

# ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

Vol. 4 No. 3.5

## ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH

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### VENERABLE MARY OF EGYPT

March 29, 2015

#### PARISH CALENDAR

Sun., Mar 29	<i>Venerable Mary of Egypt</i> . Martyrs Sabinus and Papas. 8:45 – 9:15 AM Confessions 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets	Wed., Apr. 8	<b>GREAT WEDNESDAY</b> 6:00 PM Confessions 6:30 PM Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts & Holy Mystery of the Anointing of the Sick
Wed., Apr. 1	Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria 7:30 AM <i>Pirohi Prep</i> 5:30 PM Confessions 6:00 PM Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	Thu., Apr. 9	<b>GREAT THURSDAY</b> 6:00 PM <i>Last Scheduled Confessions</i> 6:30 PM Divine Liturgy of the Last Supper. Setting up the Tomb.
Thu., Apr. 2	Martyred Monks of the Sabbas Monastery 8:00 AM <i>Pirohi Making</i>	Fri., Apr. 10	<b>GREAT &amp; HOLY FRIDAY</b> 10:00 AM Matins of the 12 Gospels 7:00 PM Vespers and the Procession with the Shroud Vigil at the Tomb
Fri., Apr. 3	Bishop Serapion of Thmuis 5:30 PM Confessions 6:00 PM Paraklis	Sat., Apr. 11	<b>GREAT &amp; HOLY SATURDAY</b> 8:00 PM Resurrection Matins Blessing of Baskets
Sat., Apr. 4	<b>LAZARUS SATURDAY</b> 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy – pp 186–187	Sun., Apr. 12	<b>PASCHA: THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST</b> 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – pp. 193-196. Blessing of Baskets Easter Egg Hunt for the kiddies.
Sun., Apr. 5	<b>PALM (FLOWERY) SUNDAY</b> 8:45 – 9:15 AM Confessions 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – pp. 188-192 <i>Church School Meets</i>		
Tue., Apr. 7	<b>FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION. GREAT &amp; HOLY TUESDAY</b> 6:00 PM Confessions 6:30 PM Vespers and Divine Liturgy		<b>Confessions:</b> See <i>Parish Calendar</i> for days and times. The last scheduled Confessions are on Great Thursday.

## THE LENTEN FAST

### THIS WEEK:

DIOCESAN RULES require fasting from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays (which we are supposed to do all year anyway).

TRADITIONAL RULES call for STRICT FAST (no meat, dairy, wine or oil products) *every weekday* during the Great Lenten Season, with some few exceptions which I note in the bulletin. On Saturdays and Sundays the Traditional Rules permit wine and oil. Meals should be limited to one a day.

*LENT ENDS ON FRIDAY, APRIL 3.*

**LAZARUS SATURDAY AND PALM SUNDAY** are days of rejoicing, and the Fast is mitigated (lessened) the same way as on *Annunciation* (see above).

### FOR HOLY WEEK:

THE GREAT FEAST OF ANNUNCIATION, APR. 7 (MARCH 25) is also *Great Tuesday* this year: Even so, the fast is mitigated (lessened) this day because of this Great Feast. The Traditional Rules say you may eat fish, oil and dairy on this day. If you are not yet keeping the Traditional Fast, you may “step up” two steps on this day. For instance, if you are fasting from meat and dairy only, you may eat meat.

TRADITIONAL RULES call for STRICT FAST (no meat, dairy, wine or oil products) *every other weekday* during the Holy Week, Monday through Saturday. Note that this is the only Saturday of the year on which oil is not permitted (which is why there is no *mirovanije* at Liturgy on Pascha).

DIOCESAN RULES require the following for Holy Week: Monday through Thursday, no meat. Great Friday and Holy Saturday, STRICT FAST.

### FOOD BANK DURING GREAT LENT:

Please remember that we are also called to almsgiving during Lent: what we take from ourselves is to go to others in need. So, this is an especially good time to contribute to the **Food Collection Project** noted below.

