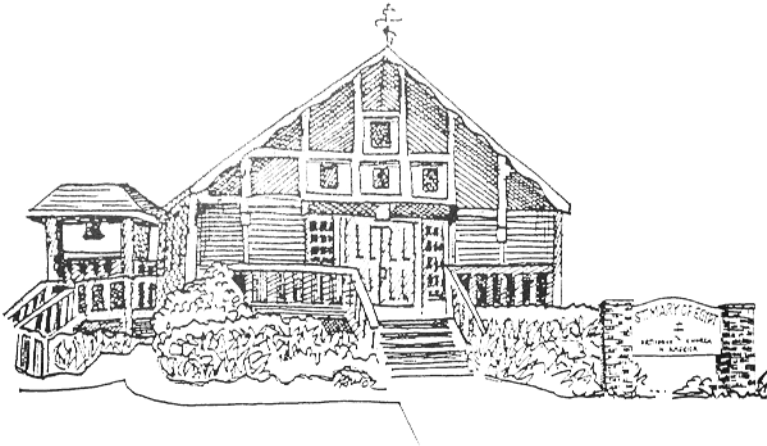


# SAINT MARY OF EGYPT ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

**Newsletter – APRIL 2012**

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## **Calendar Highlights**

April 1 St. Mary of Egypt Sunday - Our Patronal Feastday

April 7 Lazarus Saturday – Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. followed by  
Potluck Lenten Lunch in honor of Fr. Dn. Lazarus' name day and  
parish clean up in preparation for Pascha

April 8 Palm Sunday and the Beginning of Great Week – a separate  
detailed calendar will be provided

**April 15 Pascha – The Feast of Feasts, the Night that is Bright than  
Day**

**Today Hades cries out groaning:  
I should not have accepted the  
Man born of Mary. He came and  
destroyed my power. He  
shattered the gates of brass. As  
God, He raised the souls I had held  
captive. Glory to Thy cross and  
resurrection, O Lord!**

(Vespers Liturgy of Holy Saturday)

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION ARE NEEDED FOR:**

The Orthodox Church in America  
Diocese of the South and the Episcopal Search Committee  
Metropolitan Jonah; Bishop Nikon, Our Holy Synod,  
Archpriest Peter, Matushka Anastasia, Lottie  
Hieromonk Cyprian, Macrina and Nina  
Priest Thomas; Matushka Angela  
Archpriest Dimitri; Matushka Maryanne  
Deacon Lazarus  
Archbishop Seraphim,  
Metropolitan Theodosius; Metropolitan Herman,  
Our catechumens: Kristina, Yolanda, Jacob and Stephanie  
The newly illumined Ward (Patrick) and Cindy (Patricia)  
The infant Juliana & family David, Elizabeth and David  
Adrian, Adriana and the child to be born of her  
Gabriel, Susan and the child to be born of her  
Michael & Serah and the child to be born of her (Ioanna's  
family)  
Robert and Felicia and the child to be born of her (Ward  
and Cindy's daughter)  
Phil (Tikhon) Mattox  
Sasha, Natalie, Kristina and Peter  
Cathie Payton (Maryanne Romano's mother – diagnosed  
with breast cancer)  
Robert and Xenia Peterson  
Abby Peterson (Debra's daughter in law)  
Holly Peterson (Debra's daughter in law)  
Magdalene Marston  
Elaine Calugar and family, Carole;  
Anna, Victor; Tanya and family - especially Veronica;  
Todd, Kimber, Mathew, Maggie, Amanda and Scott;  
Niko Bouboulis battling a brain tumor  
Ron, BJ, Gail, Dustin, Jordan, Donna and Christopher  
Thomas, Emilia, Maria, Catherine; Craig  
Anna (Lynne)  
Harvey(George) and Irene Ghiz (Emily's parents)  
Christopher Tsalos (Emily's uncle)  
Rayna and family  
Eugenia (Catalina's mother)  
Nathaniel, Maria and family (Nathaniel is a long time  
friend of the Alessandronis who has recently been  
diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor)  
Danielle and Michael (Ralph Geeza's niece and brother)  
Patrick Robert (Kristina's fiancé)  
Andrea Rajski (Michaela's friend)  
Harry (93 and feeble), Susan, Jane and Hugh (Tikhon's  
family and Hugh's caregivers)  
Matthew & Tracey Bonaker, Steve & Earlene Nesselrote;  
Pat and Dave Bonaker, Marc and Jenny Nesselrote and the  
children Taylor, Connor and Keira  
Kerin Tamara recovering from surgery and Todd Demetrios  
Teresa and Tim  
Barbie and Rob (daughter and son-in-law of recently  
departed Joan)  
Patti  
The Gainesville Mission  
All those who have suffered and/or are suffering at the  
hands of others or without friends or family

