

Volume 2 Issue 2

Spring 2006



Our Journey Together as Orthodox Christians

In Community

From the Lions of Nittany, To the Eagles of the Last Frontier

By Father Jack Sparks

At the end of 1968 I left my position as a professor at Pennsylvania State University. With my wife Esther and our four children, the family headed for Arrowhead Springs, California, and my new assignment with Campus Crusade for Christ. We were excited. We saw great opportunities for helping young people to build a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, which has been one of the great goals of the Christian Church since its inception. During our year at Arrowhead Springs, we met the Dunaways; Harold and Barbara and their three children. When they arrived they had no place to stay, so we invited them to stay with us. That was the beginning of a long relationship which continues to this very day.

Soon after their arrival, the Dunaways were assigned to Alaska, while we were off to the University of California at Santa Barbara, where a group of radical students had taken over the Student Union Building. We met with a number of Christian students who showed us around the campus. When we visited the Student Union Building, a couple of these brilliant young scholars had the bright idea I should address the student body from the stairway. So two of them pushed a couple of tables together. While I stood on them, another young man introduced me, and I spoke; though what I said has been lost in the dust of time. We enjoyed our visit with the Christian students there, but we were soon off to UC Berkeley.



Fr. Jack in Berkeley, 1969

Our first day at Berkeley was a defining moment. First of all, this was a day on which an event of a type I came later to call, “Noon Riot”



Father Jack & Kh. Esther Sparks, 2006

had been planned for Sproul Plaza at the University. Indeed, we were to learn that what happened that day was something of a model for “happenings” there. At noon someone stood on the steps of Sproul Hall and introduced a speaker. When the speaker had drummed up sufficient energy, a body of students, street people, and radicals began a sort of march that erupted in a riot. This mini-riot consisted largely of breaking windows, starting fires in trash cans, and other acts of minor vandalism.

We moved into our new home in Berkeley, convinced there was a great need for assisting young people in becoming Christians and learning to lead an active and productive Christian life. It was the beginning of a ministry which would occupy our lives for the next eight years. We soon formed a new body of believers and were operating as the *Christian World Liberation Front*. Noting the presence of “free papers” on the streets, we also began producing our own newspaper called *Right On*. We wrote flyers which we handed out freely and posted everywhere. Soon our family had twenty young people living in our house, and that led to the establishment of what we called “Christian Houses.”

About this time I renewed my acquaintance with a couple of old Campus Crusade friends, Richard Ballew and Jon Braun. Both were in the Santa Barbara area, working with students and others who were trying to find their place in the whole realm of Christianity. We began to meet regularly and talk about how we might work together more closely, for we were beginning to be concerned about the future of the young people who were meeting

(Continued on page 6)

Community Cooks: Featuring: Duke & Lori Fravel

By Maye Johnson



Lori and Duke Fravel arrived in our community in 1996 and immediately became involved in church activities, especially if it involved cooking for a crowd. Helping write, edit and publish our community cookbook was a joy to Lori. Duke and Lori take advantage of the great fishing Alaska has to offer

and treat us to a wonderful fish dinner on the Feast of the Annunciation.

Between raising three children, a full time nursing job and Duke in school full time, they are indeed busy but a valuable part of our community and the kind of people you call when you need anything.

Psari Plaki: Alaskan Salmon or Halibut

1 1/2 lb. fish fillets, cut into serving pieces
3 diced tomatoes
1 bunch celery, chopped
2 small onions, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 c. white wine
Crushed oregano
6 lemon slices
1/4 c. lemon juice

1/3 c. olive oil
1/2 c. fresh parsley, chopped
1/2 c. bread crumbs
Salt & pepper to taste

In Community

is published by: Mary Alice Cook, Barbara Dunaway, Maye Johnson, Sally Eckert, Mary Ann Northey, Jennifer Gillquist, Dan Kendall. We welcome your comments.

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Arrange fish fillets in a single layer on a greased casserole dish. Season with salt, pepper and oregano. Make sauce by combining tomatoes, celery, onions, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and wine into a stock pot. Bring to a boil and simmer until vegetables are tender, but firm. Pour sauce over fish fillets. Sprinkle with parsley and bread crumbs or croutons. Place a lemon slice on top of each serving and bake at 250 for 30 to 40 minutes, or until fish is *flaking* when tested.

