



The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

Sunday 29th March 2026
5th Sunday of Lent (Mary of Egypt)



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday we celebrate the Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt. This is the Fifth Sunday of the Great Lent. It is also one of the busiest liturgical weeks in the church. We started the week with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete and the reading of the life of St. Mary of Egypt on Monday evening. A few people stayed until late evening to participate in the words of the amazing work of St. Andrew and the remarkable life of St. Mary of Egypt. These two readings are very helpful spiritually during the Great Lent. On Tuesday evening we served the Great Vespers with the Blessing of Bread, Wine and Oil for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, a very important feast for humankind. The feast marks the beginning of the salvation of humanity and is also the beginning of our liturgical journey toward the Feast of Nativity. Annunciation is celebrated exactly nine months before Nativity once again to show the perfect Incarnation of Christ. The troparion for the Feast describes this perfectly:

"Today is the summary of our salvation, and the revelation of the age-old mystery. For the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel announces the good news of grace. Therefore, let us join him, and cry aloud to the Theotokos: "Rejoice, Maiden full of grace! The Lord is with you"

Then on Wednesday we served the Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Feast early in the morning and despite the very early start of the service, the people came to participate in this Feast.

Friday evening was marked with the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and Small Compline with the Full Akathist of the Theotokos. This week we finished the cycle of reading the Akathist of Theotokos weekly and we start our preparation for the Holy Week. It will be a busy time in the church and your help is needed. Inside this Newsletter you will find plenty of information about opportunities to help. We are a self-sufficient community and everything we do and prepare in the church is done ourselves, we don't receive any help.

Thank you for your generosity and help in the church. I'm sure we can organise our Holy Week better than in previous years. We will need your help especially on the Holy Friday and Saturday Midnight services. More information will be given in this newsletter.
Fr. John



Announcements

- For the preparation of the Holy Week we will need plenty of flowers, you will see a collection basket; please donate for the flowers, we will need a lot. This can be done in the church or online. Please leave a note that your donation is for the flowers. Thank you!
- We will need volunteers during the Holy Week. For the Holy Friday procession of the Epitaphios we will need:
 1. Two people to carry the Epitaphios.
 2. A few people to carry the rest of the processional elements. Please contact me if you wish to help.
- If you wish to help with the arrangement of the flowers for Holy Friday, please contact me.
- For the Midnight Services on Holy Saturday we will need:
 1. Two people to organise and guide the parking between 11pm and midnight.
 2. A few people for the procession at midnight to carry the cross, the veils, the censer, the lanterns, and the icon.
 3. Two people to stay behind in the church to do all the lights and quickly transform the church from dark to light.
- On the 4th of April, after the Lazarus Saturday Services, the church will be cleaned and prepared.

Upcoming Services

29 March Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt
1 April Wed	6.00pm	Pre Sanctified Liturgy	
3 April Fri	6.00pm	Pre Sanctified Liturgy	
4 April Sat	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Lazarus Saturday
5 April Sun	10.00am 11.00am 3.00pm	Matins Divine Liturgy Matins of the Bridegroom	Palm Sunday



Announcement

Donations for the Flowers for the Epitaphios



Dear all,

For the procession of the Epitaphios on Holy Friday, we will need plenty of flowers. We are trying to achieve something similar to this picture so we will need generous donations for the flowers.

Please donate so that we can order the flowers for this beautiful moment. You can donate in the church by cash or by bank card. Please leave your receipt in yellow envelope and leave it in the basket with flowers donations. Alternatively, you can donate online by bank transfer to the church bank account. Please, if you donate online don't forget to leave a note that your donation is for the flowers.

Thank your in advance for your generosity!

A story from the internet

The Epitaphios is an ornate embroidered icon depicting the body of Christ laying on the Tomb. The word Epitaphios comes from a Greek expression meaning “on the tomb” (= επί του τάφου). On the Epitaphios, Christ can be alone, or flanked by angels, or included in the iconographic type known as the “Lamentations over the Tomb” (Epitaphios Threnos – Επιτάφιος Θρήνος in Greek).

