



Changing Your Ways

Glory to Jesus Christ!

☞ Going to church is a good thing. In fact, it's a great experience for us.

How would you react if you were prevented from going to church?

Would you be mad? Demand justice? Complain that your rights were being denied?

When would you begin to wonder the reason why this was happening to you?

Self Reflection

This is what happened to Saint Mary of Egypt when she was 29 years old. She was in Jerusalem, attempting to enter a church, but **felt an invisible power** preventing her from going in.

After thinking about what this could mean, Mary saw an icon of the Theotokos, and began praying, **asking the Virgin Mary to entreat God's mercy**, allowing her to enter the church.

Facing Reality

Mary had realized that her life, filled with sinful acts, was preventing her from encountering God. Her prayers turned inward, taking on new meaning. Like the Prodigal Son, she resolved to change her ways.

Mary promised that in exchange for being **allowed into the church**, she would spend the rest of her life in **repentance for her sins**.

A New Life

God answered Mary's prayers, and the invisible power allowed her entry into the church. **Mary bowed before the Cross** of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Her repentance was changed to gratitude, making good on her promise to God. Leaving behind her sinful ways, Mary left the church and immediately went to live in the Palestinian desert for the next 46 years!

Be Serious

We don't need to run to the desert, we need to think seriously about our way of life.

The journey through Great Lent is nearly over, and we can still **be like St. Mary of Egypt**, leaving behind the things which separate us from God, approaching the church in humility and repentance.

Changing our ways can transform us into the people God created us to be: Saints!

☞ **Scripture Readings**

for the Fifth Sunday of Lent:
St. Mary of Egypt

Epistle: **Hebrews 9:11-14**

Gospel: **Mark 10:32-45**



☞ **Hymns of the Day**

for the Fifth Sunday of Lent:
St. Mary of Egypt

Troparion/Apolytikion — T8 (Pl 4)

The image of God, was faithfully preserved in you, O Mother.

For you took up the Cross and followed Christ.

By Your actions you taught us to look beyond the flesh for it passes, rather to be concerned about the soul which is immortal.

Wherefore, O Holy Mary, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion — Tone 3

Who once was filled with every carnal sin has become today, through repentance, the bride of Christ.

She desired the company of angels. She trampled upon demons with the Cross as her weapon.

This is why, O Glorious Mary, you became a Bride of the Kingdom.

Parents, Church School Teachers & Youth Directors:
Watch for the ☞ to indicate topics/questions you can use to inspire conversations with youth. Or use the corresponding study guide for this resource.



Sing or pray these hymns to St. Mary before her icon.

Troparion/Apolytikion — Tone 8 (Plagal 4)

The image of God was truly preserved in you, O mother, for you took up the Cross and followed Christ. By so doing, you taught us to disregard the flesh, for it passes away; but to care instead for the soul, since it is immortal.

Therefore your spirit, O holy Mother Mary, rejoices with the Angels.

Kontakion — Tone 3

Having been a sinful woman, you became through repentance a Bride of Christ. Having attained angelic life, you defeated demons with the weapon of the Cross; therefore, O most glorious Mary you are a Bride of the Kingdom!

✠ Six Ideas for the Last Six Days of the Great Fast

1. Read the full life of St. Mary of Egypt:
<https://bit.ly/stmary-egypt>
2. Keep saying St. Ephraim's Prayer every day
3. Read from the Book of Proverbs (chapters 19-31)
4. Forgive those who offend you, repent if you offend someone
5. Go to confession (if you haven't already)
6. Pray to St. Mary of Egypt for humility and repentance

ST. MARY OF EGYPT

was born in Alexandria, on north African coast of Egypt, in 445 AD.

Mary was raised as a Christian, but at the age of 12 she discovered boys and soon became obsessed with a passion-filled life of sensuality and lust. Mary lived like this for seventeen years.

