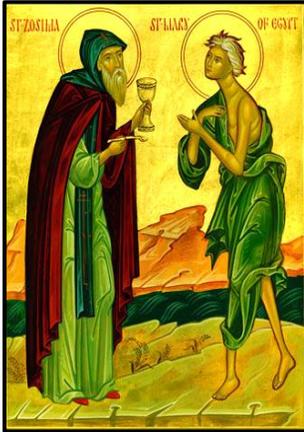


# The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent

## *St. Mary of Egypt*

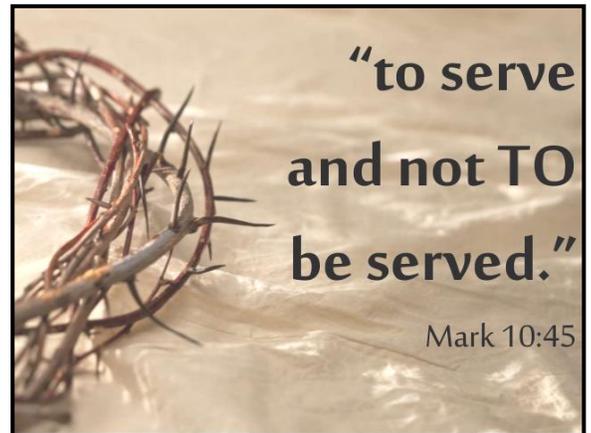


**This Sunday of Lent is dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt:** From Harlot to Saint by the grace of God! Hers is the story of passion converted and genuine love restored. By her example, we are reminded of the extraordinary power of repentance and God's mercy, by which even the greatest sinner may be transformed and sanctified.

From the hardened sinner that she had been, Mary has, for a great many souls crushed under the burden of sin, become a source of hope and a model of conversion. This is why the Holy Fathers have placed the celebration of her memory at the end of the Great Fast as an encouragement for all who have neglected their salvation, proclaiming that repentance can bring them back to God even at the eleventh hour.

On this final Sunday before we enter Holy Week, the Gospel passage shows an interaction Jesus had with His disciples shortly before his entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He gives clear instructions on how His disciples are to minister to the flock not as rulers but as servants. This is important to keep in mind in today's society where ambition and status are valued more than helping our neighbor. To be first in the kingdom of heaven, which is better than being first in anything in this life, we must be last and a servant to all.

During the course of their discussions Jesus says, "For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The entire Gospel centers on this revelation: "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all." Christ has been preaching and teaching and living this all along. In Jesus' upcoming days, He will show His apostles what this means. Jesus' disciples must drink of His cup if they expect to reign with Him in his kingdom, and the cup He has in mind is a bitter one involving crucifixion.



What kind of cup does the Lord have in mind for us? For some, such a cup entails physical suffering and the painful struggle of martyrdom. But for many, it entails the long routine of the Christian life, with all its daily sacrifices, disappointments, set-backs, struggles, and temptations. A disciple must be ready to lay down his or her life in martyrdom and be ready to lay it down each and every day in the little and big sacrifices required.

Jesus' teaching can be summed up with the expression: to serve is to reign with Christ. We share in God's reign by laying down our lives in humble service as Jesus did for our sake. Are you willing to lay down your life and to serve others as Jesus did?

*"Lord Jesus, your death brought life and freedom. Make me a servant of your love that I may seek to serve rather than be served."*

Sources: [http://lent.goarch.org/saint\\_mary\\_of\\_egypt/learn/](http://lent.goarch.org/saint_mary_of_egypt/learn/)  
<http://lent.goarch.org/family/5thsundayoflent.asp>