This dish can be prepared a day before, or hours before cooking, if refrigerated. I suggest using croutons if marinating the fish in the sauce. This recipe is portioned for six servings, but can be adjusted to serve as many as needed.

It has become a tradition to serve this fish to our parishioners after Liturgy for the Annunciation Feast. On this day fish, wine and oil are allowed, which this recipe requires. When I cook this for the Annunciation Feast, I duplicate the recipe 20 times. Everyone enjoys this dinner, even if they otherwise do not eat fish. A good accompaniment is basmati rice with peas, rolls, green salad and white wine.

Welcome Home, our church cookbook, is available for \$18.00. Contact Maye Johnson to order.
tommajej@mtaonline.net
Phone or fax: 907-696-3326

Who are These People and What are They Doing?

By Kh. Barbara Dunaway

When we decided to begin this adventure into journalism on behalf of St. John's, some wondered if we would get beyond the first issue, yet they encouraged us to give it a try. Now working on the sixth issue, we are licking our accomplishment chops and hoping to keep going...and going. All involved are enjoying the work and the outcome and we feel a sense of purposeful accomplishment.

We began this project with two things in mind: one, to let others know we are here and second, to give our St. John's family an opportunity to share our stories and love of the faith with friends and relatives. You, dear reader, are one of the names on our mailing list. Some of you came to our list through your attendance at the Eagle River Institute, while others are friends and family suggested by our priests and parishioners.

For whatever reason you find this publication in your mailbox every three months, we now would like to ask a favor of you. We think one important item is lacking, and to fill the void, we are asking our readers for feedback. Are we welcome at your doorstep? We have sent this newsletter to you at our cost, a work we have been happy to do. This is not a request for donations, though we have received some for which we are grateful. But perchance you are receiving this and would prefer not to, please let us know. We also welcome additional names and addresses of those you think might enjoy reading this newsletter. We will not remove anyone from our mailing list unless we are requested to do so. Please send your comments to: In Community, C/O St. John Orthodox Cathedral, PO Box 771108, Eagle River, AK 99577. You may also send e-mail to: frmarcd@aol.com

For whatever reason you find this publication in your mailbox every three months, we now would like to ask a favor of you.

Christmas 2005

Bishop JOSEPH presented each Saint John choir member with a certificate from the Diocese recognizing their service to the Church and a newly produced CD of Orthodox Hymns. At the same time Saint John's Parish gave each choir member a Symphony chocolate bar and a ticket to a choral concert at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts in Anchorage as appreciation for their hard work and sacrifice.



Deacon Peter Jon Gillquist— Ordained to the Priesthood By Jennifer Gillquist

February 2, 2006 Deacon Peter Jon Gillquist was ordained to the priesthood at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary by Bishop Mark of Toledo and the Midwest. Friends and family were in attendance for this joyous occasion. Fr. Peter Gillquist and brother-in-law Dn. Thomas Braun were among the serving clergy. Pictures of the ordination can be viewed at www.svots.edu.

Fr. Peter Jon moved to Alaska in March of 1993 after one semester of community college in Santa Barbara, California. He started out as part of the Saint James House under the direction of Fr. Michael Dunaway. A six month stay turned into six years when he decided to take a job with his brother, Greg. He later participated in the first year of the Holy Cross House under Fr. Paul Jaroslaw. He learned to chant during this time and served as cantor during church services.

He also started recording his songs and performed at local coffee houses. Improvised recording studios included his bedroom in the home right across the street from our cathedral that he rented with several other bachelors (referred to as the "Hobo House") and the boiler room in the cathedral basement. He enlisted the vocal talents of brother Greg and Michele (Harvey) Sparrow and John Morrison on bagpipes. Angie Williams and Andrea (Kendall) Stiehr provided artwork.

After three years Fr. Peter Jon was offered a position to run a Juneau office. Seeing an opportunity for adventure and personal growth, he accepted. Wanting a place to live that would be close to the local Orthodox Church and his new office, he got the okay to move into the rectory of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church. His new surroundings gave him inspiration for fresh material and he made friends with many talented musicians who helped him produce his

next album.