## Those who have fallen asleep in the Lord:

Archbishop Dmitri  
Jamison (Born into the Arms of the Lord at 20 weeks  
gestation)

## **Speaking the Language of Heaven**

By Edna King

Last summer, Nadia looked into my eyes and with heartfelt tears of sincerity said she would study English. There was an English teacher at her school and she said she'd ask her for help. "It's the most important thing you can do" I said emphatically. Nadia is 16 and if she was going to start a new life in America, she needed to start getting ready.

A few weeks later, we sent word that we would come and adopt them and once again implored them to diligently study English. For the next few months, we were unable to speak directly to them, but sent messages through our translator and always encouraged them to study so they'd have an easier transition.

When we arrived, they were very happy to see us and expressed great joy at being adopted and coming to America, but their English had not improved at all. They could still say "thank you" and "hello" but that was about it. After great effort, we taught them a few numbers and color words, but they were always glad to get to move on to a non-English activity.

After the adoption, we brought them home and they were shocked to suddenly find themselves immersed in an English speaking world. I think it had been beyond their imagination before. They had been so occupied in their own world they hadn't taken the time, or used the resources they had, to get ready.

My kids had a chance to prepare for their new lives, but in one major way, they weren't able to see the value of getting ready for something intangible in the future when there were other more pressing

things around them. It's Ok, they have time now to catch up, but it made me think of my own life and how I do the same thing.

God told us to be ready for Him, and He gives us abundant opportunities to practice the language of heaven to prepare for life in our real home. Sometimes that means babbling "baby words" in simple kindness, sometimes it's forthrightly telling an unwelcome but needed truth, while other times we might have poetic, eloquent expressions of grace, but the language of heaven is always the language of love and the time to speak it is now.

*A true Christian behaves in this life so that it may be preparation for the future one, and not only a life here below. In his actions he does not think of what will be said of him here, but of what will be said of him in Heaven; he represents to himself that he is always in the presence of God, of the angels, and all the saints, and remembers that someday they will bear witness of his thoughts, words and deeds.*

*St. John of Kronstadt*

*Edna and Mark King are the parents of Mary Evelyn King, who courageously battled Neuroblastoma and fell asleep in the Lord at age 8 in October 2010. They have recently adopted 3 children from the Ukraine. The King family are members at St. John the Wonderworker in Atlanta. Reprinted from her blog [HopeBeyondHope.me](http://HopeBeyondHope.me).*



## St. Mary of Egypt

### Sermon by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Surozh on the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt 16 April 1989

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

We keep today the memory of Saint Mary of Egypt in the gradual progression from glory to glory which Lent is, and which must lead us step by step to facing the supreme glory of the Divine Love crucified, the sacrificial love of the Holy Trinity.

