



# Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox Church of  
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
18<sup>th</sup> April 2021**



## **Fifth Sunday in Lent – Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**

### **Metropolitan Anthony on Saint Mary of Egypt**

On this fifth Sunday in Lent we remember Saint Mary of Egypt, and she can teach us a great deal of what we need to know. She was a sinner, publicly known, a temptation and a scandal to men. How she became a sinner - we do not know; whether there was evil in her, whether she was seduced or raped, how she became a harlot, we shall never know. What we know for sure is that one day she came to a church of the Mother of God - the image of perfect wholeness - and she suddenly felt that she could not enter it. We need not imagine a miraculous force preventing her from crossing the threshold; the force was probably - certainly - within herself. She felt that the realm was too sacred, and the person of the Mother of God too holy for her to dare walk into Her presence and stand in the precincts of the church. This was enough for her to realise that all the past was darkness, and that there was but one way out of it: to shake off all evil and to start a new life. She did not go for advice, she did not go for confession; she walked out of the city into the desert, into the scorching desert where there was nothing but sand and heat and hunger, and desperate loneliness.

She can teach us something very great. As Saint Seraphim of Sarov repeated more than once to those who came to see him, the difference between a sinner who is lost and a sinner who finds his way to salvation lies in nothing but determination. The grace of God is always there; but our response is not. But Mary responded; through the horror of her new perception of herself she responded to the holiness, the grace, the wholeness and sanctity of the Mother of God, and nothing, nothing was too much for her to change her life

Year after year, in fasting and prayer, in the scorching heat, in the desperate aloneness of the desert she fought all the evil that had accumulated in her soul; because it is not enough to become aware of the evil, it is not enough even to reject it in an act of will, - it is there, in our memories, in our desires, in our frailty, in the rottenness which evil brings. She had to fight for her whole life, but at the end of that life she had conquered; indeed, she had fought the good fight, she had become pure of stain, she could enter the realm of God: not a temple, not a place, but eternity.

She can teach us a great deal. She can teach us that only if one day we become aware that the realm into which we walk so freely- the church, or simply the world created by God and which has remained pure of evil although subjected, enslaved to evil, because of us – that this realm is so holy that we alone have no place there, then we might in response to this sense repent, that is turn away from ourselves in horror, and turn against ourselves with stern determination. Then we could follow her example.

This example of hers is presented to us as a crowning moment of this spring of life, which is Lent. A week before, we heard the teaching and call of Saint John of the Ladder, the one who has established a whole ladder of perfection for us to overcome evil and come to right. And today we see one who from the very depth of evil was brought to the heights of saintliness, and as the Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete says: 'Be sure that God Who could heal the leprous could heal the leprosy which is yours.'

Let us therefore see in her a new encouragement, a new hope, indeed, a new joy, but also a challenge, a call, because it is in vain that we sing the praise of saints if we do not learn from them and emulate them.

Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999  
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### This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup>: **Fifth Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**

Epistle Hebrews 9: 11-14      Gospel Mark 10: 32b-45

On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Caedwalla**, King of the West Saxons (689)

On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>: **Apostles Nathaniel, Luke and Clement** (1<sup>st</sup> C)

On Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>: **Holy, Glorious Great Martyr George** (303) (Services transferred to 3<sup>rd</sup> May)  
We wish **George K and Georgia B** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>: **Saturday of the Raising of Lazarus.**

Epistle Hebrews 12: 28 – 13:8      Gospel John 11: 1-45

### From the Akathist to Saint Mary of Egypt and Saint Zosimas

#### Kontakion 1

We glorify You, Heavenly Father, for You raise up sinners to sainthood in response to their repentance and from the boundless creativeness of Your compassionate and merciful ways. Whether we live in the depth of depravity or in the peace of prayer, You know our heart and You call us forth into Your marvellous light. We see Your unfathomable love illustrated so clearly in the lives of the penitent Saint Mary of Egypt and the priest Saint Zosimas. We therefore exalt You, Gracious Father, and cry out to Your holy saints, saying:

Rejoice, Saint Mary, beloved penitent and giver of hope.