The Juneau adventure ended in 1999 when he launched a tour, performing at college campuses and parish halls around the country. Then he moved to Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania to attend Geneva College. He

worked at Antiochian Village Camp during his summers and maintained a schedule of weekend concerts during the school year. It was at a concert where he met Kristina George. The two were wed in June of 2001.

Many milestones have taken place since then. Graduation from Geneva College in May of 2002, their son Christian was born in June of the same year; a move to New York in the summer of 2003 where Fr. Peter began his Orthodox theological studies. A daughter, Nina, was born in March of 2004. He was ordained to the Diaconate in August of 2005.

He recently completed his seventh album and has coordinated two Cross Culture Project CDs, featuring original songs from Orthodox recording artists, spanning many styles and genres. Those recordings and all of Fr. Peter Jon's albums are available through www.SaintRomanosRecords.com. Though he does not know where he will be assigned yet, that community will be truly blessed as we had been when we had him here. **God grant Father Peter Jon and his family many years. AXIOS!**



His Grace, Bishop Mark of Toledo and the Midwest (Antiochian) ordained Dn. Peter Jon Gillquist to the Holy Priesthood at St Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

Fr. Harold and Kh. Barbara Dunaway - A Golden Evening

By Father Marc Dunaway

On December 26, 2005 Fr. Harold and Kh. Barbara Dunaway celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. The celebration of this event was combined with a Christmas party for the whole parish and a time to thank the Church choir for their dedicated service. Bishop JOSEPH arrived in the Church social hall as fireworks exploded over the Cathedral. He was accompanied by Fr. John Downing dressed as Santa in a very convincing red suit and two elves, Subdeacon Mike Habib and Matthew Howell, both wearing green hats and pointed ears. The Bishop and Santa gave gifts to all the younger children and to the Church youth groups. A potluck meal was followed by a slide show prepared by Kh. Luanne Barr (Fr. Harold and Kh. Barb's only daughter) of Austin, Texas. Old black and white photos became colorful snapshots of the present as Willie Nelson sang, "Ain't It Funny How Time Slips Away?"

After dinner Bishop JOSEPH shared a few funny jokes along the lines of "you know you're old when..." and everyone was impressed to see him delivering punch lines with such good timing. The dinner ended with choral presentations from the children and from the Church choir, which sang some of Fr. Jack's metered Christmas hymns which had recently been set to original music. Bishop JOSEPH presented certificates of appreciation and music CD's to the choir members and Fr. Marc presented each of them with Symphony candy bars and tickets to a February concert.

The evening concluded upstairs in the Nave with the singing of the Akathist, "Glory to God for All Things." Then Bishop JOSEPH announced his surprise for the evening. On behalf of Metropolitan PHILIP he presented Fr. Harold and Kh. Barbara with the Archdiocese's Antonian Gold Medal of Merit "in recognition of distinguished service rendered with generous and unselfish dedication," for the work they have done in founding and raising up this Cathedral parish. Congratulations, Fr. Harold and Kh. Barbara, and may God grant you many years!



On behalf of Metropolitan Philip, Bishop JOSEPH presented Fr. Harold and Kh. Barbara the Archdiocese's Antonian Gold Medal of Merit.

Some Reflections on Great Lent

By Mary Ann Northey

Tim and Tanna Terrell were married on Jan. 9, 2005. Before their marriage, Tanna was a single mom with four children. Tanna has been part of this community since 1977; she lived in the Big House for five years, which may be a record. Tim was a friend of Laurie Prather's, and he started visiting here at Christmas and Easter in the late 90's. Tim teased Laurie that he would become Orthodox after she died, and he did start catechism classes right after her death. Tim was chrismated two years ago. We wanted to hear about Great Lent from an old community member and from a new one, so Tim and Tanna came to mind.

Do you look forward to Lent? Dread it? **Tim:** I dread it and I look forward to it. Cheese is my favorite food, but I like to get into the spirit of things. **Tanna:** Like confession, I hate it, hate it, hate it. But I know to go forward, I have to do it. I thought it would get easier with time, but, like confession, it doesn't.

What kind of preparation do you make? What do you think of Forgiveness Sunday? **Tanna:** We THINK about it, we read 'Great Lent' together last year. We listen to the gospels in church! Meatfare week helps us get ready so we can concentrate on Forgiveness Sunday without a Mardi Gras feeling.

