

ANNIVERSARY OR OUR DEPARTED FOR THIS SUNDAY

<u>DAY</u>	<u>NAME OF THE DEPARTED</u>	<u>ANNIVERSARY</u>
12	Missadi Hourani	36
14	Lottie Mary Assaf	32
16	Hanna Daides	23
18	Aida Awad	23

- **Please**, pray for the health of the following parishioners: Ellen, Robert, Alex, Sam, Elias, Nassar, Valentine, George, Nina, Sonia, George, Elizabeth, Beshara, Samer, Irene, Nadia, Mona, Christine and Toni. If you have any names of people who need prayers, email them to father.

ETERNAL LIGHT

- **April 18:** in loving memory of **Yousef and Sumaya Musallam** from Nadim Irbib and family
For the good health of **Nicole Shami from Adel, Reem & J.P. Shami.**
- **April 25:** for the good health of **Issa Bisharat, his children and Grandchildren.**
- **May 2:** for the good health of **Issa Bisharat, his children and Grandchildren.**
- **May 16:** in loving memory of **Adel Younes** from his family
- **June 6:** in loving memory of **Ernest Younes** from his family
- **Ushers for April 18: Ramzi Shnoudeh, Nabil Tahhan, Fadil Nemr and Riad Touma**
- **Lenten Luncheons:** Our Church will be hosting a Lenten Luncheon every Sunday following Divine Liturgy. Please mark your calendar. This Sunday, Coffee and Falafel will be served outside under the tent. **We would like to thank Labib & Hala Chami and their family for sponsoring this Sunday's Luncheon.**
- **FOR Palm Sunday, Good Friday AND Holy Week services, THE BOOKING THROUGH EVENTBRITE WILL BE EMAILED TO ALL PARISHIONERS THE WEEK BEFORE THE SERVICES.**
- **Monday: Great Compline, Wednesday: Presanctified, Friday: Canon of St. Lazarus, Saturday: Lazarus Saturday starts with Orthros at 9:30 AM followed by the Divine Liturgy.**
- **Palm Sunday: we will have a procession with palms at 1 PM. Please, sign up.**
- Please note effective Sunday March 28th, parishioners should book through EVENTBRITE a maximum of one Sundays every week.
If there are bookings for more than two Sundays, with Father George's blessing, your registration will be cancelled for the third liturgy to give other parishioners a chance to attend.
You will get notified of this cancellation by email. By Friday night, if there are available seats, then you can register for the upcoming Sunday or you can then book for the following Sunday. Thank you so much for your patience and cooperation. For any questions, please call Colette at 416-558-8665
- **Memorial:** if you are planning on doing a memorial for a loved one and you are expecting more than 15-20 people, please consider doing it on a Saturday in the evening. Thank you.

- **PLEDGE FORM 2021:** Please fill your pledge form if you have not done so as to allow us to budget for this year. **Please see attached form.**
- We are in need of a lot of **flowers for Good Friday** to decorate the bier of Christ. If your family would like to donate towards flowers, please see or call **Fouad Kodsi 416-917-5457**
We are in need of **Easter Lilies** to decorate the Church. Please see **Fouad Kodsi**, if you would like to donate. Thank you
- **Kindly Submit your Contribution through the Following Methods: Connect to the Church Website www.stgeorgeto.org Click on *Donate***
- “e-transfer” info@stgeorgeantiochianchurch.org Account Name: St. George Church
- **PayPal, or send your Cheque by Mail to: St. George Antiochian Church, 9116 Bayview Ave, Richmond Hill ON, L4B 3M9**
Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice. (Psalm 112:5)
- **Bookstore: New icons have just arrived in our bookstore. The Bookstore is located in the church’s basement. Icons are great gifts for newborn, new home, your car or your children, and Christmas gifts. Please see Colette El-Hajj or Odette Boutros to see these new icons.**
- **Please, don't forget to send your sacrificial giving to your church of St. George via e-transfer, or you can still bring your envelope with you and place it in the box by the candles. Your sacrificial giving (financial donation/support) will keep our doors open.**
- **Canned Food Drive:** please bring non-perishable canned food to donate to the needy and place them in the box outside in the Narthex.
- **Online Sunday School has begun and is in full swing. You may still register your children at any time. For further assistance contact Amanda Qaqish at orthodoxchristianeducation@gmail.com.**
- **MASKS ARE STILL MANDATORY INSIDE THE CHURCH. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- **Please, sign up to attend the Liturgy on Sunday on Eventbrite. You don't have to sign up for services during the week.**

