



DIAKONIA

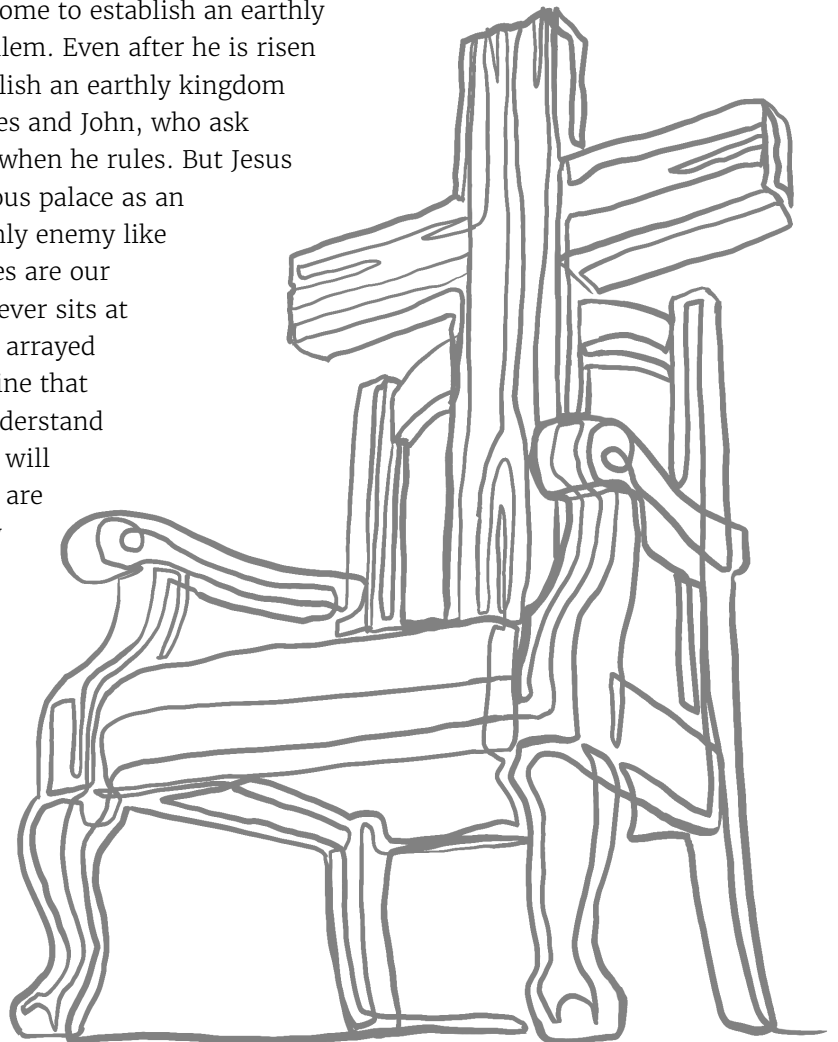
A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING - *Mark 10:32-45*

A King Enthroned on the Cross

Fr. George Parsenios

The disciples are confused in today's Gospel reading about the purpose of Jesus' ministry. They believe that he has come to establish an earthly kingdom, by driving the Romans from Jerusalem. Even after he is risen from the dead, they still think he has come to establish an earthly kingdom (Acts 1:6). This explains the odd question from James and John, who ask Jesus to grant them seats at his left and right hand when he rules. But Jesus did not go to Jerusalem to be enthroned in a luxurious palace as an earthly king, nor did he come to defeat a mere earthly enemy like the Romans. His throne is the cross, and his enemies are our spiritual adversaries, sin and death. Therefore, whoever sits at his left and right will not be crowned with gold and arrayed with soft robes. James and John are correct to imagine that their fate is tied to the fate of Jesus, but they misunderstand what this means. They will not rule with him. They will be crucified with him. In today's Gospel reading we are told that we, too, must pick up our cross and follow Christ. Focusing on the cross reminds us that our faith requires us to look beyond earthly wealth and comfort. We pray for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and we pray for peace on earth. But the purpose of our faith is not to establish for ourselves worldly riches or power or glory or fulfillment. The purpose of our faith is to lead us beyond the things of this earth to the things of heaven. The season of Great Lent reminds us that the Kingdom of God is not of this world, and that we must look beyond earthly comforts to find it.



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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK:

Lord of the Powers (Κύριε τῶν Δυνάμεων)

What is “Lord of the Powers?”

Fr. George Parsenios



The central hymn of the Great Compline service chanted during Lent refers to God as “Lord of the Powers,” which translates rather literally the Greek phrase *Κύριε τῶν Δυνάμεων*/*Kyrie ton Dynameon*.