Forgiveness Sunday is hard on me, but worth it! Wonderful. **Tim:** Enjoyable. Cathartic. Of course I have no grudges against anyone yet. I was always late for the afternoon marriage counseling appointment with Fr. John, so I did have to beg his forgiveness that first year! **Tanna:** I used to think about it too much, it was too emotionally traumatic. Better now, I just go.

How has your experience of Lent changed over time? **Tanna:** Initially, I was full of self-righteousness. It was all about following the rules. My kids have made me more humble; I'm not so legalistic now. Now it's disappointment that I don't live up to goals I've hoped to get to. It has changed hugely over the years. **Tim:** Lost 20 pounds my first Lent! I was living by myself then, just cutting out all the cheese and snacks. I was pretty self-righteous about how I did Lent that first year. **Tanna:** We are going to try to start praying together this year, just some simple prayers, every day. **Tim to Tanna:** I think you should cut the pet's rations this year. (wink)

How has Lent changed you? **Tim:** I do think it's benefited me in spiritual ways, certainly, and with self-discipline. Denying myself things, especially cheese and meats! That's a new thing. **Tanna:** Certainly it's changed me. Feasting without fasting is just not the same. It has changed my whole outlook on life. Good times come, bad times come, but there's always going to be an Easter.



Tim & Tanna Terrel

The Wandering Websters

By JoAnn Webster

My husband Tom was 12 when his parents sold their farm in New Mexico. They bought several different motels, finally ending up in Paso Robles, California, where Tom attended high school. He then went to U.C. Berkeley where we met. We were married in a small Presbyterian church in Berkeley in 1956.

For the first 12 years of our married life we moved from pillar to post, courtesy of the U.S. Army. After Tom's first

shared a love for God and a desire to know the truth about the Christian faith.

In 1972 the Dunaways bought the Big House in Eagle River which became a hub for many of us who were still seeking the "true faith." One of Harold's Crusade associates, "Pete" Gillquist, brought his banjo to Eagle River and sang about how "health-food won't get you to Heaven." He and other Crusade men, Jon Braun, Richard Ballew and Jack Sparks, taught us about the historical New Testament church. It was called the "One Holy

We all shared a love for God and a desire to know the truth about the Christian faith.

Catholic and Apostolic Church," and it was still physically present on earth. We had much to learn about it and many years before we actually "jumped in."

tour to Vietnam, we were assigned to Fort Richardson, outside of Anchorage, Alaska. In August 1968 Tom and I, our two kids Melinda and Bill, Grammy Phyl Webster and our poodle dog drove the Alcan Highway, north to Alaska!

Tom retired from the army in 1978 and we were asked to go to Santa Barbara to attend the new Academy of Orthodox Theology. So off we went again, this time leaving our kids in Alaska. Melinda was married to Dan Kendall and Bill was out of high school. Grammy Phyl went with us and she soon had some young men boarding in her apartment, including Marc Dunaway, Harold's oldest son. We learned a lot of history and theology in our seven years there. Our teachers were Braun, Gillquist, Ballew and Sparks, among others. They had discovered, after much research, the history of the Orthodox faith, and they opened it up to us.

Meanwhile in Alaska, our first two granddaughters, Andrea and Barbara, were born and we traveled back several times to see them. In November, 1984, we returned for the birth of grandson John and son Bill's wedding. As we prepared to return to Santa Barbara, I told Tom I was tired of



Tom and JoAnn Webster, February 11, 2006

saying goodbye to our family. The next summer we, including Grammy Phyl, packed up once again and headed back to Alaska. We built a duplex on Monastery Drive, just down the street from the new St. John Cathedral, and settled down, hopefully to stay.

April 1, 1987, the day our entire community was chrismated by Metropolitan PHILIP, was a momentous day for Tom and me, as four generations of our family became Orthodox. As we walked into the church that evening, Phyl slipped on the ice. She didn't say anything, but when the festivities were over, whispered that she thought she broke her wrist. She had refused to let a broken bone deprive her of chrismation. She had come back to the faith she left as a young woman.

