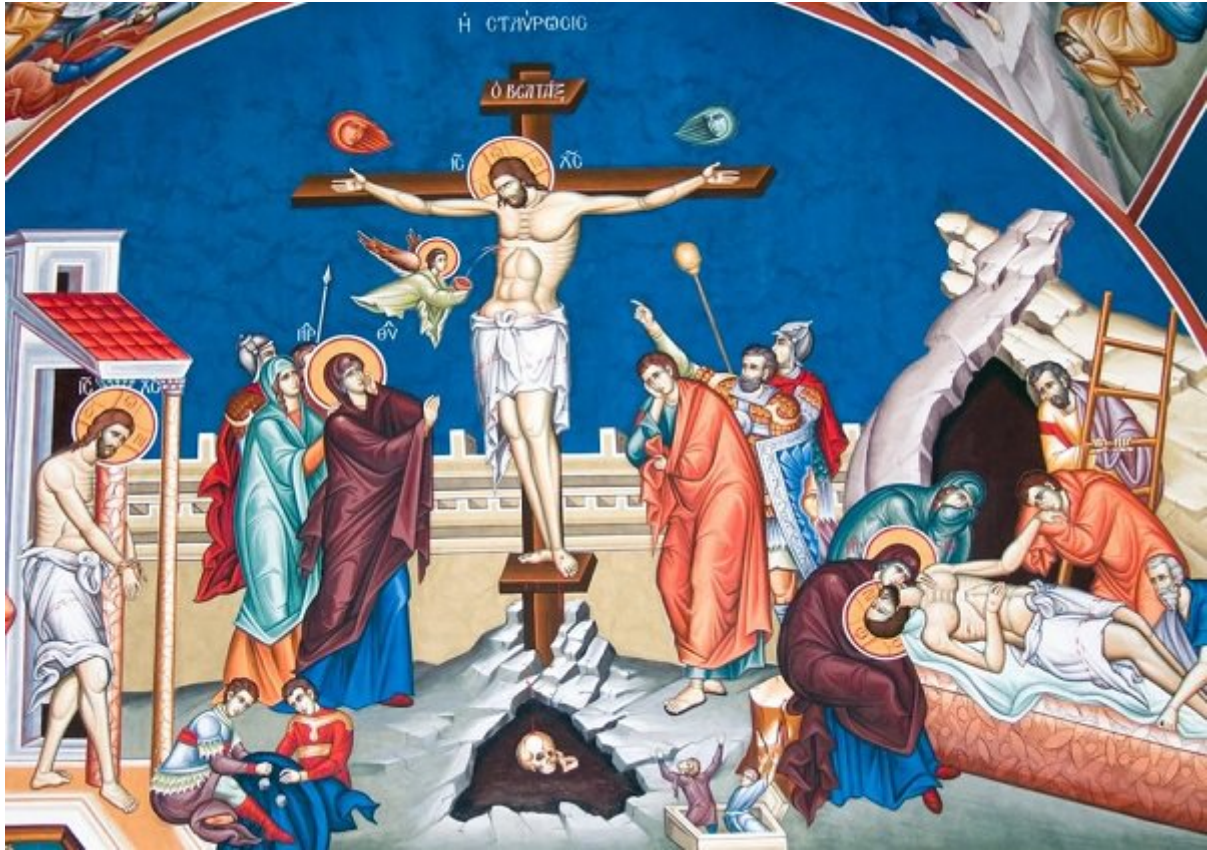


## 40 Day Challenge: Week 6 (Prayer and Repentance) (Metropolitan of Toronto Sotirios)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



It seems like it was just the other day that our 40 Day Challenge disembarked for the harbour of Holy Week. We can now see the Lighthouse; our Journey to Pascha will be more vividly before us as we commemorate the Raising of the Four-day Dead Lazarus next Saturday and Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Before then, however, there is one more week remaining in the 40-day Fast. Today, the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent, we celebrated Saint Mary of Egypt – one of the greatest saints of our Holy Orthodox Church. St. Mary is a shining example of our theme this week: Prayer and Repentance.



Beginning in her youth St. Mary lived a profligate life, lustfully and without shame. So what dominated the latter part of her life that the Church would choose to honour her during Lent (in addition to her annual feast day on April 1st)?

It was her unwavering commitment to a life of prayer, which is communication with Christ, and her deep commitment to repentance, that is, rejecting her previous unethical life, turning her mind from the devil to God – an ethical and virtuous rebirth.

St. Paul writes, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1Th 5:16-18). Prayer is conversation and dialogue with God Himself.

We constantly communicate with our family and friends; how much more should we communicate with our Creator? This is done through prayer, sincere prayer, which can – and should – happen wherever we are and whatever we’re doing. As St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain says, everything should remind us of Christ.

Prayer is an especially powerful tool leading man to repentance. Like all of the other virtues we have highlighted during our 40 Day Challenge, prayer is an indispensable part of the Christian life.

St. Mary of Egypt's repentance, which was watered by the tears from her sincere prayers, provides us with a path towards salvation in Christ. St. Mary is not a fictional personality. She is not a creation of Hollywood. She was a human being, body and soul, who through her free will and with God's help, chose to live a virtuous life, notwithstanding her past transgressions.

God helps everyone who desires and takes the first step towards Him – He does not interfere with our freedom. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

We can do this too. We can live a holy life if we try. We are all called to become saints.

When Holy Week begins and the richness of the Orthodox liturgical life is made more manifest, the Church will invite us to prayer and repentance. It will invite us to communion with Christ.

Our Holy Metropolis prays for a spiritually uplifting and beneficial Holy Week for all. Let us remember the virtues highlighted each week of our 40 Day Challenge. Let us not turn back to our old selves but like St. Mary of Egypt begin anew. When the Great Fast concludes and we celebrate the Glorious Resurrection let us keep in mind each week's simple lessons so that if we are deemed worthy to celebrate the Lenten period next year, we will be ever closer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thank you for partaking in this Challenge and may God always bless you abundantly! Kali Anastasi!