### COMMUNION FASTING:

For the reception of Holy Eucharist in the morning, we must fast from bed-time until we receive, as usual. To receive Holy Eucharist in the evening (for instance, at

the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts), we must fast for *at least 3 hours before the beginning of the service*. ESSENTIALLY, THIS MEANS NOT EATING AFTER LUNCH UNTIL YOU RECEIVE THE EUCHARIST, IF POSSIBLE. Finally, of course, those who are under a doctor’s care or are infirm must follow the doctor’s orders. If you have any question about this, please see me.

### BRIGHT WEEK:

From Pascha through Thomas Sunday, there is *no fast* permitted, even on Wednesday or Friday, as we celebrate the great joy of our salvation in the Resurrection.

## PEOPLE STUFF

*Please remember in your prayers:*

*Deceased:* Fr. Matthew Baker. Fr. Thomas Hopko.

*Living:* Fr. George Dursa. Fr. Donald Valasek. Matt & Lori Algar. Stephanie Bonk. Gloria Bracey. Tim & Christina Bracey. Susan Danchak. Ricky, Rick & Sarah. Michael Danchak. Jada Eiden. Tammy Hall. Heather Harris. Robert & Eddie Hawley. Lorraine Kacaba. Dawn & Warren Kieffer. Anna Mae Kuklis. Dee Lositski. Peggy Majcher. Theresa Niester. Margie Pecuch. John Polanichka. Karen Rolka. Emma Sacco. Amy Shimo. Connie Lou Slater. Faye Snell. Marion Sosnowski. Russell Spilka. Jeff Thomas. Ann Marie Tigue. Gary Wassel. Julia Worobey.

*At Home:* Michael Andreosky. Elizabeth Basalyga. George & Anna Senich. Kathryn Stocoski.

*Assisted Living Homes:* Julie Kovacs. Julie Roberts.

*Panachidas & Memorials for the deceased:* Note that no memorial services for the deceased are celebrated from Palm (Flowery Sunday) until Thomas Sunday (Sunday after Easter), as we are called to focus on the great Salvific Event of Our Lord’s Death and Resurrection. Panachidas & other memorials may be celebrated again beginning on Thomas Sunday after Divine Liturgy.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

**Ongoing Food Collection Project:** This past week, 6 boxes of food were delivered to the NEPA Bread Basket. They were very thankful for our continued generosity and thank the members of our parish for

remembering those in need.

The food donation container continues to be available in the Church Hall. Please help fill this container with non-perishable food items: cans, dry goods, etc. This is an ongoing good thing.

### YOUR GIFTS TO GOD AND HIS CHURCH

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

MARCH 22, 2015

\$ 558.00	General Collection
\$ 94.00	7 Day Light
\$1739.00	Pirohi
\$ 184.00	Church Dues
\$ 100.00	Maintenance & Repairs
\$ 13.00	Taper Candles
\$ 47.41	Rebate
\$ 206.00	Iocc
<b>\$2,941.41</b>	<b>Total Collection</b>

### PARISH STUFF

**Tomb Vigil Sign up Sheet** As in past years, we are asking folks to sign up for the Great Friday–Saturday Tomb Vigil. The Sign-up sheet is in the church vestibule.

**Last Pirohi Sale:** this week. Thanks so much to all who have worked so hard for this project.

**Church School** meets next Sunday.

### FROM THE DIOCESE & OTHER STUFF

**St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church**, 320 Mifflin Ave. Scranton, Pa. will have their INTERNATIONAL DINNER on Thursday, April 9, 2015. Seatings will be at 5:30 and 6:30pm. The menu this month is called "Southern Delight". The dinner will start off with a Hearty Lentil Soup and the Entree will be a delicious Beef Bourguignonne served with Mushroom Brown Rice and Sauteed Creole Green Beans. The dessert is Peach Cobbler Supreme. Coffee, Tea Soda and Water are included with your meal and a Cash Bar is Available. Featured Alcoholic Beverage: Southern Comfort Cocktails. The cost is \$20.00 per person and the deadline will be April 6th.

**Family Camp at Camp Nazareth June 5 – June 6.** The Registration Form, Flyer and Schedule are all available on the Camp website: [campnazareth.org](http://campnazareth.org).