Saint Mary of Egypt was a sinner, someone whose sin was known to everyone and not to God alone; perhaps she was the only one who was least of all aware of it because sin was her life. And yet, one day, she wanted to go and venerate an icon of the Mother of God in a church. The supreme beauty of womanhood in the Mother of God reached her heart, touched it. But when she came to the gate of this church, a power prevented her from crossing the threshold. The Publican had been able to stand there because his heart was broken; Mary of Egypt had no broken heart, and the entrance of the church was forbidden to her. And she stood there, aware that what she was, was incompatible with the holiness of the Presence, the presence of God, the presence of the Mother of God, the presence of all that is holy on earth and in heaven.

And she was so profoundly shaken by this experience that she left all that had been her life, retired into the desert, and with a life which the service books define as 'extreme', fought to conquer her flesh, her soul, her memories - everything that was sin, but also everything that could lead her away from God. And we know how glorious her life was, the kind of person she became.

What lesson can we receive from her life? How often is it that we have knocked at the door of God in the way in which Mary tried to come into His presence? How often have we tried to pray, to be in His presence in silence? How often has our longing been to God, and how often have we felt that between our prayer and Him, between our silence and Him, between our longing and Him there was a barrier which we could not pass. We were crying, praying into an empty sky, we were turning towards icons that were silent; all we could perceive was the Divine absence, and an absence so frightening, because not only

could we not reach Him, but we perceived that unless we reached Him, our soul was laid waste, there was within us nothing but emptiness, an emptiness that if it continued, if it became our definitive condition would mean more than death - ultimate separation.



**If you cross the Jordan you will find glorious rest. The monastery of St. Saba (Mar Saba) in the Judean Desert – founded in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century**

But how often also has God knocked at the door of our heart. You remember the word of the Book of Revelation: I stand at Thy door and I knock... How often has God, in the words of the Gospel, in the events of our life, in the weak promptings of our soul, in a whispering of the Holy Spirit, in all the ways in which God tries to reach us - how often has He knocked at this door, and how often have we made sure that this door does not open. Either didn't we simply care to open it because we were busy with things that mattered to us at that moment more than His interrupting, disturbing presence; and how often did we refuse to open the door because the coming of the Lord to us would have meant the end of things which were precious to us, which mattered to us... And the Lord stood knocking, and the door was shut in His face: exactly in the same way in which every door was shut in the face of the Mother of God and Joseph on the night of the Nativity.

We may not be aware of it with the intensity which should be ours; and yet for each of us, simply, the proof of it is that we are here, and millions of other people at some moment have suddenly perceived the presence of God, have heard His knocking, have let perhaps the door ajar, have listened to what He was saying, had a moment of elation, a moment when suddenly we came to life, and then we shut the door again. We chose our aloneness, we chose to be without Him, and what we imagined to be 'free' from Him: we are never free; we are never free not because He enslaves us, not because He hunts us down.

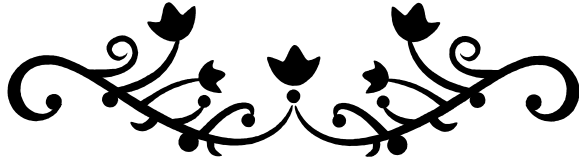
We are never free because He is ultimately in the end the only supreme longing of our whole being, because He is the fullness of life, the glory of life, the exultation of life for which we long and which we try to glean right, and left in vain.

Mary of Egypt confronted with the Divine absence, with God's refusal to allow her into His presence, confronted with a shut door within herself felt that unless the door opened, everything was vain. And she turned away from everything that stood between her and God, and life, and fullness, and exultation.

Isn't she for us an example, a call, an image of what could be the life of each of us? But we may say, Yes, this applied to her, she was a prospective saint... Each of us is called to commune with God in such a way, that God and each of us should become one, that each of us should become partaker of the Divine nature, a living member, a brother, a sister, a limb of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a son and a daughter of the Living God! This is our vocation; but can that be achieved by our own strength? No, it cannot! But it can be achieved by God in us if we only turn to Him with all our mind, all our heart, all our longing, determinably, yes: it is determination, and it is longing, a passionate, desperate longing... And then - and then all things become possible. I have said so often that when Saint Paul asked God for strength to fulfil his mission, the Lord said to him, My grace sufficeth unto thee, My power deploys itself in weakness... And at the end of his life, having fulfilled his vocation, Paul, who knew what he was saying, said, all things are possible unto me in the power of Christ Who sustains me... All things are possible, because God does not call us to more than can be achieved by Him with us and in us.