Rejoice, Saint Zosimas, humble priest and finder of true holiness.

Rejoice, unity of all saints from every walk of life.

#### Ikos 1

“Forgive me for God’s sake,” said Saint Mary when she was found by Saint Zosimas in the desert beyond the Jordan River. Indeed, forgive us, holy saints of God, as we approach you with our praises and supplications. Forgive us, in the Name of God, for we are sinful men and women and we humbly bow down before you. Henceforth, let all the repentant say, “Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner,” as we devotedly bring forth words of praise to God’s wonderful saints:

Rejoice, for you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, for you pour out your blessings upon us.

Rejoice, for you left behind your former pursuits.

Rejoice, for you satisfied your spiritual thirst in the desert.

Rejoice, for you understood each other’s desire for purity.

Rejoice, for you beheld each other’s holiness of life.

Rejoice, for God filled you with interior peace and beauty.

Rejoice, for your repentance and humility were acceptable.

Rejoice, for you fill us with awe and inspiration.

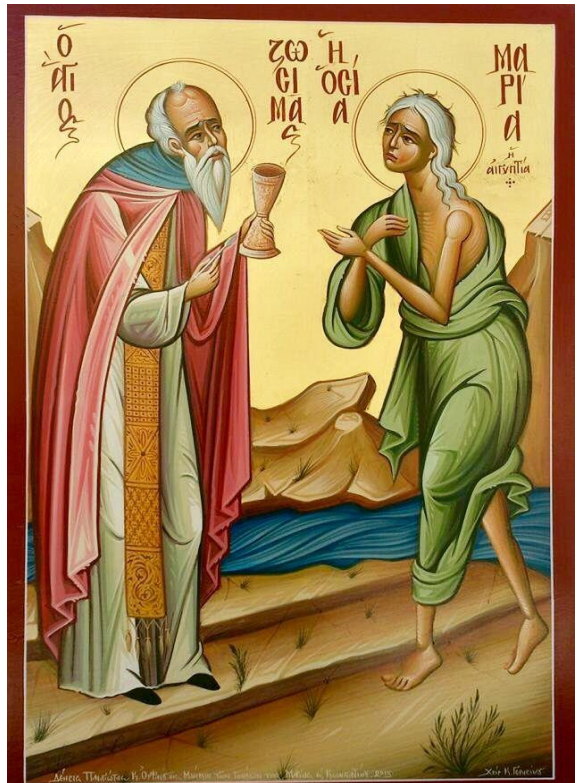
Rejoice, for you accept our quest for spiritual prosperity.

Rejoice, for God shines His wisdom and forgiveness through you.

Rejoice, for you manifested the Church in a wilderness gathering.

Rejoice, unity of all saints from every walk of life.

Full text posted at [Akathist to Saint Mary of Egypt and Saint Zosimas - The Catalog of Good Deeds \(obitel-minsk.com\)](http://obitel-minsk.com)



## The Life of Saint Mary of Egypt

She began her life as a young woman who followed the passions of the body, running away from her parents at age twelve for Alexandria. There she lived as a harlot for seventeen years, refusing money from the men that she lay with, instead living by begging and spinning flax.

One day, however, she met a group of young men heading toward the sea to sail to Jerusalem for the veneration of the Holy Cross. Mary went along for the ride, seducing the men as they travelled for the fun of it. But when the group reached Jerusalem and actually went towards the church, Mary was prohibited from entering by an unseen force. After three such attempts, she remained outside on the church patio, where she looked up and saw an icon of the Theotokos. She began to weep and prayed with all her might that the Theotokos might allow her to see the True Cross; afterwards, she promised, she would renounce her worldly desires and go wherever the Theotokos may lead her.

After this heart-felt conversion at the doors of the church, she fled into the desert to live as an ascetic. She survived for years on only three loaves of bread and thereafter on scarce herbs of the land. For another seventeen years, Mary was tormented by "wild beasts - mad desires and passions." After these years of temptation, however, she overcame the passions and was led by the Theotokos in all things.