The icon type of the “Lamentations over the Tomb” is based on the Gospel account (John 19:38-42). It shows the dead body of Christ lying supine on top of the Tomb. The Theotokos, broken-hearted and weeping, is sitting or kneeling, holding the head of Her Son on Her lap, embracing Him. Behind her, the other holy women, including St. Mary Magdalene, are also lamenting. On the opposite side, we see Joseph of Arimathea venerating Christ’s feet, and close to him Nicodemus. St. John the Beloved Disciple is also shown, weeping and often kissing our Lord’s hand. Angels can additionally be present, bowing down in reverence. In some variations they are wearing deacon’s vestments or they are holding liturgical fans.

On Holy Friday morning, before the Great Vespers (the service of the Apokathelosis), a wooden construction symbolizing the Tomb of Christ and called “Kouvouklion” or “Sepulcher” is lovingly and painstakingly decorated with flowers, usually by the young women of the parish.

During the Great Vespers, the Epitaphios is ceremoniously placed inside the decorated Sepulcher. The priest sprinkles the icon with rose-water and covers it with flower petals and whole flowers,

then he places the Gospel Book on top of it.

At the evening service of Holy Friday – which is actually the Orthros (Matins) of Holy Saturday – the Sepulcher is taken out of the church in a funeral procession. In Greece, this procession is usually long, and it covers most of the neighborhood around the church. The faithful accompany the procession of the Epitaphios, holding their lit candles, and chanting the Lamentations.

In some areas, the processions from different churches get together at a central place, forming an extra large gathering. The procession concludes with the return to the church. The sepulchre is held on the shoulders outside the church, and the faithful pass under it, one by one, to re-enter the church.

At the end of the service of lamentations the priest gives us some flowers from the sepulchre to take home to adorn our icon corners.

The procession of the Epitaphios is rooted in ancient Christian burial practices, and it symbolises the victory of Christ over death as well as the Church’s belief in the Resurrection. It is one of the most memorable and moving experiences of the Eastern Orthodox Holy Week.



The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: www.thyateira.org.uk.

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἐβρ. θ ' , 11-14

Ἀδελφοί, Χριστός δὲ παραγενόμενος ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς, οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν, οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως, οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων, διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν ἐπάπαξ εἰς τὰ Ἅγια, αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὐράμενος. Εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἷμα τάρων καὶ τρά- γων, καὶ σποδὸς δαμάλεως ραντίζουσα τοὺς κεκοινωμένους, ἀγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα, πόσω μάλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ Πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ Θεῷ, καθαριεὶ τὴν συνείδησιν ὑμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων, εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν Θεῷ ζῶντι.

EPISTLE READING

Heb. 9: 11-14

Brethren, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος α ' .

Τοῦ λίθου σφραγισθέντος ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ στρατιωτῶν φυλασσόντων τὸ ἄχραντόν σου Σῶμα, ἀνέστης τριήμερος, Σωτὴρ, δωροῦμενος τῷ κόσμῳ τὴν ζωὴν· διὰ τοῦτο αἰ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐβόων σοι, Ζωοδότα· Δόξα τῇ Ἀναστάσει σου, Χριστέ, δόξα τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, δόξα τῇ οικονομίᾳ σου, μόνε φιλόανθρωπε.

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

1st Mode

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, and while soldiers were guarding your most pure Body, you rose, O Saviour, on the third day, giving life to the world; therefore the heavenly Powers cried out to you, Giver of life: Glory to your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to your Kingdom! Glory to your dispensation, only Lover of mankind!