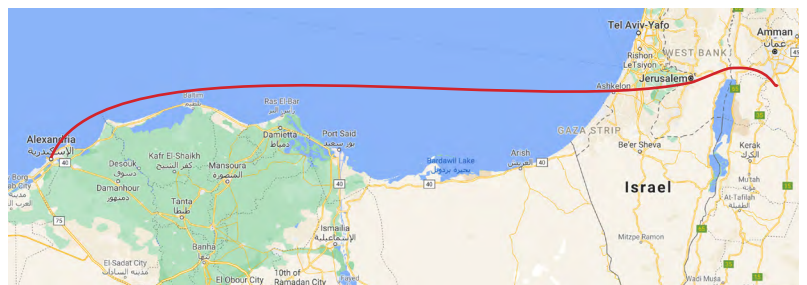
Then, one summer, she joined a group of pilgrims on a ship heading to Jerusalem to see the Precious Cross of Jesus Christ. Although poor, Mary was able to make the voyage by leading some of the men into sin, giving Mary money for time spent with her.

When she arrived at the Church in Jerusalem with the others, they entered it, but an invisible force prevented Mary from going in to see the Cross. She tried multiple times, getting frustrated and eventually physically exhausted.

Mary began to realize it was her sinful way of life which prevented her from entering the church. In her unworthiness, Mary looked above the door of the church and saw the icon of the Theotokos.

She dropped to her knees and began to pray with a great intensity, asking for God's mercy, repenting of her sinful life. Mary then arose, and again tried to enter the church. This time, she was able, venerating the holy Cross. Mary then returned to the doors of the church, kneeling before the icon of the Theotokos in gratitude.

Mary heard a voice telling her, "If you cross the Jordan river, you will find glorious rest." Mary did just that, leaving Jerusalem, she walked to the Jordan River, crossed it, and left the world and her former way of life, focusing on repentance through prayer and strict fasting.



We know of Saint Mary's radical change of lifestyle thanks to a monk named Saint Zosimas who lived at a monastery not far from Jerusalem. Years after Mary had left Jerusalem, he had gone to pray in the desert during Great Lent where he encountered Mary.

At first, St. Zosimas thought he was seeing a spirit, but then realized Mary was a real person. They spoke, and Mary eventually shared her life story with St. Zosimas. He was amazed at her holiness, and how through her personal struggles to repent for 46 years, alone in the desert, she tamed her physical passions and acquired spiritual holiness.

St. Mary of Egypt is an example and inspiration for us, showing how God loves and forgives us of our sins when we repent. Christ encourages us to live a life of humility with prayer and fasting, caring for our soul so we can one day stand with the Venerable Mary of Egypt and all of the other saints before God in Paradise.



Learning from the Liturgy

Today's church services feature hymns which celebrate the repentance of St. Mary of Egypt. The liturgical texts sung or chanted today during the divine services teach us why Saint Mary is an example for us on how to live repentant lives as Orthodox Christians.

Even if we are unable to be in church for every service this weekend, we can sing/read these prayers at home to honor St. Mary, asking her to pray to God for us and our families.

Instructions:

Read the texts in the left column and then choose one about which to write your thoughts on how St. Mary can be an inspiration for your own struggles to live a godly life.

☞ #1: From **Vespers**

(the evening service):

At "Lord, I have Called..." Tone/Mode 6 (Plagal 2)

You lived alone in the wilderness; as you erased the images of sin from your soul, God marked it with the imprint of holiness.

Filled with the Spirit, blessed mother, you walked on the surface of the waters; by your prayers you ascended from earth to heaven.

Since you stand before Christ, O glorious Mary, entreat Him with boldness to save our souls!

#2 From **Matins**

(the morning service):

At the Canon, Ode 1: Tone/Mode 6 (Plagal 2)

How great is Your tender mercy, O my God, and Your ineffable condescension!
For at the intercessions of Your Mother,
You made the former harlot pure and spotless as the angels.

#3 From **Matins**

(the morning service):

Ikos of the Kontakion: Tone/Mode 3

We praise you now in our hymns, all-honored Mary, as the lamb and daughter of Christ. Sprung from Egyptian stock, you fled from all their errors and were offered as a precious flower to the Church. You struggled in abstinence and prayer above the measure of human nature, and so you were exalted by Christ, for through your life and actions: Most glorious Mary, you are a bride of the kingdom!

Saint Mary of Egypt inspires me because: