

# St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church

April 21st, 2024

FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

ST. MARY OF EGYPT

## Activities and Events this Week

- Wednesday April 24  
Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm  
Presanctified Liturgy 6:00pm  
Lenten Fellowship Meal to follow
- Thursday April 25  
Assembling the Palms - Church Hall 12:30pm
- Saturday April 27  
Hours 8:40am  
Divine Liturgy 9:00am  
*Lazarus Saturday*  
  
Great Vespers w/Litya 5:00pm  
*Blessing of the Palms*

## Announcements

**A HUGE THANK YOU! To the Myrrhbearers for graciously sponsoring our Lenten Retreat. I hope everyone was edified by Mother Catherine's presence and presentations.**

During the Lenten Season - please avail yourself to Holy Confession - very important and self-evident in the season of repentance. **Please! I do not intend to hear confessions during Holy Week.**

On Palm Sunday and Pascha we will be taking a collection for St. Eugene's Summer Camp. The proceeds of these two collections will go toward defraying the costs of volunteers who make the camp possible.

I plan to take a small group this year to Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco to attend the Vigil for Pentecost. It is quite the event! His Beatitude Metropolitan TIKHON is scheduled to be in attendance. Let me know if you are interested. We will be getting back late on Saturday night with Pentecost liturgy the next morning. It is a historic Cathedral and they have a very nice bookstore!

## We Were Created to be Good

Mother Catherine in her presentation on Friday night where we learned a great deal about her very interesting past said something in passing that really struck me, “we were created to be good.” Now intellectually I understand this and I’m sure I have even said this to others. The value of a guest speaker in many cases, is hearing something we affirm, and when said in a different context, has the ability to be very powerful.

The difficulty for all of us is that we have a very shallow, “scratching at the surface” estimation of this grand truth. God is something we may consider on Sunday for a short while, but in reality He has very little affect in our daily lives. This is the secularism feared by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann as far back as the 1950’s. For many Orthodox in America the Church was and in many cases still is, reduced to an ethnic club or just a club, where many other benign activities and worldly desires and ambitions are manifested, but not necessarily transformation. Perhaps we are making progress today? I’m probably the least qualified person to make that assessment. I can perhaps point to communities who have done a great deal better than others. The strongest and healthiest parishes in this country are the ones who have a clear path to their transformation. So what are we to do? Perhaps it seems hopeless? I would say no, it is never hopeless.

The Church, which functions as Christ in this world give us everything we need for our transformation, that is in being more Christ like. We have the Sacraments, the Scriptures, the Icons, the Music, the sheer beauty of her temples and services – all directed at the worship of God and finding ourselves in His presence. Even though we may lack in our spiritual development, when we hear stories like that of St. Mary of Egypt something deep down moves us in a way that we are never moved in this world. There is a level of awe and even disbelief that a human being such as St. Mary could ever walk the Earth because her life is so far different than ours. However, the reality is, is that her life is not that different from our high calling. We just cannot see it because we are blinded by our sin, our indifference, our blissful ignorance, our striving for worldly power, success, and wallowing in our passions.

To be sure, St. Mary’s life and repentance is way beyond our abilities. That is because God gave to St. Mary certain gifts and abilities for her to accomplish what she did. We are also given certain abilities to repent that will seem just as unlikely and amazing to the world should our story of utter repentance and transformation be told. The only difference at this point – is that we have to live a life that may one day be worthy to be told for the edification of the faithful. Until then brothers and sisters, like St. Mary of Egypt had head from the Most Holy Theotokos, “go beyond the Jordan and there you will find peace.” Repent and strive for transformation and *there we* will find peace.