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 2021

tone 4 / EOTHINON 1

FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

COMMEMORATION OF OUR RIGHTEOUS MOTHER MARY OF EGYPT

VENERABLE JOHN, DISCIPLE OF GREGORY OF DECAPOLIS; VENERABLE EUTHYMIOS AND ATHANASIOS OF AEGINA;
COSMAS THE CONFESSOR, BISHOP OF CHALCEDON

DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT

NOTE TO CLERGY: Remember to include this special petition in the Great Litany before the one for the head of state, as directed by the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Deacon: For Metropolitan Paul, Archbishop John, and for their quick release from captivity and safe return, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

الشَّماس: مِنْ أَجْلِ الْمِثْرُوبُولِيَّةِ بُولْسَ وَالْمِطْرَانَ
يُوحَنَّا وَقَفَا أَسْرِهِمَا وَعَوَدَتِهِمَا سَالِمِينَ، إِلَى الرَّبِّ
نَطْلُبُ.

الجوقة: يَا رَبُّ ارْحَمْنَا.

- During the Little Entrance, chant the Resurrectional Apolytikion, then the Eisodikon.

THE EISODIKON (ENTRANCE HYMN) OF ORDINARY SUNDAYS

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.
Save us, O Son of God, **Who art risen from the dead**; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

هَلِّمُوا لِنَسْجُدُ وَنَرْكَعَ لِلْمَسِيحِ، مَلِكِنَا وَإِلَهِنَا. خَلِّصْنَا
يَا ابْنَ اللَّهِ، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، لِنُرْتِّلَ لَكَ.
هَلِّلُوبِيَا.

- After the Little Entrance, chant the apolytikia in the following order:

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE FOUR

Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world Great Mercy.

إِنَّ تَلْمِيزَاتِ الرَّبِّ تَعَلَّمْنَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْكَرَزَةِ بِالْقِيَامَةِ
الْبَهْجِ، وَطَرَحْنَ الْقَضَاءَ الْجَدِّيَّ، وَخَاطَبْنَ الرُّسُلَ
مُفْتَحِرَاتٍ وَقَائِلَاتٍ: سُبِّحِ الْمَوْتُ وَقَامَ الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ،
وَمَنَحَ الْعَالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ الْعَظْمَى.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT IN TONE EIGHT

Through thee, the divine likeness was securely preserved, O mother Mary; for thou didst carry the cross and follow Christ. By example and precept thou didst teach us to ignore the body, because it is perishable, and to attend to the concerns of the undying soul. Therefore, doth thy soul rejoice with the angels.

بِكَ حُفِظَتْ صُورَةُ خَلْقِنَا بِدِقَّةٍ أَيَّتُهَا الْأُمُّ مَرْيَمُ، فَإِنَّكَ
حَمَلْتِ الصَّلِيبَ وَتَبِعْتِ الْمَسِيحَ، وَعَمَلْتِ وَعَلَّمْتِ أَنْ
يُنْتَعَاذَى عَنِ الْجَسَدِ لِأَنَّهُ زَائِلٌ، وَأَنْ يُعْنَى بِالنَّفْسِ
غَيْرِ الْمَائِتَةِ. لِذَلِكَ تَبْتَهِّجُ رُوحُكَ مَعَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ.

- Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

ORDINARY KONTAKION IN TONE TWO

O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

يا شَفِيعَةَ الْمَسِيحِيِّينَ الْغَيْرِ الْخَازِيَةِ، الْوَسِيطَةَ لَدَى الْخَالِقِ غَيْرِ الْمَرْدُودَةِ، لَا تُعْرِضِي عَن أَصَوَاتِ طَلِبَاتِنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ، بَلْ تَدَارِكِينَا بِالْمَعُونَةِ بِمَا أَتَيْتِ صَالِحَةَ، نَحْنُ الصَّارِحِينَ إِلَيْكَ بِإِيْمَانٍ: بِأَدْرِ إِلَى الشَّفَاعَةِ وَأَسْرِعِي فِي الطَّلِبَةِ، يَا وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهِ، الْمُتَشَفِّعَةَ دَائِمًا بِمُكْرَمِيكَ.

THE EPISTLE (For Fifth Sunday of Lent)

Make your vows and pay them to the Lord our God.

God is known in Judaea. His Name is great in Israel.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (9:11-14)

Brethren, Christ having appeared a High Priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; neither through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having found eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of bulls and goats 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?

صَلُّوا وَأَوْفُوا الرَّبَّ إِلَهَنَا نُذَوِّرْكُمْ.

اللَّهُ مَعْرُوفٌ فِي أَرْضِ يَهُودَا.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولْسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى الْعِبْرَانِيِّينَ.

يا إِخْوَتِي، إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ إِذْ قَدْ جَاءَ رَئِيسَ كَهَنَةِ الْخَيْرَاتِ الْمُسْتَقْبَلَةِ، فَبِمَسْكِنٍ أَعْظَمَ وَأَكْمَلَ غَيْرِ مَصْنُوعٍ بِأَيْدٍ، أَيْ لَيْسَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْخَلِيقَةِ. وَلَيْسَ بِدَمِ ثِيُوسٍ وَعُجُولٍ بَلْ بِدَمِ نَفْسِهِ دَخَلَ الْأَقْدَاسَ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَوَجَدَ فِدَاءً أَبَدِيًّا. لِأَنَّهُ إِنْ كَانَ دَمُ ثِيْرَانٍ وَثِيُوسٍ وَرَمَادُ عِجْلَةٍ يُرَشُّ عَلَى الْمُنَجَّسِينَ فَيَقْدِسُهُمْ لِتَطْهِيرِ الْجَسَدِ * فَكَمْ بِالْأُخْرَى دَمُ الْمَسِيحِ، الَّذِي بِالرُّوحِ الْأَزَلِيِّ قَرَّبَ نَفْسَهُ لِلَّهِ بِلا عَيْبٍ، يُطَهِّرُ ضَمَائِرَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْمَالِ الْمَيِّتَةِ لِتَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ الْحَيَّ.

THE GOSPEL (For Fifth Sunday of Lent)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (10:32-45)

At that time, Jesus took His twelve Disciples, and 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

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفًا مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ مَرْقُسِ الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيذِ الطَّاهِرِ. (10:32-45)

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، أَخَذَ يَسُوعُ تَلَامِيذَهُ الْإِثْنَيْ عَشَرَ وَابْتَدَأَ يَقُولُ لَهُمْ مَا سَيَعْرِضُ لَهُ. "هُوَذَا نَحْنُ صَاعِدُونَ إِلَى أُورُشَلِيمَ، وَابْنُ الْبَشَرِ سَيُسَلَّمُ إِلَى

to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit upon 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 would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire” And Jesus said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And they said to Him, “Grant us to sit, one at Thy right hand and one at Thy left, in Thy 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 at 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 servant 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.”