Grandson George was added to the clan in December, 1987. Grammy Phyl, called "Gee-Gee" by her great-grandchildren, succumbed to cancer five years later. Singing hymns together, several ladies and I prepared her for burial. Some of the men built a lovely wooden casket; others chipped through the icy ground to dig her grave in the cemetery. On the day of her funeral the casket was loaded in a station wagon and driven the half mile to the Cathedral, our family and most of the church members walking behind. She was laid to rest with Orthodox

(Continued on page 6)



JoAnn & Tom with grandson James (top) and great grandchildren Evelyn & Roman

From the Lions of Nittany, To the Eagles of the Last Frontier

By Father Jack Sparks

(Continued from page 1)

in various places around the country.

Soon we started meeting one day a week, each studying specific areas of theological and ecclesiological concern in the development of the Christian Church from its earliest days: Ballew was concentrating on theology, Braun on history, and I on the worship liturgy. We recognized these as three of the most basic and critical matters for us to devote ourselves to in finding out how best to establish the groups with whom we were now more and more concerned.

In 1976 our daughter Ruth moved to Alaska to finish high school and to live in the community here. She married Christian Sorensen, who became a deacon at St. John's, and they had five children. Dn. Christian died in 2000 and Ruth has married again to Steve Templeton, another long-time member. They continue to rear their children together.

In 1977, our oldest son Stephen moved to Alaska and to St. John's. He married and has two daughters attending the University of Alaska in Anchorage. And, oh yes, he and his wife, Valorie, live at the top end of the road that takes you to St. John's Cathedral.

It was also in 1977 that Esther and I moved to Santa Barbara, for in that year



Sparks Family, 1963

had joined in our search, and we saw the need for more organization. The result was a leadership team consisting of the three of us: Ballew, Braun and myself, augmented by Gordon Walker, Peter Gillquist, and Kenneth Berven. The total leadership group now consisted of twenty. We gave it a name: The New Covenant Apostolic Order.

Soon we saw that we were more like what we thought the Orthodox Church had been than like any other body of Christians. In each metropolitan area we set up small neighborhood "churches."

Soon we saw that we were more like what we thought the Orthodox Church had been than like any other body of Christians.

we began St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, and from that time it has been the center around which my life and work has revolved. That fall we opened resident classes for the first time, and all the related new directions in my life began to roll.

Braun, Ballew and I were also involved in helping the group in Alaska. On one visit we were asked to help teach them to sing. In pulling back from the "established church" and identifying themselves more as a Bible study group, they had lost this part of common Christian worship. The three of us tried our best to teach them. That may not seem to be such a big deal, but it somehow was! These people seriously no longer knew how to sing and did not seem to be able to

Each of these had one or more "elders" or "priests" and two or more "deacons." There was a "bishop" for each metropolitan area. Soon there were twenty groups in twenty cities and we were The Evangelical Orthodox Church. One more step was necessary in order to be actually Orthodox. We had to find entrance into the canonical Orthodox Church. In 1986 Metropolitan PHILIP of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese in North America told us we were to be accepted by that body. In early 1987 chrismations and ordinations began and by late Spring all was accomplished.

Over the succeeding years I have continued to work with St. Athanasius Academy. The day came when it was necessary to cease operation of resident study

programs, while at the same time other projects to provide education have grown. The New Testament and Psalms edition of the Orthodox Study Bible was first published in 1993. In 1998 we began work on the Old Testament portion and soon, perhaps by Pascha 2007, the complete edition will be published.

Esther and I always maintained contact with St. John's. In 2004 it became clear we needed to come up to Alaska to be near our children and grandchildren. We've been able to do that, and I've been able to maintain the work I've been doing and love doing. Oh yes, there are many reasons to be here. Most importantly the many people we love and love working with. There is truly little more we need say!

climb over that hump. But sing they did one day, and now they are an excellent singing congregation. Meanwhile, more leaders and their groups

Wandering Websters

By JoAnn Webster

(Continued from page 5)

prayers and incense, her family surrounding her.

Since then one more grandson, James, was added in 1996, then a grandson-in-law, Jesse Stiehr, who married Andrea in 2000. They and their two children, Roman and Evelyn, live next door to us and what a joy it is to watch them grow. As I walked into the Cathedral on a recent Sunday morning, little Evelyn ran to me, whispering "Grammy Great." As I scooped her into my arms, I thanked our Lord for the blessing of having five generations of our family worshipping here at St. John's.