How much hope, how much inspiration can we find in each of the Saints of God, as frail as we are, and in whom the power, the glory, the victory, the life unfolded itself, deployed itself gloriously.

Let us once more receive inspiration from what we hear, receive inspiration from what we meet face to face in the Gospel, in Holy Communion, in prayer, in the silence in the presence of God. And let us move one step more forward towards the vision of the love of God made manifest in Holy Week, in the last steps of the way of the Cross, in the final victory of crucified Love, and in the victory of the Resurrection of God. Amen



## Great and Holy Saturday

Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

Great and Holy Saturday is the day on which Christ reposed in the tomb. The Church calls this day the Blessed Sabbath.

The great Moses mystically foreshadowed this day when he said:  
God blessed the seventh day.  
This is the blessed Sabbath.  
This is the day of rest,  
on which the only-begotten Son of God  
rested from all His works . . . .

(Vesperal Liturgy of Holy Saturday)

By using this title the Church links Holy Saturday with the creative act of God. In the initial account of creation as found in the Book of Genesis, God made man in His own image and likeness. To be truly himself, man was to live in constant communion with the source and dynamic power of that image: God. Man fell from God. Now Christ, the Son of God through whom all things were created, has come to restore man to communion with God. He thereby completes creation. All things are again as they should be. His mission is consummated. On the Blessed Sabbath He rests from all His works.

### THE TRANSITION

Holy Saturday is a neglected day in parish life. Few people attend the Services. Popular piety usually reduces Holy Week to one day — Holy Friday. This day is quickly replaced by another — Easter Sunday. Christ is dead and then suddenly alive. Great sorrow is suddenly replaced by great joy. In such a scheme Holy Saturday is lost.

In the understanding of the Church, sorrow is not replaced by joy; it is transformed into joy. This distinction indicates that it is precisely within death the Christ continues to effect triumph.



### TRAMPLING DOWN DEATH BY DEATH

We sing that Christ is ". . . trampling down death by death" in the troparion of Easter. This phrase gives great meaning to Holy Saturday. Christ's repose in the tomb is an "active" repose. He comes in search of His fallen friend, Adam, who represents all men. Not finding him on earth, He descends to the realm of death, known as Hades in the Old Testament. There He finds him and brings him life once again. This is the victory: the dead are given life. The tomb is no longer a forsaken, lifeless place. By His death Christ tramples down death.

### THE ICON OF THE DESCENT INTO HADES

The traditional icon used by the Church on the feast of Easter is an icon of Holy Saturday: the descent of Christ into Hades. It is a painting of theology, for no one has ever seen this event. It depicts Christ, radiant in hues of white and blue, standing on the shattered gates of Hades. With arms outstretched He is joining hands with Adam and all the other Old Testament righteous whom He has found there. He leads them from the kingdom of death. By His death He tramples death.

Today Hades cries out groaning:

"I should not have accepted the Man born of Mary.

"He came and destroyed my power.

"He shattered the gates of brass.  
"As God, He raised the souls I had held  
captive."  
Glory to Thy cross and resurrection, O Lord!  
(Vesperal Liturgy of Holy Saturday)

### THE VESPERAL LITURGY

The Vespers of Holy Saturday inaugurates the Paschal celebration, for the liturgical cycle of the day



always begins in the evening. In the past, this service constituted the first part of the great Paschal vigil during which the catechumens were baptized in the "baptisterion" and

led in procession back into the church for participation in their first Divine Liturgy, the Paschal Eucharist. Later, with the number of catechumens increasing, the first baptismal part of the Paschal celebration was disconnected from the liturgy of the Paschal night and formed our pre-paschal service: Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great which follows it. It still keeps all the marks of the early celebration of Pascha as baptismal feast and that of Baptism as Paschal sacrament (death and resurrection with Jesus Christ — Romans 6).

On "Lord I call" the Sunday Resurrectional stichira of tone 1 are sung, followed by the special stichiras of Holy Saturday, which stress the death of Christ as descent into Hades, the region of death, for its destruction. But the pivotal point of the service occurs after the Entrance, when fifteen lessons from the Old Testament are read, all centered on the promise of the Resurrection, all glorifying the ultimate Victory of God, prophesied in the victorious Song of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea ("Let us sing to the Lord for gloriously has He been glorified"), the salvation of Jonah, and that of the three youths in the furnace.

Then the epistle is read, the same epistle that is still read at Baptism (Romans 6:3-11), in which Christ's death and resurrection become the source of the death in us of the "old man," the resurrection of the new, whose life is in the Risen Lord. During the special verses sung after the epistle, "Arise O God and judge the earth," the dark Lenten vestments are put aside and the clergy vest in the bright white ones, so that when the celebrant appears with the Gospel the light of Resurrection is truly made visible to us, the "Rejoice" with which the Risen Christ greeted the women at the grave is experienced as being directed to us.

The Liturgy of St. Basil continues in this white and joyful light, revealing the Tomb of Christ as the Life-giving Tomb, introducing us into the ultimate reality of Christ's Resurrection, communicating His life to us, the children of fallen Adam.

One can and must say that of all services of the Church that are inspiring, meaningful, revealing, this one — the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on the Great and Holy Saturday — is truly the liturgical climax of the Church. If one opens one's heart and mind to it and accepts its meaning and its light, the very truth of Orthodoxy is given by it, the taste and the joy of that new *life* which shown forth from the grave.

## Lazarus Saturday

April 7, 2012

10:00 a.m. Liturgy

**Followed by Lenten Potluck Lunch in honor of our beloved Fr. Dn. Lazarus**

**Parish Clean Up in Preparation for Holy Week and Pascha**

Including: preparing the palms and pussy willows, cleaning the church temple and all the brass, and preparing the processional path

**Parish Council Corner**

**Treasurer's Report:**

*Income (Jan-Feb): \$24,438.69*

*Expenses (Jan-Feb): \$23,925.52*

*Actual Net Income: \$513.17*

*Budgeted Net Income: 1,249.62*

*Thank you for your faithful support of our parish*

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**News from the Parish Council**

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- **New Sign:** After navigating a truly stunning amount of paperwork, rules and regulations, we have the building permit in hand for our new sign on Beaver Ruin Rd. The sign will be a little closer to John Dr. than our current sign and is expected to be installed soon. Funds raised during our first St. Nicholas Days will be used to cover most of this expense.
- **With the concrete** we'll need for the sign, we'll also have some left over for a couple of other small projects on the property including pouring a pad for the dumpster.
- **Website:** Our completely revamped and amazing new website is in its final stages of development prior to going live. Thanks to Tim York and Reader Thomas for their work.
- **The Audit Committee** will be performing their audit of our books shortly and will be issuing a report to the parish council.
- **Thanks to Carl Bartz** and those who volunteered their time and talent to redeck the front porch of the church temple. It will be stained once the wood is ready.
- **Tony DiLeo** will be replacing the posts on the portico to St. Julia's hall. Thanks Tony!
- **Mark your calendars:** St. Nicholas Days will be held on December 1-2, 2012

**Pascha Baskets**



Traditional Pascha Baskets contain celebratory foods we have fasted from all these weeks of Great Lent. Baskets can be elaborate or simple and include dyed eggs, breads, meats, cheeses and favorite goodies to share as we celebrate in the early hours of the morning after the Paschal liturgy.

