

St. Nikolai Orthodox Church, Divine Liturgy, 9:30 / Saturday Vespers, 5 pm.
Book study/Christian Education following Vespers
Parish Council meetings 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7pm (open to parishioners)
9837 State Street, Louisville , Ohio 44641
Right Rev. Bishop Alexander, Bishop of Toledo, Orthodox Church in America
Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (OCA)
April 17, 2016: 5th Sunday of Lent/ St. Mary of Egypt
Website: <http://www.stnikolaiorthodoxmission.com>
Facebook page: "<http://www.facebook.com/SaintNikolaiOrthodoxMission> of Alliance

Welcome to Visitors. Thank you for coming and praying with us today. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Communion is reserved only for Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and confession during the Church fasting seasons. We invite you to introduce yourself to Father Joe and Deacon James at the end of the Liturgy and receive a piece of the blessed bread and join us for fellowship and Christian education. We look forward to seeing you again and encourage you to learn more about the Orthodox Faith.

Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead// by His glorious Resurrection.

Tone 8 Troparion (St Mary of Egypt)

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, for it is immortal.//
Therefore your spirit, O holy Mother Mary, rejoices with the angels.

Tone 4 Troparion (St. Nikolai)

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you.
Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

Tone 3 Kontakion (St Mary of Egypt)

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.

Tone 5 Prokeimenon

You, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever.
v: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly!

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14

Tone 5 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

v: I will sing of Your mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Your truth from generation to generation.

v: For You have said: "Mercy will be established forever; My truth will be prepared in the heavens."

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

(Instead of "It is truly meet ...," we sing the following Hymn to the Theotokos)

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace: the assembly of Angels and the race of men. O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a Child – our God before the ages. He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens.

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. Glory to you!

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not fear evil tidings.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

A Brief Life of St Mary of Egypt

Mary began her life as a young woman who followed the passions of the body, running away from her parents at age twelve for Alexandria. There she lived as a harlot for seventeen years, refusing money from the men that she copulated with, instead living by begging and spinning flax.

One day, however, she met a group of young men heading toward the sea to sail to Jerusalem for the veneration of the Holy Cross. Mary went along for the ride, seducing the men as they traveled for the fun of it. But when the group reached Jerusalem and actually went towards the church, Mary was prohibited from entering by an unseen force. After three such attempts, she remained outside on the church patio, where she looked up and saw an icon of the Theotokos. She began to weep and prayed with all her might that the Theotokos might allow her to see the True Cross; afterwards, she promised, she would renounce her worldly desires and go wherever the Theotokos may lead her.

After this heart-felt conversion at the doors of the church, she fled into the desert to live as an ascetic. She survived for years on only three loaves of bread and thereafter on scarce herbs of the land. For another seventeen years, Mary was tormented by "wild beasts—mad desires and passions." After these years of temptation, however, she overcame the passions and was led by the Theotokos in all things.

Following 47 years in solitude, she met the priest St. Zosima in the desert, who pleaded with her to tell him of her life. She recounted her story with great humility while also demonstrating her gift of clairvoyance; she knew who Zosima was and his life story despite never having met him before. Finally, she asked Zosima to meet her again the following year at sunset on Holy Thursday by the banks of the Jordan.

Zosima did exactly this, though he began to doubt his experience as the sun began to go that night. Then Mary appeared on the opposite side of the Jordan; crossing herself, she miraculously walked across the water and met Zosima. When he attempted to bow, she rebuked him, saying that as a priest he was far superior, and furthermore, he was holding the Holy Mysteries. Mary then received communion and walked back across the Jordan after giving Zosima instructions about his monastery and that he should return to where they first met exactly a year later. When he did so, he found Mary's body with a message written on the sand asking him for burial and revealing that she had died immediately after receiving the Holy Mysteries the year before (and thus had been miraculously transported to the spot where she now lay). So Zosima, amazed, began to dig, but soon tired; then a lion approached and began to help him, that is, after Zosima had recovered from his fear of the creature. Thus St. Mary of Egypt was buried. Zosima returned to the monastery, told all he had seen, and improved the faults of the monks and abbot there. He died at almost a hundred years old in the same monastery.