رُؤَسَاءِ الْكَهَنَةِ وَالْكَتَبَةِ، فَيَحْكُمُونَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْمَوْتِ وَيُسَلِّمُونَهُ إِلَى الْأُمَمِ. فَيَهْرَأُونَ بِهِ، وَيَبْصُقُونَ عَلَيْهِ، وَيَجْلِدُونَهُ، وَيَقْتُلُونَهُ، وَفِي الْيَوْمِ الثَّالِثِ يَقُومُ. "فَدَنَا إِلَيْهِ يَعْقُوبُ وَيُوحَنَّا ابْنَا زَبْدَى قَائِلِينَ: "يَا مُعَلِّمُ، نُرِيدُ أَنْ تَصْنَعَ لَنَا مَهْمَا طَلَبْنَا. "فَقَالَ لَهُمَا: "مَاذَا تُرِيدَانِ أَنْ أَصْنَعَ لَكُمَا؟" قَالَا لَهُ: "أَعْطِنَا أَنْ يَجْلِسَ أَحَدُنَا عَنْ يَمِينِكَ وَالْآخَرُ عَنْ يَسَارِكَ فِي مَجْدِكَ. "فَقَالَ لَهُمَا يَسُوعُ: "إِنَّكُمَا لَا تَعْلَمَانِ مَا تَطْلُبَانِ. أَتَسْتَطِيعَانِ أَنْ تَشْرَبَا الْكَأْسَ الَّتِي أَشْرَبُهَا أَنَا، وَأَنْ تَصْطَبِغَا بِالصِّبْغَةِ الَّتِي أَصْطَبِغُ بِهَا أَنَا؟" فَقَالَا لَهُ: "نَسْتَطِيعُ." فَقَالَ لَهُمَا يَسُوعُ: "أَمَّا الْكَأْسُ الَّتِي أَشْرَبُهَا فَتَشْرَبَانِهَا، وَبِالصِّبْغَةِ الَّتِي أَصْطَبِغُ بِهَا فَتَصْطَبِغَانِ. وَأَمَّا جُلُوسُكُمَا عَنْ يَمِينِي وَعَنْ يَسَارِي فَلَيْسَ لِي أَنْ أُعْطِيَهُ إِلَّا لِلَّذِينَ أُعِدُّ لَهُمْ. "فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ الْعَشْرَةُ، ابْتَدَأُوا يَعْضَبُونَ عَلَى يَعْقُوبَ وَيُوحَنَّا. فَدَعَاهُمُ يَسُوعُ، وَقَالَ لَهُمْ: "قَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ أَنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحْسَبُونَ رُؤَسَاءَ الْأُمَمِ يَسُودُونَهُمْ، وَعُظَمَاءُهُمْ يَتَسَلَطُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ. وَأَمَّا أَنْتُمْ فَلَا يَكُونُ فِيكُمْ هَكَذَا. وَلَكِنْ مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَكُونَ فِيكُمْ كَبِيرًا، فَلْيَكُنْ لَكُمْ خَادِمًا. وَمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَكُونَ فِيكُمْ أَوَّلًا، فَلْيَكُنْ لِلْجَمِيعِ عَبْدًا. فَإِنَّ ابْنَ الْبَشَرِ لَمْ يَأْتْ لِيُخْدَمَ بَلْ لِيُخْدِمَ، وَلِيَبْدُلَ نَفْسَهُ فِدَاءً عَنْ كَثِيرِينَ."

- *The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great continues as usual with the following variables.*

ST. BASIL LITURGY MEGALYNARION

In thee rejoiceth, O full of grace, all creation: the angelic hosts, and the race of men, O hallowed Temple and noetic paradise, glory of Virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a little child, even our God Who is before all the ages; for He made thy womb a throne, and thy body He

إِنَّ الْبَرَايَا بِأَسْرِهَا، تَفْرَحُ بِكَ يَا مُمْتَلِئَةَ نِعْمَةً: مَحَافِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ، وَأَجْنَاسِ الْبَشَرِ. أَيُّهَا الْهَيْكَلُ الْمُتَقَدِّسُ، وَالْفِرْدَوْسُ النَّاطِقُ، فَخْرُ الْبَتُولِيَّةِ مَرِيمَ، الَّتِي مِنْهَا تَجَسَّدَ الْإِلَهُ، وَصَارَ طِفْلًا، وَهُوَ إِلَهُنَا الَّذِي قَبْلَ الدَّهْرِ. لِأَنَّهُ صَنَعَ مُسْتَوْدَعَكَ عَرْشًا، وَجَعَلَ بَطْنَكَ

made more spacious than the heavens. In thee rejoiceth, O full of grace, all creation; and it glorifieth thee.

أَرْحَبَ مِنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ. لِذَلِكَ يَا مُمْتَلِئَةً نِعْمَةً، تَفْرَحُ بِكَ كُلُّ الْبَرَايَا وَتَمَجِّدُكَ.

THE DISMISSAL

Priest: May He Who rose from the dead, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the might of the Precious and Life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of Heaven; at the supplication of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles; of our father among the saints, Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, whose Divine Liturgy we have now celebrated; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Martyrs; of our venerable and God-bearing Fathers; of Saint N., the patron and protector of this holy community; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; of our Righteous Mother Mary of Egypt; of the Venerable John, disciple of Gregory of Decapolis; Venerable Euthymios and Athanasios of Aegina; Cosmas the Confessor, bishop of Chalcedon; New-martyr John of Epiros; and Venerable Euthymios, enlightener of Karelia, whose memory we celebrate today, and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.

الكَاهِنُ: أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ إِلَهُنَا الْحَقِيقِيُّ، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنَ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، بِسَفَاعَاتِ أُمَّكَ الْكَلِيَّةِ الطَّهَارَةِ وَالْبَرِيَّةِ مِنْ كُلِّ عَيْبٍ؛ وَبِقُدْرَةِ الصَّلِيبِ الْكَرِيمِ الْمُخْيِي؛ وَبِطَلَبَاتِ الْقُوَّاتِ السَّمَاوِيَّةِ الْمُكَرَّمَةِ الْعَادِمَةِ الْأَجْسَادِ؛ وَالنَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيمِ السَّابِقِ الْمَجِيدِ يُوْحَنَّا الْمَعْمَدَانِ؛ وَالْقَدِيسَيْنِ الْمُشْرَفَيْنِ الرَّسُلِ الْجَدِيرَيْنِ بَكْلٍ مَدِيحٍ؛ وَأَبِينَا الْجَلِيلِ فِي الْقَدِيسِينَ بَاسِيلْيُوسَ الْكَبِيرِ، رَئِيسِ أَسَاقِفَةِ الْقَيْصَرِيَّةِ وَكَبَادُوكْيَا كَاتِبِ هَذِهِ الْخِدْمَةِ الشَّرِيفَةِ؛ وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الْمَجِيدِينَ الشُّهَدَاءِ الْمُتَأَلِّقِينَ بِالظَّفَرِ؛ وَأَبَائِنَا الْأَبْرَارِ الْمُتَوَشَّحِينَ بِاللَّهِ؛ وَالْقَدِيسِ (ة) (فُلَانِ، فُلَانَةَ) شَفِيعِ(ة) وَحَامِي(ة) هَذِهِ الرَّعِيَّةِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ، وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الصَّدِيقِينَ يُوَاكِمَ وَحَنَّةَ جَدِّي الْمَسِيحِ إِلَهُنَا؛ وَتَذَكَارِ أُمَّنَا الْبَارَّةِ مَرْيَمَ الْمِصْرِيَّةِ؛ الْقَدِيسِ يُوْحَنَّا، تَلْمِيزِ غَرِيغُورْيُوسَ الْبَانْيَاسِيِّ؛ إِفْتِيمْيُوسَ وَأَتْنَاسْيُوسَ اللَّذَيْنِ مِنْ إِبِينَا؛ قُزْمَا الْمُعْتَرِفِ أُسْقَفِ خَلْقِيدُونِيَا؛ الشَّهِيدِ الْجَدِيدِ يُوْحَنَّا الَّذِي مِنْ إِبِيرُوسَ؛ إِفْتِيمْيُوسَ الْعَجَائِبِيِّ مُنِيرِ كَارِيلِيَا، الَّذِينَ نُقِيمُ تَذَكَارَهُمُ الْيَوْمَ، وَجَمِيعِ قَدِيسِيكَ، إِرْحَمْنَا وَخَلِّصْنَا بِمَا أَنَّكَ صَالِحٌ وَمُحِبٌّ لِلْبَشَرِ.

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

الكَاهِنُ: بِصَلَوَاتِ آبَائِنَا الْقَدِيسِينَ، أَيُّهَا الرَّبُّ يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحُ إِلَهُنَا، اِرْحَمْنَا وَخَلِّصْنَا.

Choir: Amen.

الجوق: آمين.

These texts have been prepared by the Department of Liturgics of the Antiochian Archdiocese

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Selfless Service Over Self-Centered Desire: Homily for the 5th Sunday of Lent in the Orthodox Church [Fr. Philip LeMasters](#)



Hebrews 9:11-14; Mark 10:32-45

Human beings have an amazing capacity to miss the point, to become blind to truths that should be obvious. We often do that because we become so preoccupied and distracted with our own agendas and desires that we ignore everything else. That is especially the case when the truth goes strongly against our inclinations by telling us what we do not want to hear.

That is what James and John did when they asked for choice positions of honor right after Jesus Christ had told them that He was to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. They were apparently so consumed by their desires for prominence and power that they refused to hear the Lord saying that He was nothing like an earthly king. They boasted of being prepared to follow the Savior without having any idea of what that would mean. He responded by making clear that the path to true greatness was to follow His way of selfless service. “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

As we begin the last week of Lent, it should be clear to us all that we have not earned a place of honor in God’s reign. If we have practiced the spiritual disciplines of Lent with any integrity and honesty, we will know primarily our own weakness and brokenness. By revealing how easily we are distracted and how enslaved we are to our self-centered desires and habits, they show us that we cannot heal our own souls. And if we have not devoted ourselves to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving at all in the previous weeks of Lent, we should confess that in humility and thus gain a greater awareness that we stand in constant need of the Lord’s gracious mercy. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Regardless of how we have approached Lent so far, we must not become paralyzed with a sense of obsessive guilt for not living up to a standard of perfection, for not making

ourselves worthy of the mercy of Christ. To do so is simply a form of self-centered pride, for it is impossible to earn grace as a reward for good behavior. Becoming great among the Lord's servants means laying down our lives for others, lowering ourselves by placing the needs and interests of others before our own. That is the opposite of a self-centered obsession to prove that we are worthy of anything.

Today we remember St. Mary of Egypt, who had lived a grossly immoral life, but then gave herself up in repentance for decades in the desert, where she became a remarkably holy saint. Instead of continuing to gratify her addiction to sexual pleasure, she died to self by rejecting everything that was a hindrance to the healing of her soul through incredibly rigorous repentance for the rest of her long life. She knew that such disciplines did not somehow put God in her debt, but were ways of opening herself to receive the gracious healing of the Lord, which we never deserve.

St. Mary of Egypt was not like James and John in trying to use the Savior to get what she wanted. Instead, she freely obeyed a divine command to turn away from fulfilling her obsessive desires by uniting herself to the One Who offered His life as a ransom to free us all from slavery to sin and death. Our Lord's disciples ultimately found victory over their passions in different ways, for they had to learn that greatness in the Kingdom comes through selfless service to the point of suffering and death, not by yearning after what the world calls power and success.

In the remaining days of Lent, we all have the opportunity to embrace our Lord's way of selfless service in relation to those we encounter on a regular basis in our families, in our parish, at work, at school, and in our larger communities. We all have the opportunity to confess how we have enslaved ourselves to self-centered desires and then to take the steps we can to turn away from them. We all have the opportunity to fill our minds with holy things and give less attention to whatever fuels our unholy passions. We all have the opportunity to follow the example of St. Mary of Egypt in doing what it takes to find the healing of our souls. If our Lord could make a great saint out of her, then how can anyone remain paralyzed in guilt? Our great High Priest offered Himself on the Cross and rose in glory on the third day in order to save sinners, to restore all who bear His image and likeness. Thanks be to God, that includes even people as broken as you and me. In the coming week, let us open the eyes of our souls to this glorious truth through selfless service, humble prayer, and genuine repentance.