

St Mary of Egypt / The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent 8 / 21 April

The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent: Venerable Mary of Egypt, Troparion, Tone VIII — In thee, O Mother, was carefully preserved what is according to the Image. For thou didst take the Cross and follow Christ. By so doing thou didst teach us to disregard the flesh, for it passes away, but to care for the soul as an immortal thing. Therefore, St. Mary, thy spirit rejoices with the Angels.

Kontakion, Tone IV — Having escaped the fog of sin, and having illumined thy heart with the light of penitence, O glorious one, thou didst come to Christ and didst offer to Him His immaculate and holy Mother as a merciful intercessor. Hence thou hast found remission for transgressions, and with

the angels thou ever rejoicest.

Troparion of the Sunday, Tone V — Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, / Co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, / born for our salvation from the Virgin, / for He willed to be lifted up on the cross in the flesh, / to endure death / and to raise the dead by His glorious resurrection.

Hymn to the Theotokos, Tone V — Rejoice, O impassable gate of the Lord! / Rejoice, O wall and protection of those who run to you! / Rejoice, O unshakable refuge! / Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of your God and Creator! / Do not cease praying for those who praise you and worship your Son. (1x) Blessed be the name of the Lord, henceforth and forever more.

Kontakion of the Sunday, Tone V — Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior, / shattering its gates as almighty; / resurrecting the dead as Creator, / and destroying the sting of death. / Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, / and we all cry to Thee: "O Lord, save us!"

St. Mary of Egypt - The recorder of the life of this wonderful saint was St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. A hieromonk, the elder Zossima, had gone off at one time during the Great Fast a twenty-days' walk into the wilderness across the Jordan. He suddenly caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body and with hair as white as snow, who fled in its nakedness from Zossima's sight. The elder ran a long way, until this figure stopped at a stream and called: 'Father Zossima, forgive me for the Lord's sake. I cannot turn round to you, for I am a naked woman.' Then Zossima threw her his outer cloak, and she wrapped herself in it and turned round to him. The elder was amazed at hearing his name from the lips of this unknown woman. After considerable pressure on his part, she told him her life-story. She had been born in Egypt, and had lived as a prostitute in Alexandria from the age of twelve, spending seventeen years in this way of life. Urged by the lustful fire of the flesh, she one day got into a ship that was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she tried to go into one of the churches to venerate the Precious Cross, but some unseen power prevented her from entering. In great fear, she turned to an icon of the Mother of God that was in the entrance, and begged her to let her go in and venerate the Cross, confessing her sin and impurity and promising that she would then go wherever the Most Pure led her. She was then allowed to enter the church. After venerating the Cross, she went out again to the entrance and, standing in front of the icon, thanked the Mother of God. Then she heard a voice: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace.' She immediately bought three loaves of bread and set off for the Jordan, arriving there the same evening. She received Communion the following morning in the monastery of St John, and then crossed the river. She spent forty-eight whole years in the wilderness in the

greatest torments, in terror, in struggles with passionate thoughts like gigantic beasts. She fed only on plants. After that, when she was standing in prayer, Zossima saw her lifted up in the air. She begged him to bring her Communion the next year on the bank of the Jordan, and she would come to receive it. The following year, Zossima came with the Holy Gifts to the bank of the Jordan in the evening, and stood in amazement as he saw her cross the river. He saw her coming in the moonlight and, arriving on the further bank, make the sign of the Cross over the river. She then walked across it as though it were dry land. When she had received Communion, she begged him to come again the following year to the same stream by which they had first met. Zossima went, and found her dead body there on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: 'Abba Zossima, bury in this place the body of the humble Mary. Give dust to dust. I passed away on April 1st, on the very night of Christ's Passion, after communion of the divine Mysteries.' Zossima learned her name for the first time, and also the awe-inspiring marvel that she had arrived at that stream the previous year on the night of the same day on which she had received Communion—a place that he had taken twenty days to reach. And thus Zossima buried the body of the wonderful saint, Mary of Egypt. When he returned to the monastery, he recounted the whole story of her life and the wonders to which he had been an eyewitness. Thus the Lord glorifies repentant sinners. St Mary is also commemorated in the Fifth Week of the Great Fast. The Church holds her up before the faithful in these days of the Fast as a model of repentance. She entered into rest in about 530.

