

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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SUNDAY, APRIL 21

Fifth Sunday of Great Lent

St. Mary of Egypt

Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

*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.*

Tone 8 Troparion (St. Mary of Egypt)

*The image of God was truly preserved in thee, O
Mother,
for thou didst take up the Cross and follow Christ.
By so doing, thou taughtest us to disregard the
flesh for it passes away;
but to care instead for the soul, for it is immortal.
Therefore thy spirit, O holy Mother Mary, rejoices
with the angels.*

Tone 5 Kontakion (Resurrection)

*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 cry to Thee: "O Lord, save us!"*

Tone 3 Kontakion (St. Mary of Egypt)

*Having been a sinful woman,
thou becamest through repentance a bride of
Christ.
Having attained angelic life,
thou didst defeat demons with the weapon of the
Cross.
Therefore, O most glorious Mary, thou art a bride
of the Kingdom.*

✠ Prokeimenon ✠

Tone 5 (Resurrection)

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever. (Ps. 11:7)

V. Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly! (Ps. 11:1a)

Tone 4 (St. Mary of Egypt)

God is wonderful in His saints, / the God of Israel. (Ps. 67:35a)

✠ The Epistle Reading ✠

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 9:11-14

BRETHREN, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Letra e Apostull Pavlit drejtuar Hebrenjve 9:11-14

Por si erdhi Krishti, kryepifti i të mirave të ardhshme me anë të tendës më të madhe e më të përsosur, që s'është bërë me dorë, domethënë, që s'është prej këtij krijimi. As me anë gjaku cjepësh e viçash, po me anë të gjakut të tij hyri një herë e përgjithmonë në Shenjtëroren e Shenjtëroreve, edhe fitoi shpërblim të përjetshëm. Sepse në qoftë se gjaku i demave e i cjepëve, edhe hiri i mëshqerrës që spërkat të ndoturit, shenjtëron për pastrimin e mishit, sa më tepër gjaku i Krishtit, i cili me anë të Frymës së përjetshme i blatoi veten e tij pa njollë Perëndisë, do të pastrojë ndërgjegjen tuaj nga punë të vdekura, që t'i shërbeni Perëndisë së gjallë?

К Евреям 9:11-14

Но Христос, Первосвященник будущих благ, придя с большею и совершеннейшею скиниею, нерукотворенною, то есть не такового устройства, и не с кровью козлов и тельцов, но со Своею Кровию, однажды вошел во святилище и приобрел вечное искупление. Ибо если кровь тельцов и козлов и пепел телицы, через окропление, освящает оскверненных, дабы чисто было тело, то кольми паче Кровь Христа, Который Духом Святым принес Себя непорочного Богу, очистит совесть нашу от мертвых дел, для служения Богу живому и истинному!

Tone 5

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation. *(Ps. 88:1-2)*

V. For Thou hast said: Mercy will be established forever; Thy truth will be prepared in the heavens. *(Ps. 88:3)*

Tone 1

V. I waited patiently for the Lord; He attended to me and heard my supplication. *(Ps. 39:1)*

5th Sunday of Great Lent: St Mary of Egypt

Saint Zosimas (April 4) was a monk at a certain Palestinian monastery on the outskirts of Caesarea. Having dwelt at the monastery since his childhood, he lived there in asceticism until he reached the age of fifty-three. Then he was disturbed by the thought that he had attained perfection, and needed no one to instruct him. "Is there a monk anywhere who can show me some form of asceticism that I have not attained? Is there anyone who has surpassed me in spiritual sobriety and deeds?"

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Zosimas, you have struggled valiantly, as far as this is in the power of man. However, there is no one who is righteous (Rom 3:10). So that you may know how many other ways lead to salvation, leave your native land, like Abraham from the house of his father (Gen 12:1), and go to the monastery by the Jordan."

Abba Zosimas immediately left the monastery, and following the angel, he went to the Jordan monastery and

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✠ The Gospel Reading ✠

The Gospel According to Mark 10:32-45

At that time, Jesus took his twelve disciples, and he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise." And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant of James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Ungjilli Sipas Markut 10:32-45

Edhe ishin në udhë duke u ngjitur në Jerusalemin; edhe Jisui ishte duke shkuar përpara tyre, edhe ata çuditeshin, edhe vinin prapa duke pasur frikë. Edhe ai mori pranë përsëri të dymbëdhjetët, edhe zuri t'u thotë ato që do t'i ngjanin atij, se ja tek po ngjitemi në Jerusalemin, edhe i Biri i njeriut do t'u dorëzohet kryepriiftërinjve dhe shkruesve, edhe do ta gjykojnë për vdekje, edhe do t'ua dorëzojnë kombeve; edhe do ta përqeshin, edhe do ta fshikullojnë, edhe do ta pështyjnë, edhe do ta vrasin, edhe të tretën ditë do të ngjallet. Dhe atëherë vijnë tek ai Jakovi dhe Joani, të bijtë e Zevedeut, duke thënë: Mësues, duam të na bësh atë që të kërkojmë. Edhe ai u tha atyre: Ç'doni t'ju bëj unë juve? Edhe ata i thanë: Jepna të rrimë njëri nga e djathta jote dhe njëri nga e majta jote, në lavdinë tënde. Po Jisui u tha atyre: S'dini se ç'kërkoni. A mundeni të pini potirin që pi unë, edhe të pagëzoheni me pagëzimin që pagëzohem unë? Edhe ata i thanë: Mundemi. Edhe Jisui u tha atyre: Potirin, që pi unë, do ta pini, edhe me pagëzimin, që pagëzohem unë, do të pagëzoheni. Por të rrini nga e djathta ime e nga e majta ime, nuk është puna ime ta jap, po do t'u jepet atyre, për të cilët është bërë gati. Edhe të dhjetët kur dëgjuan, zunë të zemërohen për Jakovin dhe për Joanin. Por Jisui, si i thirri pranë, u thotë atyre: E dini se ata që i mbajnë për të parë të kombeve me forcë i zotërojnë ata, edhe të mëdhenjtë fort i shtypin. Por nuk do të jetë kështu ndër ju, po kush të dojë të bëhet i madh ndër ju, do të jetë shërbëtori juaj. Edhe kush të dojë prej jush të bëhet i parë, do të jetë shërbëtor i të gjithëve. Sepse edhe Biri i njeriut nuk erdhi të shërbehet, po të shërbejë, edhe të japë jetën e tij shpërblim për shumë.