Dynamis means “power, strength” in Greek but can also refer to a unit of soldiers or a military force.

How, then, does this apply to God? What are God’s “powers”? The Old Testament refers to God in Hebrew as “Lord of Sabaoth,” where *Sabaoth* in Hebrew means “heavenly host of angels.” When the Old Testament

was translated into Greek, translators saw the Greek plural *Dynameis* as the equivalent for *Sabaoth*, so they translated “Lord of Sabaoth” as *Kyrie ton Dynameon*. Psalm 46, which is quoted in the hymn from Great Compline, follows this translation. Therefore, the phrase “Lord of the Powers” means “Master/ commander of angelic armies.” Interestingly, other Old Testament texts did not translate *Sabaoth* with the Greek word *Dynameis*, but merely transliterated the Hebrew word into Greek letters. Isaiah 6:3, for example, simply writes the Hebrew word *Sabaoth* in Greek characters as *Κύριος σαβαώθ*/*Kyrios Sabaoth*. The Anaphora hymn from the Divine Liturgy follows Isaiah 6:3 and thus we sing: “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of your glory.”



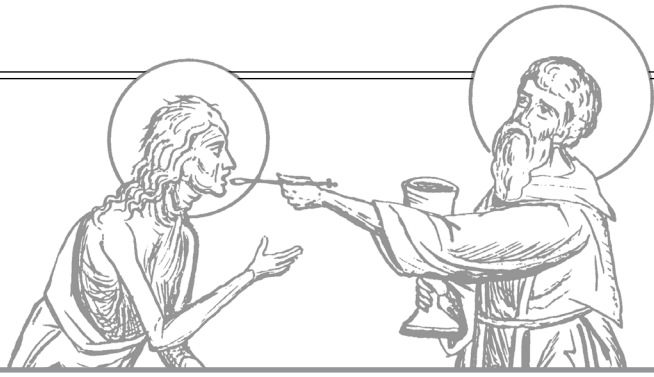
FIRST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES - 1864

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

The First Permanent Greek Orthodox Church and Priest in the United States

In 1864, during the American Civil War, the first Orthodox church was founded in the continental United States in New Orleans, Louisiana by Greek cotton merchants. In its early days, The Eastern Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity was a multi-ethnic community consisting of Greeks, Slavs, and Arabs. Greek, Slavonic, and English prayers were often heard simultaneously during services.

The congregation moved into its permanent church in 1867, and Father Stephen Andreades, who had been invited from Greece, became the first permanent priest. In 1867, Father Andreades took over the ministry and led it successfully until 1875, when he was succeeded by Father Gregory Yiayias. The New Orleans congregation acquired a parish house, a small library, and a cemetery.



**THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT:
SAINT MARY OF EGYPT**

**A Powerful Example
of Repentance**

Mary was born in Egypt. At twelve she left home for Alexandria, living in sin, trapped by her desires. One day she joined a group traveling to Jerusalem. On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, all went to the Church of the Resurrection. Mary tried to enter, but an invisible force stopped her. Realizing her sins were holding her back, she wept before an icon of the Mother of God, promising to change. She was then able to enter and venerate the Holy Cross. She heard a voice say, “If you cross the Jordan, you will find rest.” She bought three loaves of bread, crossed the river, and went into the desert. Strengthened by God, Mary lived in the desert for forty seven years, battling hunger, heat, cold, and the sins of her past. After many years, a monk named Zosimas found her, listened to her story, and she received Holy Communion from him. St. Mary of Egypt teaches us that no one is beyond God’s mercy if we truly repent.

Mary of Egypt and the Power of Change

Eva Konstantakos

St. Mary’s life shows that no one is beyond God’s mercy. From a life of sin, she became a saint through repentance and grace. Her story reminds us that change is possible—no matter our past. She wandered far from God, yet one moment of sincere prayer opened the door to transformation.

Lent is about this very change. It’s never too late to turn toward God. He doesn’t demand perfection; He asks for a willing heart. As Scripture says, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me*” (Psalm 51:10, RSV). St. Mary’s example proves that holiness begins with humility and perseverance.

St. John Climacus wrote, “*Repentance is the renewal of baptism and a contract with God for a fresh start.*” Every step toward God matters, even if small. Do not let guilt or fear hold you back—God’s mercy is greater than any sin.