Matins Gospel II

Epistle - Hebrews 9: 11 - 14

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

HE ENTERED THE MOST HOLY PLACE ONCE FOR ALL, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION

If the priesthood established by the law has come to an end, and the priest who is 'in the order of Melchizedek' has offered his sacrifice, and has made all other sacrifices unnecessary, why do the priests of the new covenant perform the mystical liturgy? Now it is clear to those instructed in divinity that we do not offer another sacrifice, but perform a memorial of that unique and saving offering. For this was the Lord's own command: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (I Cor. 11:24). So that by contemplation we may recall what is symbolised, the sufferings endured on our behalf, and may kindle our love towards our benefactor, and look forward to the enjoyment of the blessings to come.

Theodoret of Cyprus. The Eucharist. interpr. in XIV ep. S. Paul in Heb.8.4. B#15, p. 276.

Second Reading: Galatians 3: 23-29

Gospel - Mark 10: 32 - 45

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

WHOEVER DESIRES TO BECOME GREAT AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT

But let no man be troubled at the apostles being in such an imperfect state. For not yet was the cross accomplished, not yet the grace of the Spirit given. But if you want to learn their virtue, notice them after these things, and you will see them superior to every passion. For with this object He reveals their deficiencies, that after these things you might know what manner of men they became by grace ...No one will sit on His right hand nor on His left. For that throne is inaccessible to all: I do not say to men only and saints and apostles, but even to angels, and archangels, and to all the powers that are on high... But for whom is it prepared? For those who could become distinguished by their works ..Do you see how they were all in an imperfect state, when these were lifting themselves up above the ten, and those envying the two? ...Hear at least how this same John - he who now came to Him for these things - everywhere gives up the first place to Peter, both in addressing the people, and in working miracles, in the Acts of the Apostles. He does not conceal Peter's good deeds, but relates both the confession, which he openly made when all were silent, and his entering into the tomb. And he puts the apostle before himself ..Let us then become lowly, so we may be high. For most utterly does arrogance abase ...Abraham says, I am dust a ashes and prevailed over countless barbarians bearing a trophy more glorious than the former, and, cleaving to his virtue, grew ever more high.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXV on Matthew XX, 2, 3, 4, 6. B#54, pp. 399-401, 403.

ST. MARY OF EGYPT.

"This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mk. 9:29). So if you will remember, last Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, the Gospel proclaimed to us: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." What is "this kind"? If you will remember, brothers and sisters, we were told there about a youth who was possessed and sometimes fell into fire and sometimes into water, as his father said when he brought him to Christ. And Christ said, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." This is what kind. The kind which possessed the youth and was casting him down. This unfortunate youth not only knew no rest, but not even life itself And Christ said, "can come forth." This means that it was something separate. Now do we understand this or not?

Brothers, if you just open a newspaper, you will at once understand what "This kind" means. See how many people who, in a state of despair, jump into water in order to end their lives, thinking there is no eternal life. And into fire. Here you find so many who again, out of despair, throw themselves into fire, become human torches in order to burn themselves. It is the same thing: a state of insanity or despondency, or on the contrary, a state of mind which almost reaches madness—human pride. And how many people become victims of those terrible excesses of sex. How many terrible mental conditions there are in which a person commits robbery, murder, which are connected with the terrible greed for money, for power. What is this? It is precisely "this kind." We seem not to participate in it. Oh, if only we would not participate!

Now we are in the period of life which we call spiritual spring. If a farmer is late in sowing, then there will be no harvest and, therefore, no bread. Likewise, if a person is late in acquiring sobriety, attention to his inner man, his heart, then he will be left without spiritual nourishment, in spiritual hunger. And if there is some kind of passion in his heart and he realises it, then he will also understand that no one can drive out this passion except He Who created man. But for this to happen, preparation is needed. And this preparation is fasting and prayer.

We should have remained with such feelings during the past week. And if we possessed the state of mind which a Christian should possess, then during this fifth week, when the Church was crying: "O Lord, before I perish to the end, save me," when the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete was being read, which exposes and overturns our heart and reveals to us such passions; it would be possible for us to approach God and say: "O God, forgive me, heal me, give me Thine everlasting light; give me Life, because maybe I have only one year left to live, and maybe not even that; I might be going to Thee right now."

We are all going there into eternity; and the Church gives us this time for preparation, in order to look at ourselves, so that we might acquire the forces necessary for entering eternal existence.