От Марка 10:32-45

Когда были они на пути, восходя в Иерусалим, Иисус шел впереди их, а они ужасались и, следуя за Ним, были в страхе. Подозвав двенадцать, Он опять начал им говорить о том, что будет с Ним: вот, мы восходим в Иерусалим, и Сын Человеческий предан будет первосвященникам и книжникам, и осудят Его на смерть, и предадут Его язычникам, и поругаются над Ним, и будут бить Его, и оплюют Его, и убьют Его; и в третий день воскреснет. [Тогда] подошли к Нему сыновья Зеведеевы Иаков и Иоанн и сказали: Учитель! мы желаем, чтобы Ты сделал нам, о чем попросим. Он сказал им: что хотите, чтобы Я сделал вам? Они сказали Ему: дай нам сесть у Тебя, одному по правую сторону, а другому по левую в славе Твоей. Но Иисус сказал им: не знаете, чего просите. Можете ли пить чашу, которую Я пью, и креститься крещением, которым Я крещусь? Они отвечали: можем. Иисус же сказал им: чашу, которую Я пью, будете пить, и крещением, которым Я крещусь, будете креститься; а дать сесть у Меня по правую сторону и по левую--не от Меня [зависит], но кому уготовано. И, услышав, десять начали негодовать на Иакова и Иоанна. Иисус же, подозвав их, сказал им: вы знаете, что почитающиеся князьями народов господствуют над ними, и вельможи их властвуют ими. Но между вами да не будет так: а кто хочет быть большим между вами, да будем вам слугою; и кто хочет быть первым между вами, да будет всем рабом. Ибо и Сын Человеческий не для того пришел, чтобы Ему служили, но чтобы послужить и отдать душу Свою для искупления многих.

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following)

Hymn to the Theotokos

*All of creation rejoices in thee, O Full of Grace:
the assembly of angels and the race of men.
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,
the glory of virgins,
from whom God was incarnate and became a Child:
our God before the ages.
He made thy body into a throne,
and thy womb He made more spacious than the heavens.
All of creation rejoices in thee, O Full of Grace.
Glory to thee!*

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance! He shall not fear evil tidings! *(Ps. 111:6)*
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

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settled in it.*

Here he met Elders who were adept in contemplation, and also in their struggles. Never did anyone utter an idle word. Instead, they sang constantly, and prayed all night long. Abba Zosimas began to imitate the spiritual activity of the holy monks.

Thus much time passed, and the holy Forty Day Fast approached. There was a certain custom at the monastery, which was why God had led Saint Zosimas there. On the First Sunday of Great Lent the igumen served the Divine Liturgy, everyone received the All-Pure Body and Blood of Christ. Afterwards, they went to the trapeza for a small repast, and then assembled once more in church.

The monks prayed and made prostrations, asking forgiveness one of another. Then they made a prostration before the igumen and asked his blessing for the struggle that lay before them. During the Psalm "The Lord is my Light and my Savior, whom shall I fear? The Lord is defender of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 26/27:1), they opened the monastery gate and went off into the wilderness.

Each took with him as much food as he needed, and went into the desert. When their food ran out, they ate roots and desert plants. The monks crossed the Jordan and scattered in various directions, so that no one might see how another fasted or how they spent their time.

The monks returned to the monastery on Palm Sunday, each having his own conscience as a witness of his ascetic struggles. It was a rule of the monastery that no one asked how anyone else had toiled in the desert.

Abba Zosimas, according to the custom of the monastery, went deep into the desert hoping to find someone living there who could benefit him.

He walked into the wilderness for twenty days and then, when he sang the Psalms of the Sixth Hour and made the usual prayers. Suddenly, to the right of the hill where he

stood, he saw a human form. He was afraid, thinking that it might be a demonic apparition. Then he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, which removed his fear. He turned to the right and saw a form walking southward. The body was black from the blazing sunlight, and the faded short hair was white like a sheep's fleece. Abba Zosimas rejoiced, since he had not seen any living thing for many days.

The desert-dweller saw Zosimas approaching, and attempted to flee from him. Abba Zosimas, forgetting his age and fatigue, quickened his pace. When he was close enough to be heard, he called out, "Why do you flee from me, a sinful old man? Wait for me, for the love of God."

