

ST. JACOB OF ALASKA ORTHODOX CHURCH

802.485.9121 www.stjacobofalaska.org

April 5, 2009

Fr. Caleb Abetti
Priest (603.219.1711)

Susanna Toolan
President

Lives of the Saints

(condensed from oca.org)

Saint Mary of Egypt

Commemorated on April 5

+ + + **Service Schedule** + + +

Sunday, April 5th

FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT – Tone 1. St. Mary of Egypt. Martyrs Agathopodes the Deacon, Theodulus the Reader, and those with them, at Thessalonica (ca.303). Ven. Publius of Egypt (4th c.). Ss. Theonas, Simeon and Phorbinus, of Egypt (4th c.). Ven. Mark the Anchorite, of Athens (400). St. Plato the Confessor, of Studion (814). Ven. Theodora of Thessalonica (892). Translation of the Relics of St. Job, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (1652).

3rd and 6th Hours: 9:10 am.

Divine Liturgy: 9:30 am.

Epistle: Heb. 9:11-14; Gospel: Mark 10:32-45.

Wednesday, April 8th

Presanctified Liturgy: 6:00 pm.

Meal and Study Group following: St. John Climacus' Ladder of Divine Ascent (Steps 14, 15, and 16).

Saturday, April 11th

Lazarus Saturday

3rd and 6th Hours: 9:10 am.

Divine Liturgy: 9:30 am.

Great Vespers of the Resurrection: 5:00 pm.

Sunday, April 12th

PALM SUNDAY – Entrance into Jerusalem. St. Basil, Confessor, Bishop of Parium.

3rd and 6th Hours: 9:10 am.

Divine Liturgy: 9:30 am.

Epistle: Phil. 4:4-9; Gospel: Jogn 12:1-18



Pascha Flower Collection

There is still time to give to the special collection for flowers for Pascha.

Please consider contributing to the beautification of our Temple for Pashca



“All these were things that took place to the enemy's shame. For he who considered himself to be like God was now made a buffoon by a mere youth, and he who vaunted himself against flesh and blood was turned back by a flesh-bearing man. Working with Antony was the Lord, who bore flesh for us, and gave to the body the victory over the devil, so that each of those who truly struggle can say, it is 'not I, but the grace of God, which is in me'. [Gal. 2:20]”

– St. Athanasius, *The Life of St. Antony*



Saint Zosimas (April 4) was a monk at a certain Palestinian monastery on the outskirts of Caesarea...until he reached the age of fifty-three...an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, “...go to the monastery by the Jordan.”...Abba Zosimas immediately left the monastery, and following the angel, he went to the Jordan monastery and settled in it...

There was a certain custom at the monastery, which was why God had led St. Zosimas there. On the First Sunday of Lent the igumen served the Divine Liturgy, everyone received the All-Pure Body and Blood of Christ. Afterwards, they went to the trapeza for a small repast, and then assembled once more in the church.

The monks prayed and made prostrations, asking forgiveness one of another. Then they made a prostration before the igumen and asked his blessing for the struggle that lay before them. During the Psalm “The Lord is my Light and my Savior, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps 26/27:10), they opened the monastery gate and went off into the wilderness...

Abba Zosimas, according to the custom of the monastery, went deep into the desert hoping to find someone living there who could benefit him.

He walked into the wilderness for twenty days and then, when he sang the Psalms of the Sixth Hour and made the usual prayers, suddenly, to the right of the hill where he stood, he saw a human form. He was afraid, thinking that it might be a demonic apparition. Then he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, which removed his fear. He turned to the right and saw a form walking southward. The body was black from the blazing sunlight, and the faded short hair was white like a sheep's fleece. Abba Zosimas rejoiced, since he had not seen any living thing for many days.

The desert-dweller saw Zosimas approaching, and attempted to flee from him. Abba Zosimas, forgetting his age and his fatigue, quickened his pace. When he was close enough to be heard, he called out, “Why do you flee from me, a sinful old man? Wait for me, for the love of God.”

The stranger said to him, “Forgive me, Abba Zosimas, but I cannot turn and show my face to you. I am a woman, and as you see, I am naked. If you would grant the request of a sinful woman, throw me your cloak so I might cover my body, and then I can ask for your blessing.”

Then Abba Zosimas was terrified, realizing that she could not have called him by name unless she possessed spiritual insight.

Covered by the cloak, the ascetic turned to Zosimas: “Why do you want to speak with me, a sinful woman? What did you wish to learn from me, you who have not shrunk from such great labors?”...

...the Elder fell at her feet with tears saying, “I beseech you by Christ our God, do not conceal from me who you are and how you came into this desert. Tell me everything, so that the wonderous works of God may be revealed.”

She replied...”I was born in Egypt and when I was twelve years old, I left my parents and went to Alexandria. There I lost my chastity and gave myself to unrestrained and insatiable sensuality. For more than seventeen years I lived like that and I did it all for free. Do not think that I refused the money because I was rich. I lived in poverty and worked at spinning flax. To me, life consisted in the satisfaction of my fleshly lust. (Continued on insert)

Saint Mary of Egypt

(Continued)

“One summer I saw a crowd of people from Libya and Egypt heading toward the sea. They were on their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I also wanted to sail with them. Since I had no food or money, I offered my body in payment for my passage. And so I embarked on the ship...”

“...I arrived in Jerusalem and spent all the days before the Feast living the same sort of life, and maybe even worse.

“When the holy Feast of the Exaltation of the Venerable Cross of the Lord arrived, I went about as before, looking for young men. At daybreak I saw that everyone was heading to the church, so I went along with the rest. When the hour of the Holy Elevation drew nigh, I was trying to enter into the church with all the people. With great effort I came almost to the doors, and attempted to squeeze inside. Although I stepped up to the threshold, it was as though some force held me back, preventing me from entering. I was brushed aside by the crowd, and found myself standing alone on the porch. I thought that perhaps this happened because of my womanly weakness. I worked my way into the crowd, and again I attempted to elbow people aside. However hard I tried, I could not enter. Just as my feet touched the church threshold, I was stopped. Others entered the church without difficulty, while I alone was not allowed in. This happened three or four times. Finally my strength was exhausted. I went off and stood in a corner of the church portico.

“The I realized that it was my sins that prevented me from seeing the Life-Creating Wood. The grace of the Lord then touched my heart. I wept and lamented, and I began to beat my breast. Sighing from the depths of my heart, I saw above me an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Turning to her, I prayed: 'O Lady Virgin, who gave birth in the flesh to God the Word! I know that I am unworthy to look upon your icon. I rightly inspire hatred and disgust before your purity, but I know also that God became man in order to call sinners to repentance. Help me, O All-Pure One. Let me enter the church. Allow me to behold the Wood upon which the Lord was crucified in the flesh, shedding His blood for the redemption of sinners, and also for me. Be my witness before your Son that I will never defile my body again with the impurity of fornication. As soon as I have seen the Cross of your Son, I will renounce the world, and go wherever you lead me.'

“After I had spoken, I felt confidence in the compassion of the Mother of God, and left the spot where I had been praying. I joined those entering the church, and no one pushed me back or prevented me from entering. I went on in fear and trembling, and entered the holy place.

“Thus I also saw the Mysteries of God, and how God accepts the penitent. I fell to the holy ground and kissed it. Then I hastened again to stand before the icon of the Mother of God, where I had given my vow. Bending my knees before the Virgin Theotokos, I prayed:

'O Lady, you have not rejected my prayer as unworthy. Glory be to God, Who accepts the repentance of sinners. It is time for me to fulfill my vow, which you witnessed. Therefore, O Lady, guide me on the path of repentance.'

“Then I heard a voice from on high: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest.'

“I immediately believed that this voice was meant for me, and I cried out to the Mother of God: 'O Lady, do not forsake me!'

“Then I left the church portico and started on my journey. A certain man gave me three coins as I was leaving the church. With them I bought three loaves of bread, and asked the bread merchant the way to the Jordan.”...

Abba Zosimas asked her, “How many years have passed since you began to live in the desert?”

“I think,” she replied, “it is forty-seven years since I came from the Holy City.”...

“...I beg you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, tell no one what you have heard from me, until God takes me from this earth. Next year, during Great Lent, do not cross the Jordan, as is the custom of your monastery.”

Again Abba Zosimas was amazed, that the practice of the monastery was known to this holy woman ascetic, although he had not said anything about this to her.

“Remain at the monastery,” the woman continued. “Even if you try to leave the monastery, you will not be able to do so. On Great and Holy Thursday, the day of the Lord's Last Supper, place the Life-Creating Body and Blood of Christ our God in a holy vessel, and bring it to me. Await me on this side of the Jordan, at the edge of the desert, so that I may receive the Holy Mysteries. And say to Abba John, the igumen of your community, 'Look to yourself and your brothers (1 Tim. 4:16), for there is much that needs correction. Do not say this to him now, but when the Lord shall indicate.’”

Asking his prayers, the woman turned and vanished into the depths of the desert.

For a whole year Elder Zosimas remained silent, not daring to reveal to anyone what he had seen, and he prayed that the Lord would grant him to see the holy ascetic once more.

When the first week of Great Lent came again, St. Zosimas was obliged to remain at the monastery because of sickness. Then he remembered the woman's prophetic words that he would not be able to leave the monastery. After several days, St. Zosimas was healed of his infirmity, but he remained at the monastery until Holy Week.

On Holy Thursday, Abba Zosimas did what he had been ordered to do. He placed some of the Body and Blood of Christ into a chalice, and some food in a small basket. Then he left the monastery and went to the Jordan and waited for the ascetic. The saint seemed tardy, and Abba Zosimas prayed that God would permit him to see the holy woman.

Finally, he saw her standing on the far side of the river. Rejoicing, St. Zosimas got up and glorified God. Then he wondered how she could cross the Jordan without a boat. She made the Sign of the Cross over the water, then she walked on the water and crossed the Jordan...

The woman asked him to recite both the Creed and the 'Our Father'. When the prayers were finished, she partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Then she raised her hands to the heavens and said, 'Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.'...

The saint made the Sign of the Cross over the Jordan, and walked over the water as before, and disappeared into the desert. Zosimas returned to the monastery with joy and terror, reproaching himself because he did not ask the saint's name. He hoped to do so the following year.

A year passed, and Abba Zosimas went into the desert. He reached the place where he first saw the holy woman ascetic. She lay dead, with arms folded on her bosom, and her face was turned to the east. Abba Zosimas washed her feet with his tears and kissed them, not daring to touch anything else. For a long time he wept over her and sang the customary Psalms, and said the funeral prayers. He began to wonder whether the saint would want him to bury her or not. Hardly had he thought this, when he saw something written on the ground near her head: 'Abba Zosimas, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust what is dust. Pray to the Lord for me. I reposed on the first day of April, on the very night of the saving Passion of Christ, after partaking of the Mystical Supper.'...

The monks passed on the life of St. Mary of Egypt by word of mouth without writing it down.

“I, however,” says St. Sophronius of Jerusalem (March 11), “wrote down the life of St. Mary of Egypt as I heard it from the holy Fathers. I have recorded everything, putting the truth above all else.”

Saint Mary of Egypt, pray to God for us.