The Church said to us in the last Gospel that this kind is driven out by fasting and prayer. We think that fasting is when we do not have vegetable oil on the table. Yes, certainly limitation in food is also fasting. But fasting does not consist of this alone; this is only part of fasting. Fasting is when a person opens his heart in such a way that he sees what is unneeded and rejects it, keeping only what is needed in order to preserve his heart. And prayer? Prayer is the state in which our soul, sensing Divine peace, unceasingly calls to the Lord; "Help me; don't let it happen. Don't allow the murder of the most important feeling within me—conscience."

And here at the end of this week, I don't know about you, but I still have a feeling of being unworthy. And for me today is a great comfort. In what sense? Here before us, before our spiritual eyes, stands Mary of Egypt. This was a sinner who became a classic type, a classic image of a Christian woman. She was an outrageous courtesan of Alexandria in Egypt. She was a harlot; she was a prostitute; she was a beauty; and her depravity knew no limits.

Once she chanced to see a crowd of people boarding a ship. And she, not in order to go to Palestine, but in order to be active in her profession among the pilgrims, she also boarded this ship. And so she sailed to Jerusalem. She went with the crowd to worship the Cross of the Lord. Why not? The whole crowd was going and so she went too. And here, when the crowd had entered the vestibule of the church; then here, no matter what Mary did, she could not enter the church. By now almost everyone had entered, but she was somehow nailed to the floor. It was as if a gust of wind or a wave threw her out and drove her away. No matter how she trembled, no matter how eager she was to enter, she could not; something would not let her. Finally, she understood that some kind of terrible force would not let her in. And here she looked up: before her was a face; it was the icon of the Mother of God with the Child. Immediately the curtain which covered up her conscience was opened. She had heard about Christ and she had heard that Christ called to chastity. And here her conscience revealed to her all her sin, and she fell before the Heavenly Queen with this cry: "Forgive me, help!"

And then she herself did not see or understand what happened. All at once, as if lifted by wind, she was brought into the church and she fell down before the Cross of the Lord. And here a miracle happened to her: there appeared in her the thirst for purity, for chastity. She wanted to feel the lightness of a clean conscience. And when she felt forgiveness, without looking

around and without any provisions, she rushed to the Jordan, walked through it, and then disappeared into the desert.

And so for seventeen years she lived in a state of sobriety; and as she said later, she had to bite the ground in order to destroy lustful feelings, carnal longings, the demonic bodily movements of "this kind." And later on, for seventeen more years she praised God's Grace. She was like an angel.

Therefore, I say that for us this day which the Church puts before us is a comfort. There is no sinner whom the Lord would not forgive. Brothers and sisters, without doubt every one of us will be covered by the lid of a coffin. Every one of us will disappear into the grave. And the soul will pass over into eternity. What will be there? Do we ever think about what will be there? The Church is calling and calling us to repentance. But how do we start? Now pay attention to this: Mary could not enter the Church; somebody was not letting her in. Look at yourself, at your conscience. The same happens to you; somebody is not allowing you to surrender fully to Christ. Stop this. But how? In the same way Mary did—rush to the Mother of God.

This is what I am asking you to do. This is the greatest joy. And rush to the Lord and say, "Lord, help me to be Christian. Help me, so that the motion of my heart beats out just one feeling: surrender to the Lord, fulfilment of His commandments. Then a clear, bright spring will come. And approaching Pascha we will hear the words of Christ, "Peace be unto you!" (Lk. 24:36). May this peace rest in you.

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Second Reading: St. Luke 7: 36-50

Saints of the Week

8 / 21 April — The Holy Apostles Herodion, Agabus, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon and Hermas - They were all among the Seventy, and are all mentioned by St Paul in his Epistles. Herodion was a kinsman of Paul's: 'Salute Herodion my kinsman', he writes to the Romans (16:11). Herodion suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews as Bishop of Neoparthia; he was beaten about the head, stoned on the mouth and stabbed in the legs. When they had left him for dead, St Herodion arose and continued to serve the apostles. He helped the Apostle Peter in Rome, and was beheaded along with many other Christians on the same day that Peter was crucified. St Agabus had a spirit of prophecy. Two of his prophecies are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. First, he prophesied a great famine throughout the world, which came to pass in the time of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:2~). The second was when he met the Apostle Paul in Caesarea. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, and Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound himself hand and foot, saying: 'Thus saith the Holy Spirit: so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle' (21:11). St Rufus was Bishop of Thebes in Greece. The Apostle Paul mentions him also: 'Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord' (Rom. 16:13). St Asyncritus (Rom. 16:14) was Bishop of Hyrcania in Asia. St Phlegon, who is mentioned in the same place as St Rufus, was bishop in the Thracian city of Marathon. St Hermas, mentioned with the others, was bishop in Dalmatia. All these, with bee-like industry, spread the Gospel, suffering greatly for the love of Christ. They all went to the eternal Kingdom of their beloved Christ.

St Niphon, Bishop of Novgorod - distinguished by his great enthusiasm in constructing and restoring the churches of God and by showing great courage in opposing the stances of the tyrannical princes. Thirteen days before his death, St. Theodosius appeared to Niphon and announced his imminent passing over to the other world. He died in the year 1156 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Sergius priest (1933). Venerable Rufus the Obedient of the Kiev Caves (14th c.). Martyr Pausilippus of Heraclea in Thrace (117-138). St. Celestine, pope of Rome (432). New Martyr John Naukliros ("the Navigator") in Thessaly (1699). Monk-martyrs Josias and Joseph of Mt. Kharasam, Persia (341). New Martyr John (Koulika) (1564). St. Philaret of Seminara, Calabria (1070). Spanish Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (792).

9 / 22 April — The Holy Martyr Euppsychius - He was of gentle birth and was reared in faith and devotion. In the time of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, when St Basil the Great was governing the Church in Caesarea, Euppsychius married a girl of good family. But he was not

given even one day to live in wedlock, for, on his wedding day itself, there was a pagan festival with sacrifices to the idol of Fortune. Euppsychius went out with some others and smashed all the idols in the temple, then pulled down the temple itself. Julian was furious, and commanded that the culprits be beheaded, that many Christians be taken into the army, that an enormous levy be imposed on Christians, the proceeds of which were to be used to rebuild the Temple of Fortune, and that the town cease to be called Caesarea (as it had been named by Claudius Caesar), and revert to its former name, Maza. Euppsychius was first bound to a tree and cruelly tortured, and then beheaded, in 362. A little after this time, the wicked Emperor Julian visited that town on his way to Persia, against which he was waging war. St Basil went to meet him, bearing three barley loaves as a sign of honour and welcome. The Emperor ordered that, as a return gift, the saint be given a fistful of hay. Basil said to the Emperor: 'You ridicule us now, O King; we bring you bread, by which we are fed, and you give us miserable food which you, with all your power, are not able to turn into nourishment for men!' To this the Emperor replied: 'You can be sure that I will feed you with this hay when I return from Persia ! ' But the wicked apostate did not return alive from Persia, but perished there by a fitting and un-natural death;

Our Holy Father Vadim the Martyr - During the reign of the Persian Emperor Sapor, Vadim, the abbot of a certain monastery and a man famous for his generosity was cast into prison with seven of his disciples. With them in prison was a certain Prince Nirsan who was also a Christian. Everyday they were taken out and beaten. Prince Nirsan became terrified and promised to deny the Faith and worship the sun. This was gratifying to Sapor and he promised to give Nirsan, among other things, the entire estate of Vadim's monastery if he would behead Vadim by his own hand. Nirsan agrees to this. With a quivering hand and frightened by the majestic countenance of St. Vadim, he struck this holy man with the sword many times on the neck until he finally beheaded him. Shortly after that, Nirsan succumbed to despair and stabbed himself with the sword and received at his own hand, the due punishment for the murder of the righteous one. St. Vadim suffered in the year 376 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: New Martyr Gabriel (1942). Martyrs Desan bishop, Mariabus presbyter, Abdiesus, and 270 other martyrs in Persia (362). Venerable Woutruide, foundress of a monastery (688) (Neth.). Newly revealed Martyrs Raphael, Nicholas, and Irene of Lesbos (1463) (Greek). Martyrs Fortunatus, Donatus, twelve virgins and six laymen at Sirmium (304). St. Acacius, bishop of Amida in Mesopotamia (5th c.).