The stranger said to him, "Forgive me, Abba Zosimas, but I cannot turn and show my face to you. I am a woman, and as you see, I am naked. If you would grant the request of a sinful woman, throw me your cloak so I might cover my body, and then I can ask for your blessing."

Then Abba Zosimas was terrified, realizing that she could not have called him by name unless she possessed spiritual insight.

Covered by the cloak, the ascetic turned to Zosimas: "Why do you want to speak with me, a sinful woman? What did you wish to learn from me, you who have not shrunk from such great labors?"

Abba Zosimas fell to the ground and asked for her blessing. She also bowed down before him, and for a long time they remained on the ground each asking the other to bless. Finally, the woman ascetic said: "Abba Zosimas, you must bless and pray, since you are honored with the grace of the priesthood. For many years you have stood before the holy altar, offering the Holy Gifts to the Lord."

These words frightened Saint Zosimas even more. With tears he said to her, "O Mother! It is clear that you live with God and are dead to this world. You have called me by name and recognized me as a priest, though you have never seen me

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PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i>		
<p>Margie, Linda</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p><i>April 14-20</i> Kristina Nikolla – B Belinda Mentzer – B Rose Shaloka - B Jennifer Navon – B Dave Navon – B Sharon Spause – B Dave Spause - B</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></p>	<p><u>Church Lectionary</u></p> <p><i>Today</i> Hebrews 9:11-14 Mark 10:32-45</p> <p><i>Monday</i> Isaiah 48:17-49:4 Genesis 27:1-41 Proverbs 19:16-25</p>
<i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Nina, Sophia, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha, Fr. Nikolas, Llukan, Marina, Sophia, Fr. Maxwell, Christina, Anastasia, Mary, Martin, Elena, Tatiana, Lauren, Tracy, Anita, Sandi, Anibal, Kakha, Christina, Jane, Vano</p>	<p>Llukan Dylgjeri – health Tina Murianka - Health</p> <p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><i>Tuesday</i> Isaiah 49:6-10 Genesis 31:3-16 Proverbs 21:3-21</p> <p><i>Wednesday</i> Isaiah 58:1-11 Genesis 43:26-31; 45:1-16 Proverbs 21:23-22:4</p>
<i>Prayers In General</i>		
<p>The community of Ss. Peter & Paul Miami, Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe, Marsha, Ann, Lilly, Stephen, Gela, Gabriel Joseph, Lombrino, Kondakciu, Diana, Tyler, Alexi, Nora</p>		<p><i>Thursday</i> I Peter 5:6-14 Luke 10:16-21</p>
<i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i>		
<p>Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East.</p>		<p><i>Friday</i> Isaiah 66:10-24 Genesis 49:33-50:26 Proverbs 31:8-31</p>
<i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i>		
<p>Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish in these places, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COFFEE HOUR</p> <p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	<p><i>Saturday</i> Hebrews 12:28-29;13:1-8 John 11:1-45</p> <p><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></p> <p>Apr 21: Job 9-12 Apr 22: Job 13-16 Apr 23: Job 17-20 Apr 24: Job 21-24 Apr 25: Job 25-28 Apr 26: Job 29-33 Apr 27: Job 34-38</p>

Articles and Announcements

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before. The grace granted you is apparent, therefore bless me, for the Lord's sake."

Yielding finally to his entreaties, she said, "Blessed is God, Who cares for the salvation of men." Abba Zosimas replied, "Amen." Then they rose to their feet. The woman ascetic again said to the Elder, "Why have you come, Father, to me who am a sinner, bereft of every virtue? Apparently, the grace of the Holy Spirit has brought you to do me a service. But tell me first, Abba, how do the Christians live, how is the Church guided?"

Abba Zosimas answered her, "By your holy prayers God has granted the Church and us all a lasting peace. But fulfill my unworthy request, Mother, and pray for the whole world and for me a sinner, that my wanderings in the desert may not be useless."

The holy ascetic replied, "You, Abba Zosimas, as a priest, ought to pray for me and for all, for you are called to do this. However, since we must be obedient, I will do as you ask.

The saint turned toward the East, and raising her eyes to heaven and stretching out her hands, she began to pray in a whisper. She prayed so softly that Abba Zosimas could not hear her words. After a long time, the Elder looked up and saw her standing in the air more than a foot above the ground. Seeing this, Zosimas threw himself down on the ground, weeping and repeating, "Lord, have mercy!"

Then he was tempted by a thought. He wondered if she might not be a spirit, and if her prayer could be insincere. At that moment she turned around, lifted him from the ground and said, "Why do your thoughts confuse you, Abba Zosimas? I am not an apparition. I am a sinful and unworthy woman, though I am guarded by holy Baptism."

Then she made the Sign of the Cross and said, "May God protect us from the Evil One and his schemes, for fierce is his struggle against us." Seeing and hearing this, the Elder fell at her feet with tears saying, "I beseech you by Christ our God, do not conceal from me who you are and how you came into this desert. Tell me everything, so that the wondrous works of God may be revealed."

She replied, "It distresses me, Father, to speak to you about my shameless life. When you hear my story, you might flee from me, as if from a poisonous snake. But I shall tell you everything, Father, concealing nothing. However, I exhort you, cease not to pray for me a sinner, that I may find mercy on the Day of Judgment.