Planned are a variety of activities and events that will allow your family the opportunity to learn together, have fun together, pray together and simply be together in the peaceful environment of the Camp. Families will be staying together, and have to themselves a Camp cabin; plenty of space to rest and relax and simply be together during and after the weekend's festivities. Don't miss out on this opportunity for you and your family. Come and help us to make this an ongoing and rewarding event for our Diocesan families. Space is limited to the first 10 families, so please send in your registration forms soon. They are due by Friday, May 22, 2015.

### HOLY MARY OF EGYPT

Commemorated on April 1/14 and also  
on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

From [http://orthodoxwiki.org/Mary\\_of\\_Egypt](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Mary_of_Egypt)

The primary source of information on Saint Mary of Egypt is the Vita written of her by St. Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem (634 - 638).

Saint Mary, also known as Maria Aegyptica, was born somewhere in Egypt, and at the age of twelve ran away to the city of Alexandria where she lived an extremely dissolute life. In her Vita it states that she refused the money offered for her sexual favors, as she was driven "by an insatiable and an irrepressible passion," and that she mainly lived by begging, supplemented by spinning flax.

After seventeen years of this lifestyle, she traveled to Jerusalem for the Great Feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. She undertook the journey as a sort of "anti-pilgrimage," stating that she hoped to find in the pilgrim crowds at Jerusalem even more partners in her lust. She paid for her passage by offering sexual favors to other pilgrims, and she continued her habitual lifestyle for a short time in Jerusalem. Her Vita relates that when she tried to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the celebration, she was barred three times from doing so by an unseen force. Realizing that this was because of her impurity, she was struck with remorse, and upon seeing an icon of the Theotokos (the Virgin Mary) outside the church, she prayed for forgiveness and promised to give up the world (i.e., become an ascetic). Then she attempted again to enter the church, and this time was permitted in. After

venerating the relic of the true cross, she returned to the icon to give thanks, and heard a voice telling her, "If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest." She immediately went to the monastery of St. John the Baptist on the bank of the River Jordan, where she received absolution and afterwards Holy Communion. The next morning, she crossed the Jordan and retired to the desert to live the rest of her life as a hermit in penitence. She took with her only three loaves of bread, and once they were gone, lived only on what she could find in the wilderness.



Approximately one year before her death, she recounted her life to St. Zosimas of Palestine.[4] who encountered her in the desert. When he unexpectedly met her in the desert, she was completely naked and almost unrecognizable as human. She asked Zosimas to toss her his mantle to cover herself with, and then she narrated her life's story to him, manifesting marvellous clairvoyance. She asked him to meet her at the banks of the Jordan, on Holy Thursday of the following year, and bring her Holy Communion. When he fulfilled her wish, she crossed the river to get to him by walking on the surface of the water, and received Holy Communion, telling him to meet her

again in the desert the following Lent. The next year, Zosimas traveled to the same spot where he first met her, some twenty day's journey from his monastery, and found her lying there dead. According to an inscription written in the sand next to her head, she had died on the very night he had given her Communion and had been somehow miraculously transported to the place he found her, and her body was preserved incorrupt. He buried her body with the assistance of a passing lion. On returning to the monastery he related her life story to the brethren, and it was preserved among them as oral tradition until it was written down by St. Sophronius.

## 40 HOLY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE

Commemorated on March 9/22

From [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)

In the year 313 St Constantine the Great issued an edict granting Christians religious freedom, and officially recognizing Christianity as equal with paganism under the law. But his co-ruler Licinius was a pagan, and he decided to stamp out Christianity in his part of the Empire. As Licinius prepared his army to fight Constantine, he decided to remove Christians from his army, fearing mutiny.

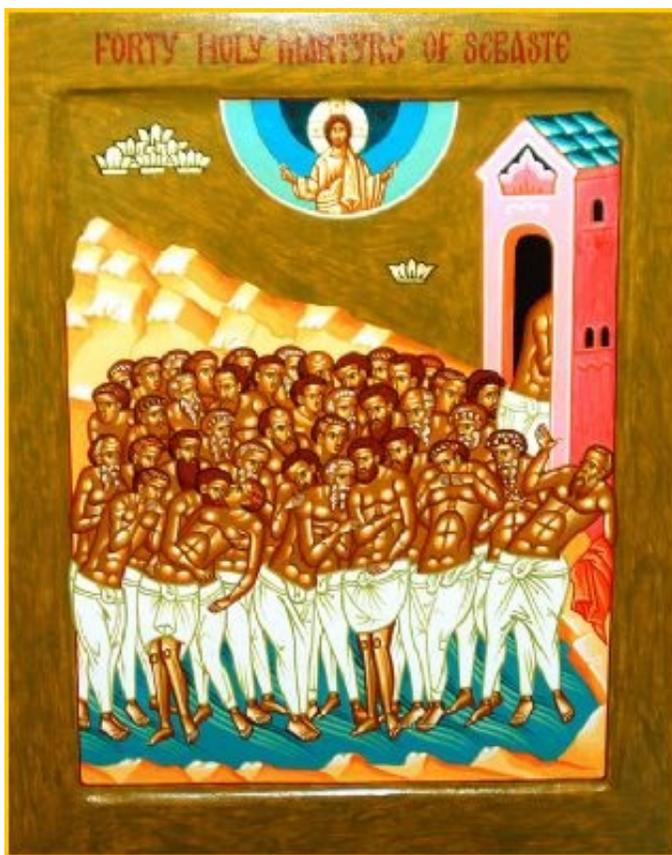
One of the military commanders of that time in the Armenian city of Sebaste was Agricola, a zealous champion of idolatry. Under his command was a company of forty Cappadocians, brave soldiers who had distinguished themselves in many battles. When these Christian soldiers refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, Agricola locked them up in prison. The soldiers occupied themselves with prayer and psalmody, and during the night they heard a voice saying, "Persevere until the end, then you shall be saved."

On the following morning, the soldiers were again taken to Agricola. This time the pagan tried flattery. He began to praise their valor, their youth and strength, and once more he urged them to renounce Christ and thereby win themselves the respect and favor of their emperor.

Seven days later, the renowned judge Licius arrived at Sebaste and put the soldiers on trial. The saints steadfastly answered, "Take not only our military insignia, but also our lives, since nothing is

more precious to us than Christ God.” Licius then ordered his servants to stone the holy martyrs. But the stones missed the saints and returned to strike those who had thrown them. One stone thrown by Licius hit Agricola in the face, smashing his teeth. The torturers realized that the saints were guarded by some invisible power. In prison, the soldiers spent the night in prayer and again they heard the voice of the Lord comforting them: “He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live (John 11:25). Be brave and fear not, for you shall obtain imperishable crowns.”

On the following day the judge repeated the interrogation in front of the torturer, but the soldiers remained unyielding.



It was winter, and there was a severe frost. They lined up the holy soldiers, threw them into a lake near the city, and set a guard to prevent them from coming out of the water. In order to break the will of the martyrs, a warm bath-house was set up on the shore. During the first hour of the night, when the cold had become unbearable, one of the soldiers made a dash for the bath-house, but no sooner had he stepped over the threshold, than he fell down dead.

During the third hour of the night, the Lord sent consolation to the martyrs. Suddenly there was light, the ice melted away, and the water in the lake became warm. All the guards were asleep, except for Aglaius, who was keeping watch. Looking at the lake he saw that a radiant crown had appeared over the head of each martyr. Aglaius counted thirty-nine crowns and realized that the soldier who fled had lost his crown.

Aggias then woke up the other guards, took off his uniform and said to them, “I too am a Christian,” and he joined the martyrs. Standing in the water he prayed, “Lord God, I believe in You, in Whom these soldiers believe. Add me to their number, and make me worthy to suffer with Your servants.” Then a fortieth crown appeared over his head.

In the morning, the torturers saw with surprise that the martyrs were still alive, and their guard Aggias was glorifying Christ together with them. They led the soldiers out of the water and broke their legs. During this horrible execution the mother of the youngest of the soldiers, Meliton, pleaded with her son not to persevere until death.

They put the bodies of the martyrs on a cart and committed them to fire. Young Meliton was still breathing, and they left him to lay on the ground. His mother then picked up her son, and on her own shoulders she carried him behind the cart. When Meliton drew his last breath, his mother put him on the cart with the bodies of his fellow sufferers. The bodies of the saints were tossed in the fire, and their charred bones were thrown into the water, so that Christians would not gather them up.