10 / 23 April – The Holy Martyrs Terence, Africanus, Maximus; Pompeius and 36 others with them - They suffered for Christ and were crowned with wreaths of glory in the time of the Emperor Decius. By the Emperor's orders, the governor of Africa notified all the people that they must offer sacrifice to idols. In the case of opposition, the governor was to put the stubborn to harsh torture. Hearing this threat, many lapsed from the Faith and worshipped idols. But these forty martyrs remained steadfast, for which they were put to torture. St Terence encouraged his companions with these words: 'Let us, my brethren, keep ourselves from denying Christ our God; that He may not deny us before His heavenly Father and the holy angels.' The governor divided them into two groups; thirty-six of them, after flogging and having salt rubbed in their open wounds, he beheaded. But the first four he cast into prison with heavy chains round their necks and on their hands and feet. An angel of God appeared to them in the prison and touched their chains, which fell from them. Then the angel brought them a table abundantly heaped with food, and fed them. They were again taken out and tortured, and again shut up in the prison. Also, the governor ordered sorcerers to gather as many poisonous reptiles as possible, such as snakes and scorpions, and to shut them up with the martyrs. But the reptiles would not touch the men of God, but huddled together in one corner, where they remained for three days. When the prison was opened on the third day, the reptiles fell on the sorcerers and bit them. At last the governor passed sentence of death on these four martyrs. When they were taken to the scaffold, they joyfully sang psalms and hymns of thanksgiving to God, who had accounted them worthy of a martyr's death. They suffered with honour and attained to the Kingdom in the year 250.;

The Six Thousand Martyrs in Georgia - In the wilderness of David-Garejeli in Georgia, there were twelve monasteries in which many monks practiced and lived the ascetical life for centuries. In 1615 A.D., the great king of Persia, Shah Abbas I, attacked Georgia, devastated it and beheaded many Christians. Once while hunting early in the morning on the Feast of the Resurrection, Shah Abbas noticed many lights in the mountains. They were the monks from the twelve monasteries in procession around the Church of the Resurrection with lighted tapers in

hand. When the Shah discovered that they were monks, he asked in amazement: "Has not all of Georgia been given over to the sword?" He then ordered his soldiers to immediately go and behead all the monks. At that moment an angel of God appeared to Abbot Arsenius and informed him of impending death. Arsenius informed his brethren. They all received Communion of the All-Pure Mysteries and prepared themselves for death. Suddenly, the assailants arrived and hacked to pieces, first of all, the abbot, who came before the others and, after that, all the rest. They all suffered honourably and were crowned with incorruptible wreaths in the year 1615 A.D. Thus, ended the history of these famous monasteries which, for more than a thousand years, served as the spiritual hearth of enlightenment for the Georgians. Only two of the monasteries exist today: St. David and St. John the Forerunner. The Georgian Emperor Arcil gathered the relics of the monks and honourably interred them. Even today, these relics emit a sweet-smelling Chrism (oil) and heal the sick.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Flegont priest (1938). Martyr Demetrius (1942). Martyrs James, presbyter, and Azadan and Abdicius, deacons, of Persia (ca. 380). New Hieromartyr Gregory V, patriarch of Constantinople (1821) (Greek). Prophetess Huldah (Olda) (II Kings 22:14). St. Milteades, pope of Rome. New Martyr Demos of Smyrna (1763) (Greek). Nun-martyr Anastasia, abbess of Uglich and 34 nuns with her (1609). Monk-martyr Chrysanthus of Xenophontos, Mt. Athos (Greek). Martyrs Beocca, Hethor and others, at Chertsey.

11 / 24 April — The Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum - He is mentioned in the Book of Revelation as 'Antipas My faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth'(Rev.2:13)—the city of Pergamum. The inhabitants of this town dwelt in the darkness of idolatry and in the depths of impurity: they were slaves to their passions, slanderers, bullies, incestuous; in brief, slaves of Satan. There among them lived Antipas 'as a light in the midst of darkness, as a rose among thorns, as gold in mud'. He who would seize and kill a Christian was regarded as good and just. The whole of their idolatrous faith consisted in soothsaying, the interpretation of dreams, the service of demons and the extreme excesses of debauchery. In terror of Antipas as of fire, the demons appeared to the pagan priests in their dreams and told them how greatly they were in fear of him, and how this fear was driving them from the city. The priests stirred up the multitude, and they began to torment him and to press him to deny Christ and worship idols. Antipas said to them: 'When your so-called gods and lords of the universe are afraid of me, a mortal man, and have to flee the city, why do you not learn from this that all your faith is in vain?' And the saint spoke further with them of the Christian faith as the only true and saving Faith. But they became incensed like wild beasts and dragged the aged Antipas before the temple of Artemis, where there stood an ox cast in bronze. They heated the ox and threw the servant of God inside. St Antipas, inside the red-hot ox, glorified God with thanksgiving, like Jonah in the whale and the Three Children in the burning fiery furnace. Antipas prayed for his flock and for the whole world until his soul parted from his exhausted body and went to join the angels in the Kingdom of Christ. He died under torture and was crowned with unfading glory in the year 92.