"I was born in Egypt and when I was twelve years old, I left my parents and went to Alexandria. There I lost my chastity and gave myself to unrestrained and insatiable sensuality. For more than seventeen years I lived like that and I did it all for free. Do not think that I refused the money because I was rich. I lived in poverty and worked at spinning flax. To me, life consisted in the satisfaction of my fleshly lust.

"One summer I saw a crowd of people from Libya and Egypt heading toward the sea. They were on their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I also wanted to sail with them. Since I had no food or money, I offered my body in payment for my passage. And so I embarked on the ship.

"Now, Father, believe me, I am very amazed, that the sea tolerated my wantonness and fornication, that the earth did not open up its mouth and take me down alive into hell, because I had ensnared so many souls. I think that God was seeking my repentance. He did not desire the death of a sinner, but awaited my conversion.

"So I arrived in Jerusalem and spent all the days before the Feast living the same sort of life, and maybe even worse.

"When the holy Feast of the Exaltation of the Venerable Cross of the Lord arrived, I went about as before, looking for young men. At daybreak I saw that everyone was heading to the church, so I went along with the rest. When the hour of the Holy Elevation drew nigh, I was trying to enter into the church with all the people. With great effort I came almost to the doors, and attempted to squeeze inside. Although I stepped up to the threshold, it was as though some force held me back, preventing me from entering. I was brushed aside by the crowd, and found myself standing alone on the porch. I thought that perhaps this happened because of my womanly weakness. I worked my way into the crowd, and again I attempted to elbow people aside. However hard I tried, I could not enter. Just as my feet touched the church threshold, I was stopped. Others entered the church without difficulty, while I alone was not allowed in. This happened three or four times. Finally my strength was exhausted. I went off and stood in a corner of the church portico.

"Then I realized that it was my sins that prevented me from seeing the Life-Creating Wood. The grace of the Lord then touched my heart. I wept and lamented, and I began to beat my breast. Sighing from the depths of my heart, I saw above me an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Turning to Her, I prayed: "O Lady Virgin, who gave birth in the flesh to God the Word! I know that I am unworthy to look upon your icon. I rightly inspire hatred and disgust before your purity, but I know also that God became Man in order to call sinners to repentance. Help me, O All-Pure One. Let me enter the church. Allow me to behold the Wood upon which the Lord was crucified in the flesh, shedding His Blood for the redemption of sinners, and also for me. Be my witness before Your Son that I will never defile my body again with the impurity of fornication. As soon as I have seen the Cross of your Son, I will renounce the world, and go wherever you lead me."

"After I had spoken, I felt confidence in the compassion of the Mother of God, and left the spot where I had been praying. I joined those entering the church, and no one pushed me back or prevented me from entering. I went on in fear and trembling, and entered the holy place.

"Thus I also saw the Mysteries of God, and how God accepts the penitent. I fell to the holy ground and kissed it. Then I

hastened again to stand before the icon of the Mother of God, where I had given my vow. Bending my knees before the Virgin Theotokos, I prayed:

“O Lady, you have not rejected my prayer as unworthy. Glory be to God, Who accepts the repentance of sinners. It is time for me to fulfill my vow, which you witnessed. Therefore, O Lady, guide me on the path of repentance.”

“Then I heard a voice from on high: ‘If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest.’

“I immediately believed that this voice was meant for me, and I cried out to the Mother of God: ‘O Lady, do not forsake me!’

“Then I left the church portico and started on my journey. A certain man gave me three coins as I was leaving the church.

With them I bought three loaves of bread, and asked the bread merchant the way to the Jordan.

“It was nine o’clock when I saw the Cross. At sunset I reached the church of Saint John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan. After praying in the church, I went down to the Jordan and washed my face and hands in its water. Then in this same temple of Saint John the Forerunner I received the Life-Creating Mysteries of Christ. Then I ate half of one of my loaves of bread, drank water from the holy Jordan, and slept there that night on the ground. In the morning I found a small boat and crossed the river to the opposite shore. Again I prayed that the Mother of God would lead me where She wished. Then I found myself in this desert.”

Abba Zosimas asked her, “How many years have passed since you began to live in the desert?”

“I think,” she replied, “it is forty-seven years since I came from the Holy City.”

Abba Zosimas again asked, “What food do you find here, Mother?”

And she said, “I had with me two and a half loaves of bread when I crossed the Jordan. Soon they dried out and hardened. Eating a little at a time, I finished them after a few years.”

Again Abba Zosimas asked, “Is it possible you have survived for so many years without sickness, and without suffering in any way from such a complete change?”

“Believe me, Abba Zosimas,” the woman said, “I spent seventeen years in this wilderness (after she had spent seventeen years in immorality), fighting wild beasts: mad desires and passions. When I began to eat bread, I thought of the meat and fish which I had in abundance in Egypt.

I also missed the wine that I loved so much when I was in the world, while here I did not even have water. I suffered from thirst and hunger. I also had a mad desire for lewd songs. I seemed to hear them, disturbing my heart and my hearing. Weeping and striking myself on the breast, I remembered the vow I had made. At last I beheld a radiant Light shining on me from everywhere. After a violent tempest, a lasting calm ensued.