Challenge:

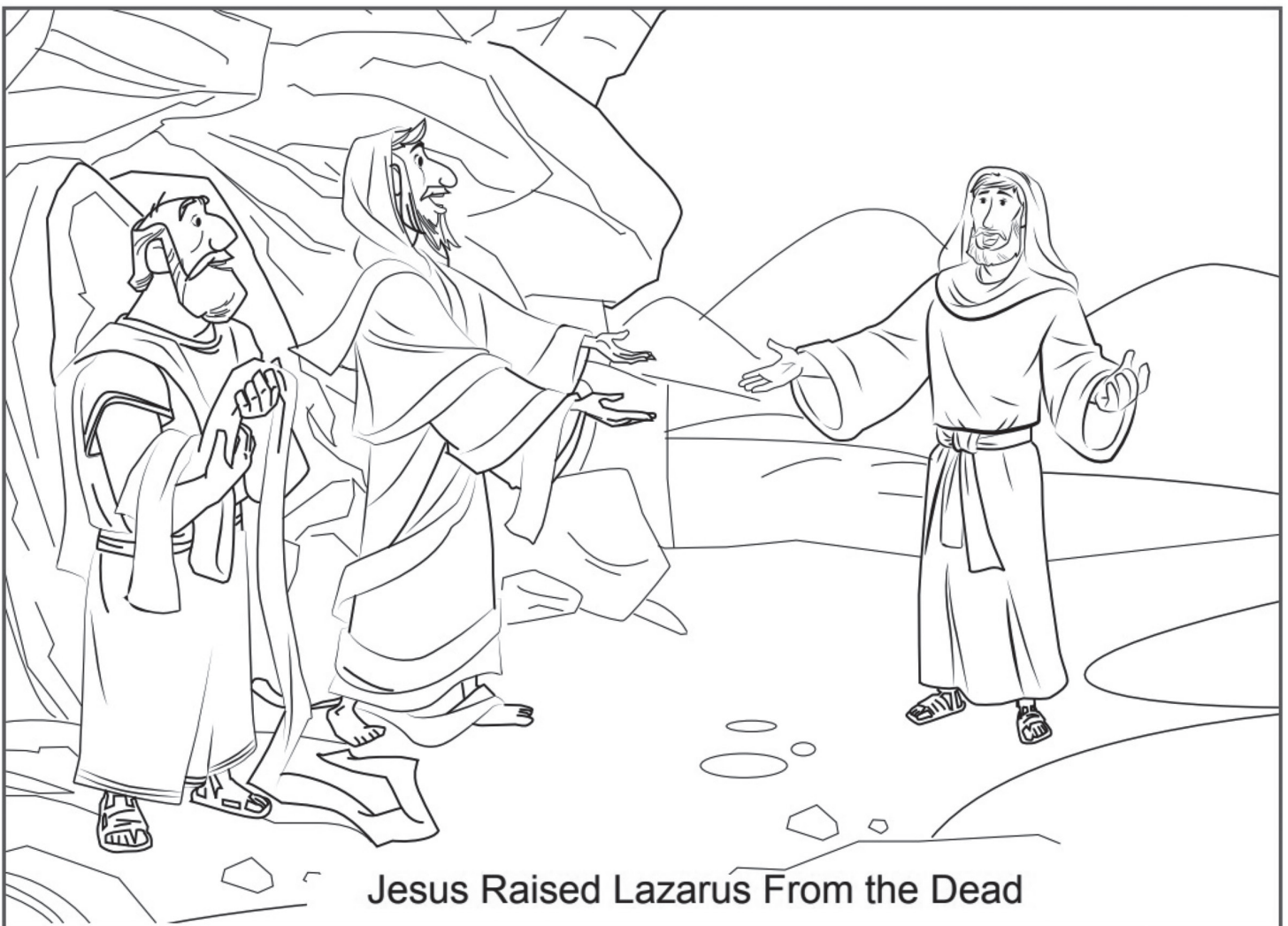
Every day this week, write down one habit or attitude that pulls you away from God. Pick one and work on changing it this month. Start small and don’t be discouraged – any work toward change is still very meaningful. Ask for God’s help daily, trusting that His grace will strengthen your resolve.



Just For Kids!
(...and the young at heart)

**The Saturday Before Palm Sunday
is The Saturday of Lazarus.**

Jesus had a friend named Lazarus who became very sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, asked Jesus to come to Bethany where they lived to heal him. Jesus waited before going to Bethany. When He arrived, Lazarus had already died and had been in his tomb for four days. Mary and Martha were very sad and told Jesus they wished He had come sooner. Jesus cried with them because He loved Lazarus. Then Jesus went to the tomb and told the people to move the stone from the door. He called, "Lazarus, come out!" and Lazarus came out alive. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. People saw this miracle and believed in Jesus.



Jesus Raised Lazarus From the Dead