St. Guthlac, hermit of Crowland (714) - as a young man Guthlac had been a soldier, fighting for Ethelred, the King of Mercia. At the age of twenty-four he renounced both violence and the life of the world and became a monk in an abbey (inhabited by men and women) at Repton and ruled by an abbess named Elfrida. Even in these early years his discipline was of an extraordinary kind. Some of the monks in fact disliked him for refusing any wine or cheering drink. After two years in the monastery it seemed to him far too agreeable a place. He found a wet, remote, unloved spot on a bed of the River Welland in the Fens, and there lived for the rest of his life as a hermit, seeking to imitate the rigours of the old desert saints. His temptations rivalled theirs. Wild men came out of the forest and beat him up. Even the ravens stole his few possessions. But Guthlac said we should be patient, even with wild creatures. Bit by bit the animals and birds came to trust him as their friend. A holy man named Wilfrid once visited Guthlac and was astonished when two swallows landed on his shoulders and then hopped all over him. Guthlac told him, "Those who choose to live apart from other humans become the friends of wild animals; and the angels visit them too - for those who are often visited by men and women are rarely visited by angels."

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest (1938). Venerable James, abbot of Zhelezny Bor (1442), and his fellow-ascetic St. James. St. Barsanuphius, bishop of Tver (1576). Martyrs Processus and Martinian of Rome (67). Venerable Pharmuthius, anchorite of

Egypt (4th c.). Venerable John, disciple of Venerable Gregory of Decapolis (820). St. Callinicus of Cernica, bishop of Rimnic in Romania (1868) (Romania). Venerables Euthymius (1456) and Chariton (1509), abbots of Syanzhema (Vologda). Hieromartyr Domninus, bishop of Salona in Dalmatia, and eight soldiers with him (100). St. Philip, bishop of Gortyna, Crete (180).

12 / 25 April — Our Holy Father Isaac II of Syria - St Gregory the Dialogist writes about this Isaac. He went to Italy in the time of the Goths and went into the church in the town of Spoleto to pray. He asked the verger to leave him locked in the church all night, and thus spent the night in prayer without moving from that place. He spent the next day and night in the same way. The verger called him a hypocrite and struck him a blow—and lost his reason at that same moment. Seeing how the verger was so fiercely tormented, Isaac bent over him and the evil spirit fled from him, leaving him whole. People came to hear of this happening, and the whole town thronged around this wonderful old man. They offered him money and goods, but he refused them all and would accept nothing. Instead, he withdrew to a forest, where he built himself a cell which quickly became transformed into a large monastery. Isaac became famous for his miracles, especially for his discernment. One evening he told the brethren to take all the hoes out to the vineyard and leave them there. The next day, the brethren set out for the vineyard, taking their lunch, as they had no workers. When they got there, they found as many people working as there were hoes to work with. It transpired that these people had come as thieves to steal the hoes, but, by the power of God, they were constrained to work all night. On another occasion, a couple of almost-naked men came seeking clothing from Isaac. He sent a monk to a hollow tree at the end of the road, to bring what he found there. The monk went off, found some clothing and brought it back to the monastery. The abbot took the clothing and gave it to the beggars. They were profoundly ashamed as they recognised their own clothing, which they had concealed in that tree. A man once sent two beehives to the monastery. A monk hid one of them on the way, and brought the other to the abbot. The saint said to him: 'Be careful when you go back to that beehive you hid on the way. It's been taken over by poisonous snakes. Take care they don't bite you!'

