires, Alice - Helen
Bires, Alice - Margie
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Mother, Helen Grysiak
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Father, Charles Grysiak
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Mother, Irene Barney
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Father, Edward Barney
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Metropolitan Nicholas
Grysiak, Janet & Gary - Virus Victims
Stagon, George - Mom and Dad

Dues

Chuprinko, Marilyn