

Saint Mary's Romanian Orthodox Church



Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (O.C.A.)

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April 5th 2020 - Bulletin

Sunday, April 5th - *Martyrs Agathopodes & Theodulus; Martyr Victorin and those with him (W,O). 5th Sunday of Great Lent. (St. Mary of Egypt) Epis. Hebrews 9:11-14; Galatians 3:23-29 (of the Saint). Gos. Mark 10:32-45; Luke 7:36-50 (of the Saint). Tone 1. Mat. Gos. 9*

Scripture Readings

Sunday, April 5, 2020

Galatians 3:23-29 (Epistle, Saint)

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Matins Gospel

John 20:19-31 (9th Matins Gospel)

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Holy Liturgy Gospel

Luke 7:36-50 (Gospel, Saint)

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat.

37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil,

38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

40 *And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it."*

41 *"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.*

42 *And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"*

43 *Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged."*

44 *Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.*

45 *You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.*

46 *You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.*

47 *Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."*

48 *Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

49 *And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"*

50 *Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."*

The Sermon

Fifth Sunday of Great Lent. Venerable Mary of Egypt.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!

When the Lord says, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18, 36), it's clear that, first of all, He warns us against crazy mistake of Jerusalem inhabitants who met their King as a man who came to solve their earthly problems, as a statesman who would improve their everyday life, as a new chief called to replace corrupt and demoralized former authorities.

When the Lord says, "My kingdom is not of this world", he warned His disciples, as it appeared later, against constant attempts to use the stones intended for building the cathedral, for quite other purposes. He forewarns the Church against fighting for earthly blessing to the detriment of Heaven care.

When the Lord says, "My kingdom is not of this world", He also points us to the fact that the truth of this world and God's truth are not only incompatible, but are too often in

opposition to each other, and “Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds” (Mt. 11,19), that is the wicked and idle world is ready to acknowledge not what is really kind and good but what is convenient and useful here and now.

It's especially realized clearly now on the fifth Sunday of Great Lent when the Church celebrates the memory of Venerable Mary of Egypt.

Human wisdom, formulated in the eastern proverb, prescribes every person to do three important things for fulfilling life vocation: to plant a tree, to built a house and to grow up a baby. Human wisdom in the form of aphorism shows a man that his life must be given to other people, because a tree, a house and a baby are only symbols of different types of service. Of course, this is a call to self-sacrifice, egoism refusal.

However, today as a reproach to all our philosophizing, all our notions about greatness of a man, the Holy Church offers an image of Venerable Mary of Egypt whose life doesn't look like the life of heroes of innumerable human wars or brilliant life of film stars.

During her long seventy-seventh year old life venerable Mary of Egypt didn't do anything for others. And of course, she didn't plant any tree, didn't build a house, didn't give birth to a child and didn't grow him up. In fact, she always lived only for herself, she devoted attention only to herself, she thought only about herself.

It was so when being a twelve year old teenager she left her parent's house to indulger herself in crazy and shameless whoredom. In the course of long seventeen years this young girl thought that whoredom was the only sense of human life. Did she think about others at that time: about her unhappy parents forsaken by her or about those who were involved by her crazy lust in everlasting destruction? Hardly. But merciful God who “doesn't take pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezek. 33, 11) performed a miracle, because “when sin increased, grace was always greater” (Rome 5, 20). And so like in Cana of Galilee ordinary water instantly became wine not by natural physic-chemical transformations, but as a result of miracle, so here a whore burnt by a sin, became a saint at once.

And so a year after year, in fast, prayer, hot weather, desperate loneliness in a desert she fought with all evil accumulated in her soul. Because it's not enough to realize it, it's not enough to reject it by the effort of will: it is here, in our memory, our lust, our fragility, in that wasting disease which is the result of the evil. She had to fight all her life, but after all she won. She really led a life of asceticism, cleansed of wickedness, she was able to come into God's region, not the cathedral, not “somewhere” but the eternity.

She can teach us a lot. She can teach us what we must realize some day: that kingdom region where we enter so easily, the Church, and simply the world itself created by God, has remained clean from evil, though it has submitted, enslaved itself to evil because of us. If we realized it some day and felt there was no place for us there, and in answer

confessed, that is turned our back upon ourselves in horror, averted ourselves in unbending resolution, we could also follow her example.

This example of her image is offered to us as a completing moment of Lent this spring and life. A week ago we had the teaching, the call of Saint John of the Ladder who made up the Ladder of Perfection, with the help of which we can overcome evil and come to the truth. And today we see the example of the one, who, from the very depth of evil, has reached the height of holiness and says to us the words of the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete, "Oh, Soul, God can whiten and cleanse the lepers, don't despair, though you are a leper..."

Let her image be for us not only new inspiration, new hope, even new joy but a call, an appeal, because in vain do we give praise to the saints if we don't learn anything from them, don't try to imitate them.

Venerable Mary of Egypt devoted attention only to herself all her life. The Saint hermit heard only herself, but the words of the Apostle Paul which he said about Christ Saviour, could be quite applied to her: "for by His wounds you were healed"(1Peter 2, 24).

She prayed only for herself but helps us to be saved. She thought only about herself but the memory of her supports us, weak and sinful, in our struggle with sin. She never called anybody to abstinence and chastity but her example of desperate struggle with immoral thoughts gives us, faint-hearted and skeptical, hope for victory. Amen.

God Bless you all!

Stay safe, sane and healthy!

Father Lucian