

• ST. MARY'S STANDING, Archpriest Dmitri Dutko (+2004)
 ...God's help is not what God will do for us, as popular rumor has it. God helps those who themselves act. When Mary of Egypt was overcome by temptation she fell to the ground and prayed. But what do we do in such cases? Let us think about our prayer. Not only do we pray carelessly, but we also do not pray at all times, although we face no fewer temptations than Mary of Egypt did. The desert of our lives is fraught with such temptations as perhaps even the ancient ascetics did not see. But they need to be overcome. The ascetics who went ahead of us on the path of repentance, thereby gaining experience, can help us. The first who can help us is St. Mary of Egypt. When she prayed, St. Zosima saw how she was raised above the ground. Her repentance gave power to her prayer. Repentance gives wings with which to soar above the earth. It is only through repentance that we can free ourselves from sin—and we have an abyss of sin. Why does this abyss not horrify us? Because we do not see it. If we had seen this abyss, then how forcefully would we have cried out: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me!" We are often slow to repent. Let us sin just a little bit more, and then we will repent. Such calculation is a deception. In the Great Canon we sing: "My soul, my soul, why sleepest thou? The end draweth near!" Our life is rapidly growing shorter and the end is very near. Repentance cannot be put off, for we might not have time. Just as Mary of Egypt made up her mind and immediately swam across the Jordan, so do we, too, need to break with sin at once. This is how you are putting things off: "Just one more drop!" But what if this drop will be fatal? Repentance leads us to resurrection. It is the fifth week of Great Lent, and soon it will be the Resurrection of Christ, Pascha. Pascha is not an earthly feast, it is a heavenly feast—and it is in heavenly fashion, through repentance, that we should prepare for it. Let us now ask ourselves: with what sins have we broken this year? Without liberating ourselves from sin we will not see Pascha, even if we reach it in earthly fashion. Pascha is the liberation from sin; it is reconciliation with God and with one another. Let us hasten to fill in this gap. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me! Holy Mother Mary of Egypt, pray to God for us! Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 1, 2012 ~ 5th Sunday of Lent
 St. Mary of Egypt

- TROPARION OF SAINT MARY, Tone Eight:
 In thee, O Mother, was preserved unimpaired that which is according to God's image, for thou hast taken up the Cross and followed Christ. By thine actions thou hast taught us to despise the flesh, for it passes away, but to care for the soul, which is a thing immortal; and so thy spirit, holy Mary, rejoices with the angels
- KONTAKION OF SAINT MARY, Tone Three:
 Once thou wast defiled with every impurity, but today through repentance thou hast become the bride of Christ. Desiring the life of the angels, thou hast cast down the demons with the weapon of the Cross: therefore, O glorious Mary, thou was made a bride of the Kingdom.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, March 31: 10:30 AM, Choir Rehearsal
 3:30 PM, Catechism Class
 5 PM, Great Vespers only (confessions during and after Vespers)
- Sunday, April 1: 9 AM, Confessions until 10 AM.
 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, 11:45 AM, Church School
 Noon, Agape luncheon in Hall
- Tues., April 3: 8 AM, Matins
- Wed., April 4: 8 AM, Matins
 6:15 PM, Presanctified. *His Grace, Bishop Benjamin will be serving at the Liturgy and will join us for dinner*
- Thurs., April 5: **No Matins.** [Fr. Lawrence in Calistoga all day]
- Friday, April 6: 8 AM, Matins

6:30 PM, Friday evening, Matins for Lazarus
Saturday, Catechism class to follow

- Sat., April 7: 9 AM, Baptism of Jean Elizabeth Share in Protection Church, followed by Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday
1 PM, Church Clean-up and decorating for Palm Sunday
5 PM, VIGIL for the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), with blessing of Palms

- LAZARUS SATURDAY / PALM SUNDAY:

There are two days are days of transition from Lent to Holy Week, marking the earthly recognition (always a temporary thing) of our Lord Jesus Christ as the King and Savior of Israel. Little did His followers realize that He came to defeat the real enemies of mankind: sin, death, ignorance and estrangement from God. As Christians, loyal subjects of the King, we acclaim Him on the two great days of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday as we prepare ourselves for Holy Week. Fr. Stephen Freeman, writes the following: “Largely ignored by much of Christendom, the Orthodox today celebrate ‘Lazarus Saturday’ in something of a prequel to next weekend’s Pascha. It is, indeed a little Pascha just before the greater one. And this, of course, was arranged by Christ Himself, who raised His friend Lazarus from the dead as something of a last action before entering Jerusalem and beginning His slow ascent to Golgotha through the days of next week... One of the hymns of the Vigil of Lazarus Saturday says that Christ ‘stole him from among the dead.’ I rather like the phrase. Next weekend there will be no stealing, but a blasting of the gates of hades itself. What he does for Lazarus he will do for all...Lazarus, of course, is different from those previously raised from the dead by Christ (such as the daughter of Jairus). Lazarus had been four days dead and corruption of the body had already set in. ‘My Lord, he stinks!’ one of his sisters explained when Christ requested to be shown to the tomb. For me, he is also a sign of the universal entombment. That even before we die, we have frequently begun to inhabit our tombs. We live our life with the doors closed (and we stink). Our hearts are often places of corruption and not the habitation of the

good God. Or, at best, we ask Him to visit us as He visited Lazarus. That visit brought tears to the eyes of Christ. The state of our corruption makes Him weep. It is such a contradiction to the will of God. We were not created for the tomb. I also note that in the story of Lazarus—even in his being raised from the dead—he rises in weakness. He remains bound by his grave-clothes. Someone must ‘unbind’ him. We ourselves, having been plunged into the waters of Baptism and robed with the righteousness of Christ, too often exchange those glorious robes for grave-clothes. Christ has made us alive, but we remain bound like dead men.”

- THANKS:

We sincerely thank the members of the Choir for spending many hours on Saturday in preparation for Holy Week to beautify our Services.

- PASCHA SIGN-UP SHEETS:

Pascha is the Feast of Feasts, however, neither the spiritual nor the bodily celebrations are going to happen without a lot of work. As for those tasks that need doing around here, the bodiless angels don’t clean, decorate, manage the candle desk, set up picnic tables or provide the BBQ. They are bodiless—however, we are not. So, it’s up to us to make it all happen. Your participation is needed and appreciated.

- FLOWERS FOR PASCHA:

Are there any parishioners who have Calla Lilies and asparagus fern they are willing to donate for decorating the church for Palm Sunday? If you have either, please contact Patricia Krueger at 573-3076. Thank you very much!

- WORK PARTY: Saturday, April 7, 1 PM

Following the Festal Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday we will have a Clean-the-Church work party: dusting, vacuuming, polishing, and decorating the Church with flowers and palms for the Palm Sunday Vigil and Liturgy.

- FOOD BARRELS:

The Redwood Gospel Mission dropped off food donation barrels that we hope to fill with canned and dry foods. At the moment, we have two mostly empty barrels awaiting your offerings for the poor.