“Abba, how shall I tell you of the thoughts that urged me on to fornication? A fire seemed to burn within me, awakening in me the desire for embraces. Then I would throw myself to the ground and water it with my tears. I seemed to see the Most Holy Virgin before me, and She seemed to threaten me for not keeping my vow. I lay face downward day and night upon the ground, and would not get up until that blessed Light encircled me, dispelling the evil thoughts that troubled me.

“Thus I lived in this wilderness for the first seventeen years. Darkness after darkness, misery after misery stood about me, a sinner. But from that time until now the Mother of God helps me in everything.”

Abba Zosimas again inquired, “How is it that you require neither food, nor clothing?”

She answered, “After finishing my bread, I lived on herbs and the things one finds in the desert. The clothes I had when I crossed over the Jordan became torn and fell apart. I suffered both from the summer heat, when the blazing heat fell upon me, and from the winter cold, when I shivered from the frost. Many times I fell down upon the earth, as though dead. I struggled with various afflictions and temptations. But from that time until the present day, the power of God has guarded my sinful soul and humble body. I was fed and clothed by the all-powerful word of God, since man does not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding from the mouth of God (Dt 8:3, Mt.4:4, Luke 4:4), and those who have put off the old man (Col 3:9) have no refuge, hiding themselves in the clefts of the rocks (Job 24:8, Heb 11:38). When I remember from what evil and from what sins the Lord delivered me, I have imperishable food for salvation.”

When Abba Zosimas heard that the holy ascetic quoted the Holy Scripture from memory, from the Books of Moses and Job and from the Psalms of David, he then asked the woman, “Mother, have you read the Psalms and other books?”

She smiled at hearing this question, and answered, “Believe me, I have seen no human face but yours from the time that I crossed over the Jordan. I never learned from books. I have never heard anyone read or sing from them. Perhaps the Word of God, which is alive and acting, teaches man knowledge by itself (Col 3:16, 1 Thess 2:13). This is the end of my story. As I asked when I began, I beg you for the sake of the Incarnate Word of God, holy Abba, pray for me, a sinner.



“Furthermore, I beg you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, tell no one what you have heard from me, until God takes me from this earth. Next year, during Great Lent, do not cross the Jordan, as is the custom of your monastery.”

Again Abba Zosimas was amazed, that the practice of his monastery was known to the holy woman ascetic, although he had not said anything to her about this.

“Remain at the monastery,” the woman continued. “Even if you try to leave the monastery, you will not be able to do so. On Great and Holy Thursday, the day of the Lord’s Last Supper, place the Life-Creating Body and Blood of Christ our God in a holy vessel, and bring it to me. Await me on this side of the Jordan, at the edge of the desert, so that I may receive the Holy Mysteries. And say to Abba John, the igumen of your community, ‘Look to yourself and your brothers’ (1 Tim 4:16), for there is much that needs correction. Do not say this to him now, but when the Lord shall indicate.”

Asking for his prayers, the woman turned and vanished into the depths of the desert.

For a whole year Elder Zosimas remained silent, not daring to reveal to anyone what he had seen, and he prayed that the Lord would grant him to see the holy ascetic once more.

When the first week of Great Lent came again, Saint Zosimas was obliged to remain at the monastery because of sickness.

Then he remembered the woman’s prophetic words that he would not be able to leave the monastery. After several days went by, Saint Zosimas was healed of his infirmity, but he remained at the monastery until Holy Week.

On Holy Thursday, Abba Zosimas did what he had been ordered to do. He placed some of the Body and Blood of Christ into a chalice, and some food in a small basket. Then he left the monastery and went to the Jordan and waited for the ascetic. The saint seemed tardy, and Abba Zosimas prayed that God would permit him to see the holy woman.

Finally, he saw her standing on the far side of the river. Rejoicing, Saint Zosimas got up and glorified God. Then he wondered how she could cross the Jordan without a boat. She made the Sign of the Cross over the water, then she walked on the water and crossed the Jordan. Abba Zosimas saw her in the moonlight, walking toward him. When the Elder wanted to make prostration before her, she forbade him, crying out, “What are you doing, Abba? You are a priest and you carry the Holy Mysteries of God.”

Reaching the shore, she said to Abba Zosimas, “Bless me, Father.” He answered her with trembling, astonished at what he had seen. “Truly God did not lie when he promised that those who purify themselves will be like Him. Glory to You, O Christ our God, for showing me through your holy servant, how far I am from perfection.”

The woman asked him to recite both the Creed and the “Our Father.” When the prayers were finished, she partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Then she raised her hands to the heavens and said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

The saint turned to the Elder and said, “Please, Abba, fulfill another request. Go now to your monastery, and in a year’s time come to the place where we first time spoke.”

He said, “If only it were possible for me to follow you and always see your holy face!”

She replied, “For the Lord’s sake, pray for me and remember my wretchedness.”

Again she made the Sign of the Cross over the Jordan, and walked over the water as before, and disappeared into the desert. Zosimas returned to the monastery with joy and terror, reproaching himself because he had not asked the saint’s name. He hoped to do so the following year.

A year passed, and Abba Zosimas went into the desert. He reached the place where he first saw the holy woman ascetic. She lay dead, with arms folded on her bosom, and her face was turned to the east. Abba Zosimas washed her feet with his tears and kissed them, not daring to touch anything else. For a long while he wept over her and sang the customary Psalms, and said the funeral prayers. He began to wonder whether the saint would want him to bury her or not. Hardly had he thought this, when he saw something written on the ground near her head: “Abba Zosimas, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust what is dust. Pray to the Lord for me. I reposed on the first day of April, on the very night of the saving Passion of Christ, after partaking of the Mystical Supper.”