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Basil the Confessor, bishop of Parium (760). New Hieromartyr Sergius (1938). Hieromartyr Zeno, bishop of Verona (ca. 260). Martyrs Menas, David, and John of Palestine (630). Virgin Anthusa of Constantinople (801). Venerable Athanasia, abbess of Aegina (860). "Murom" (12th c.) and "Belynich" (13th c.) Icons of the Mother of God. St. Acacius of Kapsokalyvia Skete, Mt. Athos (1730). St. Basil, bishop of Ryazan (1295). Deposition of the Belt of the Most Holy Mother of God in Constantinople (942). Martyr Sabbas the Goth, who suffered at Buzau in Wallachia (372) (Romania). St. Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople (1019). Martyrs Demas, Protion, and those with them (Greek).

13 / 26 April —The Hieromartyr Artemon - He was a priest in Laodicea in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. He spoke thus of himself before the torturers' tribunal: 'I am called Artemon, a servant of Christ my God. Sixteen years I was a reader, and read the services in the Church of my God; twenty-eight years a deacon, and read the Holy Gospel; and have now completed thirty years as a priest, teaching the people and setting them on the way of salvation with the help of Christ.' The judge took him to the temple of Aesculapius, where the priests kept great snakes, regarding them as gods. They meant the snakes to bite Artemon, but he made the sign of the Cross, and by its power riveted the snakes to the ground so that they could not bite him. He then brought them out to the courtyard and breathed on them, and they died instantly. All who saw this were filled with amazement. But the chief of the pagan priests of that temple, Vitalis, seeing this marvel, fell to his knees before Artemon and cried: 'Great is the Christian God!' The martyr baptised him, along with several of his friends. But the evil judge stood firm in his wickedness and tortured the aged Artemon in various ways. He intended at one time to cast him into burning pitch, but fell off his horse into it himself and was burned. Two eagles were seen to descend on him, lift him from his horse and cast him into the pitch. St Artemon remained free for a certain time and went about teaching the people, accompanied always by two tame deer. But he was arrested afresh and beheaded in the year 303. And his soul went to the Kingdom of Christ our God, whom he had served so faithfully.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Stephen (Bekh) bishop of Izhevsk (1933). Virgin-martyr Martha (1941). Martyr Crescens of Myra in Lycia. Martyr Thomais of Alexandria (476). Martyr Demetrius of the Peloponnesus who suffered at Tripoli (1803). Martyr Eleutherius of Persia (4th c.). Martyr Zoilus of Rome (4th c.). Venerable Martins, abbot, of Clermont (Gaul). St. Martin the Confessor, pope of Rome (655) (Greek). Martyrs Maximus

(286), Dada and Quinctilian at Dorostolum in Moesia. St. Martyrius, archbishop of Jerusalem (486). St. Guinoch of Buchan. Martyr Theodosius (Greek).

14 / 27 April — St Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome - He became Pope on July 5th, 649, at the time of a furious quarrel between the Orthodox and the Monothelite heretics. Constans the Second, Heraclius' grandson, was on the throne at the time, and Paul was Patriarch of Constantinople. To restore peace in the Church, the Emperor himself wrote a dogmatic decree, the Typos, which leaned heavily towards heresy. Pope Martin summoned a Council of 105 bishops, at which the Emperor's statement was condemned. At the same time, the Pope wrote a letter to Patriarch Paul, begging him to uphold the purity of the Orthodox faith and to counsel the Emperor to reject the theories of the heretics. This letter infuriated both the Patriarch and the Emperor. The Emperor sent one of his generals, Olympius, to take the Pope to Constantinople in bonds. The general did not dare to bind the Pope with his own hands, but instructed one of his soldiers to kill him with the sword in church. But, when the soldier entered the church with his sword concealed, he was instantly blinded. So, by the providence of God, Martin escaped death. At that time, the Saracens fell upon Sicily, and Olympius went off there, where he died. Then, by the intrigues of the heretic Patriarch Paul, the Emperor sent a second general, Theodore, to bind and take the Pope on the charge that he, the Pope, was in collusion with the Saracens and that he did not reverence the most holy Mother of God. When the general arrived in Rome and read the accusation against the Pope, he replied that it was libel; that he had no contact of any sort with the Saracens, the opponents of Christianity, 'and whoever does not confess the most holy Mother of God and do her reverence, let him be damned in this age and in that which is to come'. But this did not affect the general's decision. The Pope was bound and taken to Constantinople, where he lay long in prison in great sickness, tortured by both anxiety and hunger, until he was finally sentenced to exile in Cherson, where he lived for two years before his death. He gave his soul into the hands of the Lord, for whom he had suffered so greatly, in 655. The evil Patriarch, Paul, died two years before him and, when the Emperor visited him on his deathbed, he smote his head against the wall, confessing with tears that he had greatly sinned against Pope Martin and asking the Emperor to set Martin free.

Also commemorated on this day: Feast of the Georgian Language (movable holiday on the Lazarus Saturday) (Georgia). New Martyr Sergius (Trofimov) of Nizhni-Novgorod and one with him (1918). New Hieromartyr Alexander confessor, priest (1941). Martyrs Anthony, John and Eustathius of Vilnius (Lithuania) (1347). Martyr Ardalion the Actor, who suffered under Maximian (3rd c.). Martyr Azat the Eunuch and 1,000 Martyrs in Persia (341). "Vilna" Icon of the Mother of God. Monk-martyr Christopher of Mar Sabbas (797). St. Cyriacus, bishop of Jerusalem (4th c.) (Greek). Apostles Aristarchus, Pudens, and Trophimus of the Seventy (Greek). New Martyr Demetrius of the Peloponnesus, who suffered at Tripoli (1803). St. Euthymius the Wonderworker (Greek).

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Isaiah 48: 17-49:4; Genesis 27: 1-41; Proverbs 19: 16-25

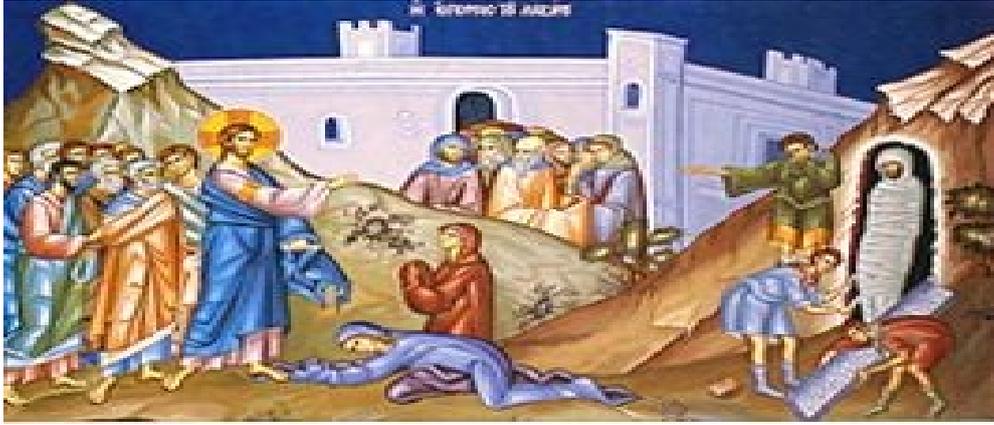
Tuesday - Isaiah 49: 6-10; Genesis 31: 3-16; Proverbs 21: 3-21

Wednesday - Isaiah 58: 1-11; Genesis 43: 26-31; 45: 1-16; Proverbs 21: 23-22:4

Thursday - Isaiah 65: 8-16; Genesis 46: 1-7; Proverbs 23:15-24:5

Friday - Isaiah 66: 10-24; Genesis 49: 33-50:26; Proverbs 31: 8-31

Saturday - Hebrews 12: 28-13:8; John 11: 1-45



Lazarus Saturday is a paschal celebration. It is the only time in the entire Church Year that the resurrection service of Sunday is celebrated on another day. At the Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, the Church glorifies Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life" who by raising Lazarus has confirmed the universal resurrection of mankind even before His own suffering and death.

At the Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, the baptismal verse from Galatians ("As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" **Galatians 32:27**) replaces the Thrice-Holy Hymn, thus indicating the resurrectional character of the celebration, and the fact that Lazarus Saturday was once among the few great baptismal days in the Orthodox Church Year.

Because of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, Christ was hailed by the masses as the long-expected Messiah-King of Israel. Thus, in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, he entered Jerusalem, the City of the King, riding on the colt of an ass (**Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12**) the crowds greeting him with waving branches and shouts of praise: Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! The Son of David! The King of Israel! Because of this glorification by the people, the Jewish priests and scribes were finally driven "to destroy Him, to put Him to death." (**Luke 19:47; John 11:53, 12:10**)

Taken from The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II: Worship, by Fr. Thomas Hopko.

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