Later, the story of Mary's life was written down by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The Life of St. Mary of Egypt is read during Great Lent along with the Great Canon of St. Andrew.

A Reflection from the Life of St Mary the Egyptian by St Nikolai

Why is it that much is said and written about the sufferings of holy men and holy women? Because the saints, alone, are considered victors. Can anyone be a victor without conflict, pain and suffering?

In ordinary earthly combat, no one can be considered victorious nor heroic who has not been in combat, tortured much or suffered greatly. The more so in spiritual combat where the truth is known and where self-boasting not only does not help at all but, indeed, hinders it. He who does not engage in combat for the sake of Christ, either with the world, with the devil or with one's self, how can he be counted among the soldiers of Christ? How, then, can it be with Christ's co-victors?

St. Mary of Egypt spoke about her savage spiritual combat to the Elder Zosimas: "For the first seventeen years in this wilderness I struggled with my deranged sexual desires as though with fierce beasts. I desired to eat meat and fish which I had in abundance in Egypt. I also desired to drink wine and here, I did not have even water to drink. I desired to hear lustful songs. I cried and beat my breasts. I prayed to the All-Pure Mother of God to banish such thoughts from me. When I had sufficiently cried and beat my breasts, it was then that I saw a light encompassing me on all sides and a certain miraculous peace filled me."

LENTEN SCHEDULE (*dates in bold are services at St. Nikolai Church*)

> **Friday, April 15**, Pre-sanctified Liturgy, 6:30 pm

> Wednesday, April 20, Pan-Orthodox Pre-sanctified Liturgy, 6:30 pm St. George (Ant) Canton

> **Saturday, April 23**, Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy, 9:30 am

There will be a full Holy Week schedule, April 25-29 (every evening at 6:30).

Confession Reminder: The participation in the Sacrament of Holy Penance (Confession) during Lent is an absolute necessity for every Orthodox Christian in Communion with the Church. Those who have not been to Confession by the end of Lent should not approach the Chalice for Holy Communion (note: Lent ends, Friday April 22, with Holy Week being the following week, April 25-30, leading up to Pascha). Please note that Father will not hear Confessions during Holy Week unless under extenuating circumstances. Confessions are regularly heard after Saturday Vespers and by appointment.

St. Nikolai Velemirovich on Confession:

And do not say that you confess your sins directly to God and have no need of confession before men. Who was more righteous than the Apostle Paul? And that Paul had a sin before his Apostleship, as Saul, and he confessed that sin publicly, not once but multiple times, and not just before the faithful but also before the godless. He says to the baptized Galatians, "You have heard how I greatly persecuted the church of God and wreaked havoc upon it." He says the same thing before the un-baptized king Agrippa (Acts 26).

And if Saint Paul acted this way, why would you keep the wounds of your soul hidden? Why would you leave snakes to multiply in your bosom?

So, when it comes to your soul, do not listen to every passing comment, but listen to what God's Church says. Talk to elder (priests) who confess people, and they will tell you of the great relief found by the many who confessed sincerely. It is no imaginary tale but the hard truth that many dying people being in a long agony could only repose once they confessed their sins before a priest. I could tell you of such examples myself, having witnessed them.

Our God is the God of mercy and goodness, and He wishes for all to be saved. But how can one be saved if he does not clearly understand the distinction between sin and God's righteousness, renounce the sin and embrace the righteousness of God? One goes to the Judgment with whatever he carries on his soul at the moment of death. If it is sin, then with sin. If it is righteousness, then with righteousness.

God awaits repentance of every mortal, and repentance implies the confession of one's sins. And since the Angel of death can appear at any moment to take our soul, this is why the Church recommends to its faithful to confess often and repent.

If you wish to list someone on the parish prayer list, you must advise Father..