Reading this note, Abba Zosimas was glad to learn her name. He then realized that Saint Mary, after receiving the Holy Mysteries from his hand, was transported instantaneously to the place where she died, though it had taken him twenty days to travel that distance.

Glorifying God, Abba Zosimas said to himself, “It is time to do what she asks. But how can I dig a grave, with nothing in my hands?” Then he saw a small piece of wood left by some traveler. He picked it up and began to dig. The ground was hard and dry, and he could not dig it. Looking up, Abba Zosimas saw an enormous lion standing by the saint’s body and licking her feet. Fear gripped the Elder, but he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, believing that he would remain unharmed through the prayers of the holy woman ascetic. Then the lion came close to the Elder, showing its friendliness with every movement. Abba Zosimas commanded the lion to dig the grave, in order to bury Saint Mary’s body. At his words, the lion dug a hole deep enough to bury the body. Then each went his own way. The lion went into the desert, and Abba Zosimas returned to the monastery, blessing and praising Christ our God.

Arriving at the monastery, Abba Zosimas related to the monks and the igumen, what he had seen and heard from Saint Mary. All were astonished, hearing about the miracles of God. They always remembered Saint Mary with faith and love on the day of her repose.

Abba John, the igumen of the monastery, heeded the words of Saint Mary, and with the help of God corrected the things that were wrong at the monastery. Abba Zosimas lived a God-pleasing life at the monastery, reaching nearly a hundred years of

age. There he finished his temporal life, and passed into life eternal.

The monks passed on the life of Saint Mary of Egypt by word of mouth without writing it down.

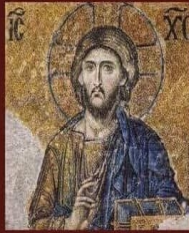
“I however,” says Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem (March 11), “wrote down the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt as I heard it from the holy Fathers. I have recorded everything, putting the truth above all else.”

“May God, Who works great miracles and bestows gifts on all who turn to Him in faith, reward those who hear or read this account, and those who copy it. May he grant them a blessed portion together with Saint Mary of Egypt and with all the saints who have pleased God by their pious thoughts and works. Let us give glory to God, the Eternal King, that we may find mercy on the Day of Judgment through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom is due all glory, honor, majesty and worship together with the Unoriginate Father, and the Most Holy and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

SUNDAY EVENING
LENTEN VESPERS SCHEDULE 2024
ALL SERVICES ARE SCHEDULED FOR 4:00 PM

5 th Sunday (21 Apr) St Nicholas Church, Elkins Park PA 506 Stahr Road, 19027

PAN-ORTHODOX CLERGY BROTHERHOOD OF PHILADELPHIA

April Events	• •
<p>April</p> <p>21 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy 4:00pm Lenten Vespers (<i>see schedule</i>)</p> <p>24 – 12:00pm Sixth Hour 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p> <p>26 – 7:30am Matins</p> <p>27 – 9:00am Divine Liturgy (<i>Lazarus Saturday</i>)</p> <p>28 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy (<i>Palm Sunday</i>)</p> <p>May</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOLY WEEK</p> <p>01 – 6:30pm Service of Holy Unction</p> <p>02 – 6:30pm Matins with the 12 Gospel Readings</p> <p>03 – 3:00pm Vespers 6:30pm Matins and Lamentations</p> <p>04 – 9:30am Vespers and Divine Liturgy PASCHA</p> <p>11:30pm Midnight Office</p> <p>05 – 12:00am Matins & Divine Liturgy 1:00pm Vespers of Pascha</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Can't join us in person? We stream our services on our YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxhurchoi810</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Want to donate by Venmo? St Peter St Paul Alb Orth Ch James Schaeffer</p>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> • • </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">“TO REPENT IS NOT TO LOOK DOWNWARDS AT MY OWN SHORTCOMINGS, BUT UPWARDS AT GOD’S LOVE, IT IS NOT TO LOOK BACKWARDS WITH SELF-REPROACH BUT FORWARD WITH TRUSTFULNESS, IT IS TO SEE NOT WHAT I HAVE FAILED TO BE, BUT WHAT BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST I MIGHT YET BECOME.”</p> <p style="font-style: italic; margin: 0;">St John Climacus</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> • • </div>

HOW TO BE DELIVERED FROM PASSIONS

Protosinghel Petroniu (Tănase)

Protosinghel Petroniu (in the world Petru Tănase; 1916-2011) is one of the revered Romanian elders of the twentieth century. For many years, he was the abbot of the Romanian cenobitic Prodromu (Nativity of St. John the Forerunner) Skete on Holy Mount Athos. The Elder enjoyed great authority not only on Athos, but throughout all of Greece, and of course in his native land of Romania, where he had to firmly defend his faith in the years of the communist regime.

On April 27, 2023, his relics were uncovered at the skete. Elder Petroniu is one of the Romanian spiritual confessors proposed for canonization in 2025.

In this article, the Elder speaks about how a Christian should live, how to conduct spiritual battle with our passions, and how to multiply faith and love in a world full of hatred.

—How can we be delivered from the passions?

