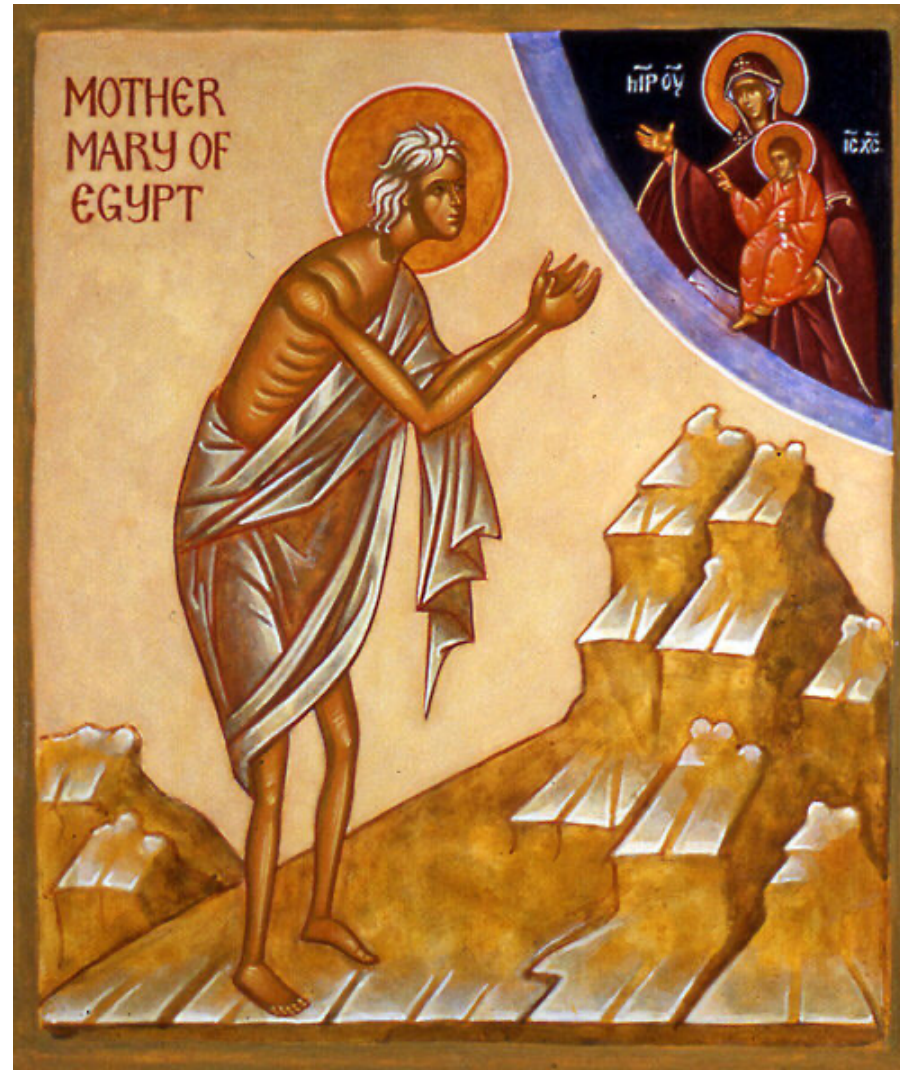


Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt



Prayer: O Lord my God, enlighten my mind with the light of understanding Thy Word, and teach me to do Thy will.

Parent Explains: On the fifth Sunday of Great Lent we honor St. Mary of Egypt. Mary was born in Alexandria in the land of Egypt. She was very beautiful, but she was not a very good girl. She didn't even try to be good. She did not listen to her parents and she did lots of bad things. One summer she saw a bunch of people boarding a boat to travel to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross. She thought it would be fun to travel with them, so she joined them on the boat to Jerusalem.

When they got to Jerusalem the people headed to the church for the feast. Mary went along with them. She was curious and wanted to see what they were doing. When she tried to enter the church something stopped her from getting in. She tried and tried again and again to enter, but she could not get through the door. She wondered why she could not enter the church. As Mary stood before the door, she realized that her sins were keeping her outside. She knew then that she had to change her life.

Mary saw an icon to the Theotokos and asked her for help. She was sorry for all the bad things she had done. Mary knelt before the Icon and cried, she promised to change. The Theotokos helped her, and she entered the church. Mary bowed before the Cross and kissed it. Then she went back outside and thanked the Theotokos for helping her. She wanted to keep her promise to stop doing bad things and asked the Theotokos to guide her. Then Mary heard God's voice, "If you cross the Jordan River, you will find glorious rest."

So Mary went across the Jordan River to the desert to pray for 47 years with the help of the Theotokos. She spent her time praying and asking God to forgive her. Then one day She saw a man walking in the desert. It was a monk named Zossima, who had come to the desert to pray. Mary asked Zossima to return the next year on Holy Thursday to give

her communion for the first time since she repented. Then Mary disappeared into the desert again.

The next year, Zossima returned as he had promised. He waited on the banks of the Jordan River, which had flooded. Then He saw Mary on the other side of the river. How would Mary get across? Mary prayed and walked across the water! Zossima gave her communion and said he would come back next year.

The next year Zossima came and found Mary's body, she was dead. She had written a message in the sand that she wished to be buried in the desert, where she had found the Lord in her heart. Zossima sang the Memorial Service for Mary, but he was an old man and could not dig the grave. Suddenly a lion came and dug the grave with his claws. Thus, Zossima and the lion buried St. Mary's body while her soul went to be with her Lord in heaven.

St. Mary of Egypt holds a special place among the Saints. She is a model of repentance. Ask "What does repentance mean?" Let the children give their responses and then explain, "Repentance means to turn around and turn to God. We turn away from things that are wrong and turn back to God."

By her life, Mary proves that no sin is so bad that it would separate us from the love of God. He is always waiting for us to turn around and return to Him.

Closing Prayer:

O merciful God, when we are turned away from You, help us to repent and turn to You, just like St. Mary Of Egypt.

Activities: Pick up the activity packet in church.

- St. Mary of Egypt Coloring Worksheet
- A-Maze-ing St. Mary
- St. Mary of Egypt popsicle stick craft