PRAYERS requested:

For The Health and Salvation of;

Andrea Bartol (Steve & Sandy Bozeka's daughter)

Letitia Bella (Lynette Baier's mother)

Olympia Tillman (Father David's mother)

Helen (Father David's aunt)

Carl (friend of Father David)

Lisa “

Kitty “

Father David & Family

Father John Zdinak & Family

Gregory Cervo
Ann Cervo

For The Repose of the Souls of the newly departed Servants:

+Paul (friend of Fr. David)
+Bruce “ “ “
+Khouria Marguerite Shaheen
+Helen (Step-Mother of Fr. Bill Evansky)

Coffee Hour Today: Greg & Michelle Rajsich; April 24 – Palm Sunday – Larry & Deanna Dordea.

If we do not have anyone signed up for coffee hour on any week, we will simply have coffee during fellowship.

Thank You to the following individuals for responding to donation requests:

Steve & Sandy Bozeka: New censer; incense; Icon stand.
Dr. & Mrs. Romica Craciun; Mary Cornea: Icon stand.
Dan Ralich: Icon stand.
Tom & Lana Baier: Icon stand.
Wally & Debbie Borojevich: Altar wine.
Helen Blebea: Purple Altar covers.

“O Lord...sanctify those who love the beauty of Your House...”

“O God our God...Remember, as You are good and love mankind, those who brought this offering, and those for whom they brought it; and preserve us blameless in the celebration of Your holy Mysteries...”

IOCC: As part of our Lenten regiment, in accord with the Gospel, we are called to help needy and suffering people, in America and around the world. Please put aside money (that we are to save by curbing expenditures of unnecessary purchases, luxuries, entertainment and sumptuous food) and turn it in by Palm Sunday. In turn we will send one check to the International Orthodox Christian Charities, which was organized 25 years ago by the Orthodox Bishops of America. For every dollar we donate, IOCC is able to get an additional seven dollars from the government and foundations. 92% of the money donated goes directly to assisting people in need.

Please turn in your donation for the IOCC, next week, Palm Sunday.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Chaplain Eleni Fredlund, IOCC Frontliner

“The road of cleansing goes through the desert. It shall be named the way of holiness.” (Isaiah 35:8)

On the fifth Sunday of Lent, we celebrate the venerable St. Mary of Egypt. Her life as a hermitess is a radiant example of repentance through prayer and fasting. Born in Egypt around 344, she fled to Alexandria in her youth and lived as a prostitute for 17 years. After that time, she traveled to Jerusalem in hopes of new adventures and arrived on the

Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. When Mary tried to enter church where the sacred relic was venerated, an unseen force prevented her from entering. Thus, a most precious gift was offered. Mary was given the opportunity to view her life and choose a different path.

Mary hid in the church courtyard, weeping with remorse for the life she had led. In fear and humility, she turned to an icon of the Mother of God and begged for permission to enter the church and venerate the Cross. She promised to renounce her old life and go wherever God led her. Encouraged by prayer and hoping for mercy, she approached the church entrance and was allowed to enter. The second gift was given. After venerating the Holy Cross, she returned to the icon and while praying, heard a voice say, "If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace."

Mary heeded the voice and traveled to Jordan that evening. She received Holy Communion the next morning in the monastery of St. John the Baptist, and then crossed the river into her new life.

For 47 years, Mary lived in the desert, fasting on plants, not seeing a single human being, and beset by tribulations mitigated by her prayers to the Most Pure One. At the end of that time, a priest named Zosimus left his monastery to spend Lent in the desert.

The person he found in the desert was not Mary of Alexandria, but St. Mary of Egypt, whose heart and ego had been transformed, who was forgiven and loved by God, and lifted to heaven to join her eternal family. The third gift was now apparent. The kingdom of heaven is within, and that is where we must begin. Asceticism is not exclusively for priests and monks, but a gift to all people as an opportunity for soulful inspection and preparation.

As we withdraw from the world and devote ourselves to prayer and fasting as St. Mary of Egypt did, we are able to hear the whispers of unconditional love, support, and healing always present in the desert of our heart.

During this solitude, our hearts are transformed regardless of circumstances, so that we may enter the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus.