

# SS. PETER AND PAUL

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**Gospel Reading ~ Mark 10:32-45**  
**Epistle Reading ~ Hebrews 9:11-14**  
**Annunciation / St Mary of Egypt**

### Gospel Meditation

The Church said to us in the last Gospel that this kind is driven out by fasting and prayer. We think that fasting is when we have vegetable oil on the table. Yes, certainly limitation in food is also fasting. But fasting does not consist of this alone; this is only part of fasting. Fasting is when a person opens his heart in such a way that he sees what is unneeded and rejects it, keeping only what is needed in order to preserve his heart. And prayer? Prayer > the state in which our soul, sensing Divine peace, unceasingly calls to the Lord; "Help me; don't let it happen. Don't allow the murder of the most important feeling within me — conscience."

And here at the end of this week, I don't know about you, but I still have a feeling of being unworthy. And for me today is a great comfort. In what sense? Here before us, before our spiritual eyes, stands Mary of Egypt. This was a sinner who became a classic type, a classic image of a Christian woman. She was an outrageous courtesan of Alexandria in Egypt. She was a harlot; she was a prostitute; she was a beauty; and her depravity knew no limits.

However, she recognized her sins and repented. And so for seventeen years she lived in a state of sobriety; and as she said later, she had to bite the ground in order to destroy lustful feelings, carnal longings, the demonic bodily movements of "this kind." And later on, for seventeen more years she praised God's Grace. She was like an angel.

Therefore, I say that for us this day which the Church puts before us is a comfort. There is no sinner whom the Lord would not forgive. Brothers and sisters, without doubt every one of us will be covered by the lid of a coffin. Every one of us will disappear into the grave. And the soul will pass over into eternity. What will be there? Do we ever think about what will be there? The Church is calling and calling us to repentance. But how do we start? Now pay attention to this: Mary could not enter the Church; somebody was not letting her in. Look at yourself, at your conscience. The same happens to you; somebody is not allowing you to surrender fully to Christ. Stop this. But how? In the same way Mary did — rush to the Mother of God.

This is what I am asking you to do. This is the greatest joy. And rush to the Lord and say, "Lord, help me to be Christian. Help me, so that the motion of my heart beats out just one feeling: surrender to the Lord, fulfillment of His commandments. Then a clear, bright spring will come. And approaching Easter we will hear the words of Christ, "Peace be unto you!" (Lk. 24:36). May this peace rest in you.

- Archbishop Andrei (Rymarenko, 1893-1978)

### *This Week at a Glance*

#### **Wed, Mar 28th**

6:00 pm  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy  
with meal to follow

#### **Fri, Mar 30th**

6:00 pm - Vespers  
Liturgy for Lazarus  
Saturday

#### **Sat, Mar 31st**

1:00 pm - Church  
Cleaning  
6:00 pm - Great Vespers  
w/Litya & Confessions

#### **Sun, April 1st**

Palm Sunday  
9:00 am - Hours  
9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

### *Thank You*

To everyone who  
volunteered their  
time, and baking  
skills to make our  
annual Easter Bake  
Sale a success. May  
God bless you all!

## Church Cleaning

Next Saturday at 1pm, please join us at church for an hour or two to clean up a bit before Holy Week & Pascha. It shouldn't take too long is enough of us pitch in.

### Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. There is a painting of the Annunciation in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome dating from the second century. The Council of Toledo in 656 mentions the Feast, and the Council in Trullo in 692 says that the Annunciation was celebrated during Great Lent.

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as “good tidings.” This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of Saint Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the “beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery,” for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God's promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel.” The Fathers of the Church understand “her seed” to refer to Christ.

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin, “Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”



In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel's message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but could not understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature.

The icon of the Feast shows the Archangel with a staff in his left hand, indicating his role as a messenger. Sometimes one wing is upraised, as if to show his swift descent from heaven. His right hand is stretched toward the holy Virgin as he delivers his message. The Virgin is shown holding a scroll. Her head is bowed, showing her consent and obedience. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is depicted by a ray of light issuing from a small sphere at the top of the icon,

### Pascha Input

I would like to thank everyone for their input regarding the schedule for this year's Pascha services. After a few weeks, I have received many emails and had many conversations with parishioners. Of those that made their opinions known, 39 voted in favor of Sunday morning and 15 voted for Saturday night. While this is a pastoral decision, I wanted to include you the parishioners. After having seen an overwhelming majority in favor of Sunday morning services, I have decided that this year we will try it out on Sunday Morning, and revisit it at the next annual meeting.