Three days later the martyrs appeared in a dream to St Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, and commanded him to bury their remains. The bishop together with several clergy gathered up the relics of the glorious martyrs by night and buried them with honor.

There is a pious custom of baking “skylarks” (pastries shaped like skylarks) on this day, because people believed that birds sing at this time to announce the arrival of spring. Forty “skylarks” are prepared in honor of the Forty Martyrs.

## RAISING OF LAZARUS (LAZARUS SATURDAY)

from [www.o.ca.org](http://www.o.ca.org)

Visible triumphs are few in the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He preached a kingdom “not of this world.” At His nativity in the flesh there was “no room at the inn.” For nearly thirty years, while He grew “in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52), He lived in obscurity as “the son of Mary.” When He appeared from Nazareth to begin His public ministry, one of the first to hear of Him asked: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). In the end He was crucified between two thieves and laid to rest in the tomb of another man.

Two brief days stand out as sharp exceptions to the above—days of clearly observable triumph. These days are known in the Church today as Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday. Together they form a unified liturgical cycle which serves as the passage from the forty days of Great Lent to Holy Week. They are the unique and paradoxical days before the Lord’s Passion. They are days of visible, earthly triumph, of resurrectional and messianic joy in which Christ Himself is a deliberate and active participant. At the same time they are days which point beyond themselves to an ultimate victory and final kingship which Christ will attain not by raising one dead man or entering a particular city, but by His own imminent suffering, death and resurrection.

In a carefully detailed narrative the Gospel relates how Christ, six days before His own death, and with particular mindfulness of the people “standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me” (John 11:42), went to His dead friend Lazarus at Bethany outside of Jerusalem. He was aware of the approaching death of Lazarus but deliberately delayed His coming, saying to His disciples at the news of His friend’s death: “For your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe” (John 11:14).

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus was already dead four days. This fact is repeatedly emphasized by the Gospel narrative and the liturgical hymns of the feast. The four-day burial underscores the horrible reality of death. Man, created by God in His own image and likeness, is a spiritual-material being, a unity of soul and body. Death is destruction; it is the separation of soul and body. The soul without

the body is a ghost, as one Orthodox theologian puts it, and the body without the soul is a decaying corpse. “I weep and I wail, when I think upon death, and behold our beauty, fashioned after the image of God, lying in the tomb dishonored, disfigured, bereft of form.” This is a hymn of St John of Damascus sung at the Church’s burial services. This “mystery” of death is the inevitable fate of man fallen from God and blinded by his own prideful pursuits.

With epic simplicity the Gospel records that, on coming to the scene of the horrible end of His friend, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). At this moment Lazarus, the friend of Christ, stands for all men, and Bethany is the mystical center of the world. Jesus wept as He saw the “very good” creation and its king, man, “made through Him” (John 1:3) to be filled with joy, life and light, now a burial ground in which man is sealed up in a tomb outside the city, removed from the fullness of life for which he was created, and decomposing in darkness, despair and death. Again as the Gospel says, the people were hesitant to open the tomb, for “by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days” (John 11:39).

When the stone was removed from the tomb, Jesus prayed to His Father and then cried with a loud voice: “Lazarus, come out.” The icon of the feast shows the particular moment when Lazarus appears at the entrance to the tomb. He is still wrapped in his grave clothes and his friends, who are holding their noses because of the stench of his decaying body, must unwrap him. In everything stress is laid on the audible, the visible and the tangible. Christ presents the world with this observable fact: on the eve of His own suffering and death He raises a man dead four days! The people were astonished. Many immediately believed on Jesus and a great crowd began to assemble around Him as the news of the raising of Lazarus spread. The regal entry into Jerusalem followed.

Lazarus Saturday is a unique day: on a Saturday a Matins and Divine Liturgy bearing the basic marks of festal, resurrectional services, normally proper to Sundays, are celebrated. Even the baptismal hymn is sung at the Liturgy instead of Holy God: “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”

Very Rev. Paul Lazor