Following 47 years in solitude, she met the priest St. Zosimas in the desert, who pleaded with her to tell him of her life. She recounted her story with great humility, while also demonstrating her gift of clairvoyance; she knew who Zosimas was and his life story despite never having met him before. Finally, she asked Zosimas to meet her again the following year at sunset on Holy Thursday by the banks of the Jordan.

Zosima did exactly this, though he began to doubt his experience as the sun began to set that night. Then Mary appeared on the opposite side of the Jordan; crossing herself, she miraculously walked across the water and met Zosimas. When he attempted to bow, she rebuked him, saying that as a priest he was far superior, and furthermore, he was holding the Holy Mysteries. Mary then received communion and walked back across the Jordan after giving Zosimas instructions about his monastery and that he should return to where they first met exactly a year later. When he did so, he found Mary's body with a message written on the sand asking him for burial and revealing that she had died immediately after receiving the Holy Mysteries the year before (and thus had been miraculously transported to the spot where she now lay). So Zosimas, amazed, began to dig, but soon tired; then a lion approached and began to help him, that is, after Zosimas had recovered from his fear of the creature. Thus St. Mary of Egypt was buried. Zosimas returned to the monastery, told all he had seen, and improved the conduct of the monks and abbot there. He died at almost a hundred years old in the same monastery.

Later, the story of Mary's life was written down by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* is read during Great Lent along with the Great Canon of St. Andrew.

Source: OrthodoxWiki

Standing, O Saint, before Christ the Light that no man can approach, send down light upon me, for with love I celebrate thy light-giving and holy memory; and keep me safe from the manifold temptations of life.

From Canticle One of the Canon of the Saint, in Tone Six

## Noticeboard

### Services:

Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup>: **Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**

Orthros and Divine Liturgy - Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Vespers – Saint Anne’s 3.00pm

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>: Vespers – Saint Anne’s 6.30pm

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>: Lazarus Saturday**

**Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Palms – Saint James’ Hall 10.30am**

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>: **Palm Sunday**

Divine Liturgy – Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Matins – Saint Anne’s 3.00pm

Monday 26<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>:

Matins – Saint Anne’s 6.30pm

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup>: **Holy Thursday**

The Mystical Supper – Plymouth 9am

Service of the Twelve Gospels – Saint James’ Hall 6pm

Friday 30<sup>th</sup>: **Holy Friday**

Vespers - Saint James’ Hall 3.30pm

Matins (Burial Service) – Saint James’ Hall 6.30pm

Saturday May 1<sup>st</sup>: **Holy Saturday Vespers and Divine Liturgy** – Saint James’ Hall 9.30

May 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>: **Easter Night – Paschal Vigil and Liturgy 10pm** – venue to be announced

### **Important reminder – Easter Night Tickets**

**You should by now have received your invitation to apply for tickets for our Easter Night service. Please let us have your requests by the end of next Sunday (25<sup>th</sup> April – Palm Sunday). After that we will start issuing any remaining tickets to people from outside our parish community.**

**If for any reason you have not yet received the invitation, please contact us at [martinolsson827@btinternet.com](mailto:martinolsson827@btinternet.com) or on 01837 82796 with details of how many people in your ‘bubble’ will be coming, yourself included.**

### **His Delight is in the Lord**

The Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and abstinence with holiness: and so the rich shall not enter into it, but those who entrust their treasures to the hands of the poor. This is what David the Prophet teaches us, saying: The righteous man shows mercy all the day long; his delight is in the Lord, and walking in the light he shall not stumble. All this was written for our admonition, that we should fast and do good; and in exchange for earthly things may the Lord reward us with the things of heaven.

From Matins of the Fifth Sunday of Lent, in Tone One

### **Thou Hast Wiped Away All Tears**

Shedding tears over Thy friend, O merciful Lord, Thou hast made the tears of Martha cease, and by Thy voluntary Passion Thou hast wiped away all tears from the face of Thy people. O God of our Fathers, blessed art Thou.

From Canticle Seven of Matins of the Saturday of Lazarus.