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Μάρκ. ι´, 32-45

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς δώδεκα μαθητάς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς λέγειν τὰ μέλλοντα αὐτῷ συμβαίνειν, ὅτι ἰδοὺ ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδοθήσεται τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσι καὶ γραμματεῦσι, καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτὸν θανάτῳ καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσι, καὶ ἐμπαίζουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ μαστιγώσουσιν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐμπτύσουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστήσεται. Καὶ προσπορεύονται αὐτῷ Ἰάκωβος καὶ Ἰωάννης υἱοὶ Ζεβεδαίου λέγοντες· διδάσκαλε, θέλομεν ἵνα ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσωμεν ποιήσης ἡμῖν. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί θέλετε ποιῆσαί με ὑμῖν; οἱ δὲ εἶπον αὐτῷ· δὸς ἡμῖν ἵνα εἷς ἐκ δεξιῶν σου καὶ εἷς ἐξ εὐωνύμων σου καθίσωμεν ἐν τῇ δόξῃ σου. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· οὐκ οἴδατε τί αἰτεῖσθε. δύνασθε πιεῖν τὸ ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ πίνω, καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθῆναι; οἱ δὲ εἶπον αὐτῷ· δυνάμεθα. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τὸ μὲν ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ πίνω πίεσθε, καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθήσεσθε· τὸ δὲ καθίσει ἐκ δεξιῶν μου καὶ ἐξ εὐωνύμων οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι, ἀλλ' οἷς ἠτοίμασαι. Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ δέκα ἤρξαντο ἀγανακτεῖν περὶ Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωάννου. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς λέγει αὐτοῖς· οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ δοκοῦντες ἀρχεῖν τῶν ἐθνῶν κατακυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι αὐτῶν κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν· οὐχ οὕτω δὲ ἔσται ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ὃς ἐὰν θέλῃ γενέσθαι μέγας ἐν ὑμῖν, ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν θέλῃ ὑμῶν γενέσθαι πρῶτος, ἔσται πάντων δοῦλος· καὶ γὰρ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθε διακονηθῆναι, ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι, καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 10: 32-45

At that time, Jesus took his twelve disciples, and he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you. And he said to them, What do you want me to do for you? And they said to him, Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory. But Jesus said to them, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? And they said to him, We are able. And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant of James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.



The Epitaphios of Silvan

According to the inscription that surrounds the embroidery, this epitaphios bears the name of the abbot who donated it to the Neamt monastery in 1437.

Monks executed it in the workshop of the the Neamt monastery, at that time an important and active cultural and artistic centre. They used the very best materials available: silk cloth, silver and gold threads, pearl beading for the most important contours.

SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

This is the last Sunday of the Great Fast of 40 days (Lent) which prepares the Church for the detailed and united following of Christ into His last week on earth. These next two weeks report everything leading to the Passion, Death, Burial and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by which He has saved humanity and all Creation from misery and slavery. Yet we regard ourselves as free people. So what has this to do with us?

We are believers in Christ, and we follow Him as He invites us to do. He frees us from the Power of Death, from slavery to Sin. The disobedience of our first Parents, Adam and Eve, destroyed the good order of God's Creation. This could only be put right by God Himself, so that the purpose of God's creative action described in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, might be fulfilled. It was destroyed by the sin of Adam and Eve. It had to be put right by the Son of Man, Who is God Himself, the Logos Who became Flesh for this purpose and was born a man, like us. This was recounted in the Gospel at Liturgy four days ago during the Feast of the Annunciation, 25th March (Luke 1:vv 24-38). The wonder of this pivotal act of all human History was celebrated incrementally on the evenings of the first four Fridays of Lent with the Salutations, and then two days ago, in the solemn singing of the full Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos on the eve of the fifth Saturday of Lent, yesterday, dedicated to praising Her role. From today, the Services follow Christ on this journey to Jerusalem, which we read in today's Gospel. This journey will reach Bethany and the raising of Lazarus on Saturday, as a prelude to Palm Sunday and the events following.

This historic timeline given in the Gospels, is reproduced for us in the Services each day in this last week of Lent and continues through Holy Week. Why? Because the Church, as One Mystical Body, is now reliving the life and work of its Head, Jesus Christ, on behalf of His Body. He called us to Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The kingdom has come to us. He said to those who would listen: "Come, follow me." Do we listen? Do we follow? The Services of these days are not for the clergy alone. They are for the whole Church, One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, which we confess at every Liturgy.

Every Baptised Believer is an individual member of the Church, which now relives the life of Christ in the Services.