—Passionlessness is the most important and most difficult work, as the Holy Fathers say. You can't grow plants in a garden if you don't dig and fertilize the ground. If there are hard clods and roots, first you have to get rid of them so something can grow. It's the same with virtue. You have to be cleansed from sins to be able to plant virtues: to be able pray, to love others, and so on. If you're full of passions, you can't do it. You have to get rid of the base sins that make you a slave of spiritual insensitivity. The Holy Fathers say that virtues are planted in the soil of the heart, or the soul, after it's been refined by rejecting worldly vanities, by bearing difficulties and sorrows, by prayer and a pure life, and it becomes receptive.

Man wants to be this and that: He wants to be rich, enjoying luxury and various pleasures, and he wants to acquire salvation and the glory of Christ. He wants to cling to worldly affairs and be with God. But this is impossible. He gets stuck in a feud with someone, and then wants to pray noetic prayer. In reality, we're quite far from the true spiritual life. Things were quite different in the first centuries of Christianity. The Christians of that time heard the call to the spiritual life and renounced worldly splendor and glory in order to acquire the eternal glory of Christ. But now we allow the enemy to catch us and we're seduced by vain worldly things; we don't want to renounce the sins that make us a slave, dependent on this world, enslaved to matter; we want to have a happy life through it, hoping in material things, which is impossible, because man is a spiritual being and he can't find happiness except through God Who created him.

—What should the life of a Christian be like?

—If a man always turns his thoughts to the commandment of love given us by Christ: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another (Jn. 13:34), then his life becomes a life in Christ; if he does everything with the blessing of God, His grace, and sees in everything the gift of God, then he comes out of propensity for the world and enters into the love of Christ. True life is love, not addiction, which is unhealthy love. The Christian life is man's return to his true health, which is a joy for him, which he perceives as the fullness of life, because Christ is poured out into this man to live in him.

To commit your will to Christ and for the life of Christ to be in you every day, you have to submit to the ascetic prescriptions of the Church, which make the soul sensitive and able to enter into communion with Christ. Fasting, prayer, humility—these are the means used by the Venerable Fathers. They don't require any expense; moreover, they're associated with the joy that communion with Christ brings to the soul.

By mastering the body, placing the nous as master over the sinful desires of the body, you'll be liberated from passions, you'll become the abode of the Holy Spirit, having made what is better master over what is worse. Thus you'll acquire strength of spirit, which the saints acquired by ascetic labors so the inner man would grow from strength to strength to the measure of the Divinity of Christ.

This is the ideal—a Christian life, and if you want, eternal life. You have to put the body in its proper place; you have to refine it through asceticism and make it spiritual. Thus you'll fulfill the true purpose of life—the acquisition of the Holy Spirit and His full indwelling in the soul and body of man, which is the true Christian life. This good to which man is called is neither a duty nor something done under compulsion—but it's in his interest to do so.

God calls us: Be ye holy! (1 Pt. 1:16). He created us to partake of His Spirit and be sanctified thereby. This is the meaning of our existence on Earth—to be sanctified and enter into perfect holiness, into the true health of our being. The Christian life should be a constant preparation for this, not a grueling slavery to food and drink, like the

life of people nowadays.

—**How can we spend the day in holiness according to the program of the spiritual life? How can we multiply faith and love in this world, so full of hatred and devoid of love for our fellow man?**

—The program of the spiritual life? Love isn't manifest according to a program. St. Basil the Great says that a spiritual man doesn't program his thoughts but always takes care of his soul; he's not attached to anything earthly and always attaches his soul to the spiritual and Divine. Love is permanent because it's eternal, and therefore it's not manifested according to some program, but naturally brings order to the whole life of a man.

If we want to talk about a program, then it's briefly stated in the words of the Apostle: Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Love is the true nature of our soul and love is how we acquire it, and the overarching program for the Christian life. No formulas! Whoever believes multiplies the faith that comes from God, because he opens his soul to the spiritual treasures to be found in God.

The greatest commandment is to love God and your neighbor as yourself—two sides of the same coin. God values love for Him and love for neighbor equally. Man is the image of God and is of great value. The Fathers say: "If you've seen a man, you've seen God." Man bears the image of God. If you feel that God has distanced Himself from you, you have to understand that your "I" has distanced itself, detached from itself, and you need to bring it back from distraction by fervent worship and piety. Even in the trials that God allows to come to us, when we feel that grace has departed from us, we can regain God in our soul by the same path of kindling zeal and faith.

As our faith in God weakens, we lose our value. If faith grows stronger in our soul, then we're ennobled by virtue of the inner wholeness that faith gives us. Many people no longer believe in anything nowadays—not even in themselves, in man. If someone is useful to you and makes money, he's good; if not, he's bad. It's utilitarianism, which turns us into objects of labor and consumption, and we consume ourselves. The Apostles say you don't love God if you don't love your neighbor. If you don't love the neighbor whom you do see, then how can you love God, Whom you don't see (cf. 1 Jn. 4:20)? That's probably why the rulers of the world have turned man into an object, because in their worship of money they fail to love God and they imagine themselves as masters of the world and the fate of man, in place of God.

