

## Great Lent: Sunday Bible Reading — Week 5

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Today's Gospel (Mark 10:32-45), read on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent (Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt) was not heard in our parishes across Canada, or indeed in any Orthodox Church around the world.

Instead, parishioners heard the Gospel according to Luke (1:24-38) for the Great Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos.

Because the Annunciation (March 25th) happens to fall on a Sunday during Great Lent this year, its Bible reading takes precedence over the customary reading for the Fifth Sunday of the Fast. This liturgical peculiarity of the Church calendar highlights an important theme and unique characteristic of Orthodoxy; namely, its deep liturgical richness, offering the faithful countless opportunities to cultivate a personal relationship with Christ.





This week's Great Lent: Sunday Bible Reading article, the final in our five-week series, will take a slightly different approach than the first four weeks in order to emphasize this point.

Let us ask ourselves and consider quietly, in our heart and in our mind, the blessings provided to us by the Church to become holy, to become Christ-like, as the Apostle Paul exhorts us to do.

Today, with great joy and festivity we commemorate the Annunciation of the Theotokos, nine months before we celebrate the Nativity of Christ.

Today's Gospel concludes with the Ever-Virgin Mary declaring to the Archangel Gabriel: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Although the Bible records the Theotokos as being "greatly troubled" initially, let us look at how she responds. What personifies her answer to the angel? Love. Humility. Obedience. Service.

Do these virtues embody how we live our life? Do these virtues dominate our words, thoughts, and deeds? These are not simple rhetorical questions, but rather meaningful personal queries that we should contemplate and make improvements, where necessary.

But today is also the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt. With her life she not only directs the faithful, but proves the power of repentance, that is, real repentance – change – in Christ our God.

In the Gospel that is traditionally read today, the Lord says: “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave 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.”

A common theme today – from the Bible reading, to the Theotokos and St. Mary of Egypt – is service.

Christ’s twelve disciples, together with His Mother, and St. Mary of Egypt, strove to serve the Lord. They did so in different ways, because each of them – like each of us today – are different, having a different calling from God, different gifts bestowed upon them, and different needs.

But the goal of each of them – like each of us today – is one: salvation in Christ.

The Theotokos, of course, is a unique person in the Church, in humanity, actually. She is the Holiest of all Saints and ... More honourable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim.

While St. Mary of Egypt took a drastically different path, it too led to the Kingdom of God.

Our calling, especially as we celebrate today’s dual-feast, is to remember the narrow gate and be servants of God, according to His commandments, which will lead us to true freedom and life eternal.

**Source: [gometropolis.org](http://gometropolis.org)**