Our participation in the journey of Christ during these days, is the measure in which we will drink of the cup which He must drink. His question, answering the request of James and John in today's reading, applies directly to each one of us, as we read this exchange between Jesus and the Sons of Zebedee at Liturgy today. Whatever ambitions for wealth, distinctions, or honours we have nurtured in our heart, are tawdry and perishable beside the real fulfilment we are offered by Him Who comes to give us Life. In today's Gospel reading, on the road with His Disciples, Jesus describes what will happen in Jerusalem, what He will suffer. There is suffering, and many unforeseen difficulties, which we must bear when we follow Him. The pattern of our life is clear.

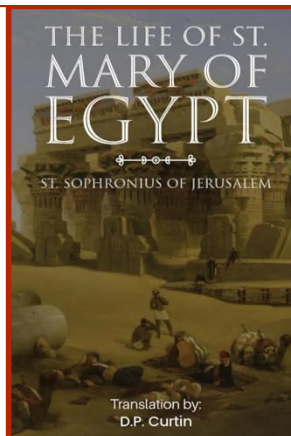
It is this liturgical following of Christ in and with the Church, which leads to the Life more abundant which Christ promised. This fulfils our deepest desire and His, that we may follow Him faithfully to the End. The End is not the Crucifixion, Death, and Burial of Great Friday. It is the Resurrection and unending Pascha of the Eighth Day. May this be ours. Amen.

Archimandrite Avraamy Neyman

Book recommendation from the Parish Library

This account of the life of St. Mary is the primary source of what we know about her. Allegedly right before her death she recounted her life to St. Zosimas of Palestine, who went on to have his student, Sophronius compose a this volume about her charity and ascetic lifestyle. This book also includes the original Latin text of Sophronius, as well as the English translation.

The Orthodox Church has dedicated the fifth Sunday of Great Lent to St. Mary, and the Life of St. Mary is read in church during the fifth week of Lent. Thus, the Life of St. Mary is essential reading for Orthodox Christians, especially during the time of Lent.



Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)

COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

To learn more visit: www.coty.org.uk.

Instagram: [COTY_org](https://www.instagram.com/COTY_org)



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Synaxarion - St Mary of Egypt



“The spirit departed, the flesh was left untended long ago; hide, O Earth, the mortal bones of Mary.”

On this day, the fifth Sunday of the Fast, we have been enjoined to make commemoration of our righteous Mother Mary of Egypt. She, while yet twelve years of age, came to Alexandria unbeknownst to her parents, and there lived a profligate life for seventeen years. Afterwards, being moved by curiosity, she departed with many other worshippers for Jerusalem, in order to be present for the Exaltation of the Precious Cross. There, she gave herself over to every form of licentiousness and impropriety, and dragged many others down to the depths of destruction. On the day in which the Cross was exalted, she, when she desired to enter the church, felt some invisible power

preventing her from passing through the entrance, though she tried a third and even a fourth time, and though the multitude that was with her passed through the same entrance unhindered. Because her heart was wounded by this, she decided to change her life, and to propitiate God through repentance. And thus when she returned to the church, she entered easily therein. After venerating the Precious Cross, that very day she withdrew from Jerusalem, passed over the Jordan, entered the inner regions of the desert, and there she lived the hardest life, a super-human life, for forty-seven years, praying alone to God alone.

Concerning the end of her life: After meeting a certain monastic, Zosimas by name, and fully recounting to him her life from the beginning, she begged him to bring to her the spotless mysteries for Communion. And he did this very thing the following year, on Holy Thursday. The year after that Zosimas, coming once again, found her dead, stretched out upon the earth; and beside her was written the following: "Abba Zosimas, bury here the body of wretched Mary. I departed in death the very day in which I communed of the spotless mysteries. Pray for me." Her death took place in the year 378. The memory of this righteous woman is celebrated on the first of every April; but the same is also appointed for today, since the end of the sacred forty-day fast now draws near, in order to rouse the slothful and the sinners unto repentance, since they have an example in her, the Saint who is being celebrated.

Through her intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. Remember that all our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including of the building and all the bills.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance if the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sing it.

Thank you for your support !



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