—**Tell us about the inner unity that faith and piety give us.**

—Generally speaking, the Apostles teach us that man came out good from the hand of the Creator, but after the fall we are inclined towards evil. So we have to fight against this inclination and direct it towards the good so as to heal it. Although redeemed and saved by Christ, we're not in that paradisiacal state where there was no evil and man wasn't inclined towards it. As the Holy Fathers say, we have a "fallen nature." We have fallen by nature, having a blind mind and a weakened will. They lead and push us towards evil, towards which the invisible enemy beckons us, as he did in Paradise. The evil one is constantly baiting us and we must constantly fight. Therefore, St. Paul calls us to gird ourselves with the virtue of righteousness, to take up the shield of faith, by which the eye of the mind sees these traps in advance, and to take up all the weapons for the battle against the evil one (cf. Eph. 6:14-17), all the armor of righteousness, to practice all these virtues and put on the will of God. The Christian life is one of constant struggle. For it to go well, we must overcome this inclination of our fallen nature and try to walk the good and true path.

—**But, Father, there are times when we're overcome, and even a spiritual man falls into temptation.**

—This isn't random. Since God knows everything, He permits this with a purpose, so it shouldn't be considered fatal. This is given to a man because he did something, and if he hasn't sinned in any way, then he should understand this fall as an occasion to rise higher, to mobilize after this fall and grow even more in grace. In any case, if someone fell, it means he didn't have a state of sobriety. We know many good things, we are Christians, we hear the Holy Gospel, but our faith is weak, because the birds of the sky peck at the seeds of the word of faith sown by Christ, so we no longer have healthy natural powers to do good.

The soil of the heart becomes fruitless and barren. God is at hand, He is near to every one of us, as the holy Apostle Paul says (Phil. 4:5), but we don't use His grace because of our distraction, the compromises that we make, because of television, because of joining societies and organizations that operate without God. We have to be sober and walk the good and holy path and fulfill the Divine teachings of the Church, which don't need any correction, for the wisdom of the world is like a discarded rag before God (cf. Is. 64:6).

—**No one can cause us any harm from outside, and all evil in the world flows from this separation of man from God.**

—St. John Chrysostom tells us that no one can cause us any harm without our own will, even the devil, who is completely against us and is eager to cause us harm; without our will, he can't do anything against us. So no one

can cause us any harm from outside. St. John Chrysostom cites the persecution of Christians as an example. The rulers and executioners who tortured Christians to renounce their true faith, though they were doing the work of the devil, with the sufferings they subjected them to they nevertheless helped Christians gain a crown of victory. The Christians didn't renounce their faith; they suffered, died, and received the crown of holiness.

Our enemy the devil stood behind those who tortured Christians to try to make them renounce their faith, and threatened them with death so that their souls might perish. And what came of all of this? They had strength and they withstood, and the enemy's evil intentions for them turned into glory for them: They became martyrs, great confessors, saints of the Church. Although his intention was negative, although he wanted to cause man evil, his evil intention was turned into reverence and praise of those against whom it was directed.

It's the same now. Today's authorities, led by the devil, want to harm the Church, insidiously spreading all kinds of teachings and temptations that demoralize man and society as a whole. The intention is evil, crafty, diabolical, not demanding outright renunciation of faith in God, but subtly dictating it in the human consciousness through all means of propaganda. And for all this, the devil and all his servants are unable to harm a true Christian, because not believing in God and the spiritual world, they see evil only in the external, in suffering, poverty, and illness.

Wishing to do evil, the enemy brings crowns for true Christians who endure to the end.

In general, Orthodoxy wasn't distinguished by earthly blessings. A Christian must live in faith, and only thereby can we overthrow the rule of the devil. We suffer his negative intentions and actions that come to us through worldly things. He can cause us suffering, we endure it, and he believes he's done us harm. But in fact, he didn't cause us any harm, but did something good for us—because in enduring this, we show our faith in God more strongly and receive a reward for it.

God rewards everyone for their deeds. If we grieve over material things, we are obviously under the devil's authority. The devil has great power in the world now, because he has led poor people off the path with so many promises and advertisements of earthly blessings. And after such materialism and the worship of money, people who don't have any wealth feel unhappy and no longer know how to be satisfied with a little and live contentedly. But at the Dread Judgment, everyone will give an account of their deeds, words, and thoughts, and if they're afflicted with material desires, then they are clearly under the control of the devil.

Protosinghel Petroniu (Tănase)
Translation by Jesse Dominick
Pravoslavie.ru
6/13/2023

Not About Location ***God Cannot Be Absent From Anywhere***

According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, heaven and hell are not about location, but about relationship. God is everywhere, and He did not create a heaven for some, and a hell for others. If we love God, His fire will be a comforting warmth, but if we choose not to have a relationship with Him, His fire will be as hell fire. We choose how we will experience the presence of God in the afterlife, and since God can not be absent from anywhere, those who have chosen to ignore Him, will, nevertheless, be in His presence for all of eternity. According to Saint Gregory, Paradise and Hell do not exist from God's point of view, but from man's point of view. It is all about man's choice and condition. According to him, heaven and hell are not two different locations. They are simply two different experiences of the same place.

Everyone will spend eternity in God's presence, but how we experience the Divine Presence will depend upon the condition of our soul. Those who have been transformed by the action and work of the Holy Spirit, will experience God as light and bliss. Those who have rejected God's love will experience it as pain and suffering. For the unbeliever and the unrepentant, their sins will not allow them to enjoy the Presence of God.

Love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon