

FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SAINT MARY OF EGYPT



Icon of Saint Zozimos and Saint Mary of Egypt

Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast

March 29, 2020

MEMO FROM BISHOP ANDRIY RABIY

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Due to continuous food shortages and economic hardships recently being experienced by the faithful because of the spreading coronavirus pandemic, the obligation to fast from

meat on Fridays, March 27th and April 3rd is lifted.

However, the faithful are strongly encouraged to continue observing the fast if circumstances allow in addition to prayers and almsgiving.

OUR BISHOPS ON SUPPORTING YOUR PARISH



Glory to Jesus Christ!

In our Philadelphia Archeparchy, most of our church communities are small in the number of

parishioners but overflowing with generosity, love of God and neighbor, and mutual sacrifice.

During the present pandemic you witness concern for family and friends, love of God and neighbor, and mutual sacrifice. Each of you is to be commended for your care and cooperation during this

unprecedented situation. Together we are all listening to what the Lord is communicating to us. It is clear that this crisis is a spiritual wake-up call.

The nation and the world are following the lead of our highest government and church authorities to safeguard each and every one of you in body and soul. With the precautionary cancellation of public services, our clergy, religious, and faithful have responded with understanding. We all experienced the loss of coming together as a parish family for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Although public services are not being held, liturgical prayer in church for your intentions continues. Our priests continue to celebrate Divine

Liturgies and other services. The clergy are intensifying their outreach in creative and caring ways.

While you are not able to come to church, our Parishes must continue to pay their bills. It is common knowledge that many of our parishes rely solely on the weekly collections and fund-raisers to meet their expenses. Presently, there are no weekly collections, and fund-raisers have been canceled. As you can imagine, our parishes need your financial support now, more than ever. None of us will avoid financial difficulties completely. Some of you already are experiencing great challenges personally and in your families. To get through these hard times we will all need to make sacrifices.

We appeal to you to please mail your weekly offerings to your parishes until public services are resumed. Your sacrificial giving as needed to help your parish meet its financial obligations in order to maintain pastoral stability.

In doing so, let us recall the words of St. Paul: “whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Thank you for your generous offerings and may the blessings of our Lord be upon you and your families, now and always.

+ Borys (Gudziak)

+ Andriy (Rabiy)

MEDITATION FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

St. Mark tells us of the disciples walking on the road to Jerusalem with Jesus walking in the lead. He tells us that “their mood was one of wonderment, while that of those who followed was fear” (Mk 10:32). Then we hear of two disciples vying to sit, one at the right and other on the left, when Jesus comes into His glory.

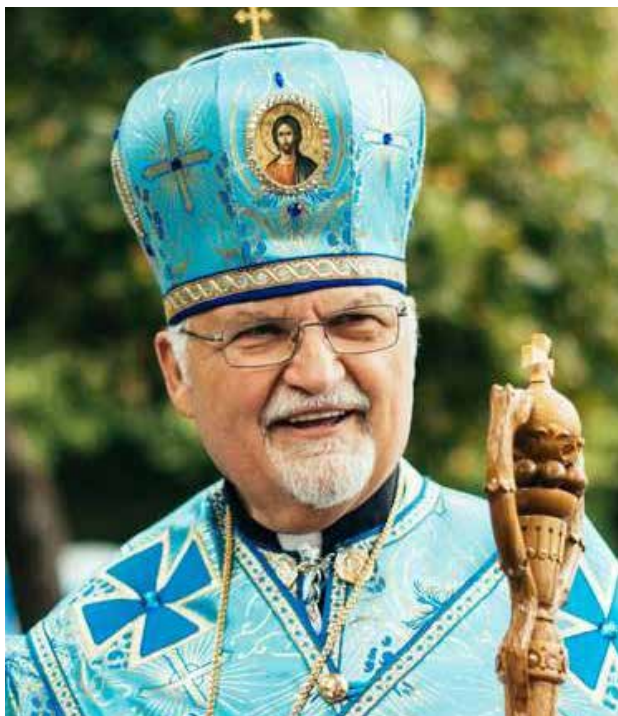
This caused some anger among the other disciples. Jesus calms them by instructing them, “You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever

wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all” (Mk 10:44). Fear, mutual distrust, envy, and pride rob you and me of the special gift of walking with Jesus with wonderment. We can be blinded to the needs and sufferings of others around us. We can forget the importance of being of service to others. Great Fast invites you and me to walk alongside Jesus Christ

with wonderment as to where He will lead us. We are reminded, “... the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve...” (Mk 10:45). Saint Teresa of Calcutta saw the face of Jesus in every person she ministered to, especially the sick and the dying. Through her inspiration, may we also cherish and search for opportunities to see Jesus Christ in the faces of those we serve!

JESUS’ PIVOTAL QUESTION TO US IN TIMES OF DESPAIR

By Archbishop (Emeritus) Stefan Soroka



As all of us practice physical distancing in this time of the coronavirus pandemic, we might give some thought to what Jesus Christ would say to you and to me as He walks amidst us. He would undoubtedly ask us a pivotal question as to our faith, just as He did when healing others. There are some lessons for you and me in these healing miracles as we cope with today’s pandemic.

Recall when Jesus returned from the mountain top with his closest friends, only to find the apostles baffled, helpless and ineffective. They had fallen into despair because they

could not help a father desperate for a cure of his ill son. Jesus challenges the father saying, "Everything is possible to one who has faith" (Mk 9:23). It is as if Jesus says, "The cure of the boy depends not on me, but on you". Herein lies a universal truth. To approach anything in the spirit of hopelessness is to make it hopeless. To approach anything in the spirit of faith is to make it a possibility. Many people are cursed with a sense of the impossible, and that is why miracles cannot happen. The father's response is inspiring to us, "I do believe, help my unbelief" (Mk 9:24). Jesus did not disappoint the father. He cured the boy.

When they were by themselves, the apostles asked Jesus what was the cause of their failure, their inability to cure the boy. They remembered how Jesus had sent them to preach and to heal, and to cast out the evil spirits. Why could they not do it this time? Jesus simply answered that this kind of cure demanded a closeness with God through faithful prayer. They had been equipped with power, but it needed prayer to maintain it. There is a lesson here for you and for me. God gives each of us a gift. We are called to maintain close contact with him, or the gift will wither and die. Jesus also cautioned the

apostles, and cautions you and me to be humble in using our gifts. When that which should be used for God's glory is used for our own glory, then the virtue goes out of it.

A similar pivotal question was asked of the many blind people Jesus healed. You will recall that some cried out for mercy as Jesus passed by, while others were brought to Jesus for healing. They are all asked what they would like. Jesus asks them if they believe He can do this for them. Their affirmative "yes" of faith yields their regaining their sight. There is also the occasion when some have to follow Jesus into the house, not healed amidst the crowds. Jesus emphasized the value of our personal relationship of faith with Him. Jesus wants us to sit down face to face with us, and to be with us fully. We all need God's healing because there are parts of us that are broken and need to be put back together again. There are parts of us that are sick that need to be restored to health. We need the reviving power of God within us, just as the blind men received in their healing and restoration of sight.

Then there is the story of a man who was deaf and who had an impediment in his speech. Jesus treats him with much compassion, taking him aside

to heal him. Jesus wants to take you and me aside also. He does not want to embarrass us that we may be strangers to him in prayer. Jesus wants us to step outside of our own rushing and meeting agendas and expectations and perceived priorities. It was the man's inability to hear which made his speech imperfect. Are we ourselves so involved with our friend "hurry"? Are we so busy ourselves that we are lost and confused as to what really matters, subject to frustrations and temptations, sinfulness, imperfect speech because we have lost the skill of hearing? Are we unable to hear God's word in our lives, and thus the speech of our lives is impaired or imperfect?

When we pray, let's ask for healing

of our listening ears. Ask God to rid you and me of that which causes our spiritual darkness. Step aside from your preoccupations, addictions, clutter of communication. Step aside with the Lord and allow Him to be present to you, to hear His whispers of what He desires of you, to know of His unconditional love for you.

"Do you believe I can do this for you?" If our answer is a "yes" of faith in Jesus, then He will fill us with an inner power that will be beyond what we ever imagined. This is the life of faith. God leads you and me by progressive touches or experiences to that moment when our "yes" becomes our life, the moment of complete peace in Jesus Christ!

CORONAVIRUS AND CHURCH SERVICES

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

All services will be temporarily celebrated by the **PRIEST ONLY** and **WITHOUT** the participation of the assembly of the faithful in the church. Church is not cancelled. I will celebrate **ALL SERVICES** for the intentions of the faithful, but sadly without your presence.

These temporary extraordinary measures find their basis not in lack of faith but in obedience to God, who

commands that we care for the least of the brethren through self-sacrifice and obey our civil authorities and follow the directives of our Ukrainian Catholic Bishops in the USA.

This week, our church will be open for Private Prayer on Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 am to 1 pm.

Confessions by appointment only. In case of an emergency, please call the Parish Office 570-291-4451. For information, visit our parish website,

<https://stcyrils.weconnect.com> and see the latest posted bulletin.

ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

It has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion which is a source of grace. Spiritual Communion means uniting one's self in prayer with Christ's sacrifice and worshipping Him in His Body and Blood. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend the Divine Liturgy. Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive

Holy Communion worthily. When unable to receive Holy Communion, pray the following prayer:

“My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.”

FISH DINNER FUND-RAISER FOR ST. CYRIL'S

St. Cyril's 8th Annual “Baked Haddock Fish Dinner” has been CANCELED due to COVID-19. We

will refund the money to anyone who has already purchased a ticket.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS TO BE RESCHEDULED

Any Divine Liturgy intentions which have been scheduled during this time of the Pandemic will be rescheduled at a time when Church is once again open to public worship. During this period

my intentions will be for the health and well-being of our Parishioners and an end to this COVID-19 crisis.

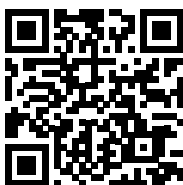
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Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor

Saint Mary of Egypt

On a pilgrimage through the desert, a priest-monk named Father Zozimos encountered a most fascinating and inspiring woman whom we know today as Saint Mary of Egypt. Saint Mary, Zozimos recalled, seemed to be "walking upon air." Upon approaching this woman, she asked for his blessing and told him of her life.

Saint Mary was born in Egypt in the sixth century and by the age of twelve had already dedicated her life to the pursuit of debauchery and excess. By her own admission, she spent the next seventeen years of her life attempting to satisfy every carnal appetite in any way possible. This intention led her to seek passage on a boat bound for Jerusalem where, out of curiosity, she followed the crowds to the threshold of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. As she attempted to follow the

crowd into the Church, she was stopped at the doorway by an invisible force. At this moment, her sinfulness was revealed to her and she made a promise to the Mother of God that if she was permitted to enter the Church she would dedicate the rest of her life to God.

After her dramatic conversion she withdrew to the desert where she spent the remaining years of her life in self-denial and repentance. Towards the end of her life she met the priest-monk Zozimos, whom she petitioned to visit her on regular occasions in order that she might be nourished with Holy Communion before she died.

May the example of Saint Mary draw attention to our own need for repentance so that we, too, nourished by Holy Communion, may re-dedicate our lives to the service of God.