On February 11, 2006 Tom and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary with a party in the church social hall. Looking back on those 50 years, I think the "glue" that held our marriage together has been our commitment to each other, and our willingness to ask each others' forgiveness, frequently! But most of all, what has bound us is our seeking together God's will for our lives. He has shown us the Orthodox faith and blessed us with a loving family that is committed to Him and to each other. Tom and I are done wandering.

Everyone's Home

By Christine Young Rogers

I was born and raised at St. John's and most of the people here have known me from my infancy. My earliest memory, at age two, is of walking into the new Cathedral while the carpet was being laid. It is fair to say that our community has shaped a great deal of who I am today.

When I was a teenager, my family moved to Wasilla to be a part of the mission church there, but St. John's remained a major part of my life. When word came during my senior year in high school that the St. James House was looking for residents for the fall of 2000, it seemed natural to want to move back to the St. John's community. After a few months of soul searching, I made the decision to do so.

My year at the St. James House was amazing in every sense of the word. Since



Saint James House, November 2005

the fifteen residents came from all over the country, we saw the immediate need to become a family of our own, and that is exactly what we did. To this day, I count my St. James House family as some of my closest friends, and I still turn to my house parents, Dn. Tom and Susan Ross, for help and advice.

That year was the year that I grew up. It was tough going as I struggled through immaturity of mind, emotion and faith, but I had my family at the Saint James House to guide me through. On our last day of residence, Dn. Tom commented on how much I had changed in such a short time, and how proud he was of the person I was becoming. That conversation is one of my most treasured memories of that year.

Many of the rest of my memories center around my husband, Josh. We met while moving into the House and spent the first few months of the year as virtual strangers, not always getting along. But one day something clicked, and when the year ended, we had been dating for eight months. Josh proposed four months later, and we were married in June, 2002.

Now we are nearing our fourth anniversary and St. John's is an instrumental part of our lives. The community gave support, advice, guidance and love to our fledgling marriage and continues to do so today. Eagle River, always home to me, is now home to both of us and the place we hope to raise a family. We live a stone's throw from the Church and the school where I teach kindergarten. I also enjoy working on my writing craft. Josh is a Reader in the church, and with Bishop JOSEPH's blessing will soon be ordained a deacon. It is a joy to serve the people who have given to me since I was a child, and who welcomed Josh with open arms.

Many changes are in store for us in the coming months and years, but we are happy and content to weather them in the shelter of God's grace, within the sound of church bells and the voices of friends.

That year was the year that I grew up. It was tough going as I struggled through immaturity of mind, emotion and faith, but I had my family at the Saint James House to guide me through.



Reader Joshua & Christine Rogers



**“Lessons and Legacies
from the
Russian Church”
with**

**Rev. Dr. Michael Plekon
Rev. Alexander Rentel
August 1-5, 2006**

sponsored by
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Saint Mary of Egypt

By Mary Ann Northey

This amazing saint is special for St. John's because we were chrismated together into the Orthodox Church on April 1, her feast day, in 1987. She is also remembered on the 5th Sunday of Lent. The Catholic iconographer, Charles Rohrbacher, wrote the pictured icon of St. Mary for us as a gift.

St. Mary was born in Egypt about 344 A.D. At age 12 she traveled to Alexandria where she lived a life of debauchery and prostitution, often refusing money in order to satisfy her lusts. At age 29 she joined a crowd of pilgrims traveling by ship to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Her desire was for adventure and sexual perversion and in this manner she secured her passage and her food. In Jerusalem Mary continued her debauchery, even following the crowds to the church. She tried three times to enter the church but was barred by an invisible force at the threshold. Standing alone on the front steps she came to a realization of her sinfulness and fell weeping to the pavement. Looking up to an icon of the Theotokos she asked for entrance so that she could stand before the Holy Cross. She was then able to enter without impediment. After venerating the cross, she returned to the steps and prayed to the Mother of God for guidance. She heard a voice telling her that she would find peace in the desert across the Jordan River. Mary secured directions and traveled all day, spending the night on the shore and crossing by boat the next morning to the desert.

Mary lived in the desert for 47 years, not looking another living being in the face. When the bread she carried ran out she ate desert herbs. Her clothing became worn out and she was then naked to the elements, the heat of day and the frost of night. Her first 17 years were spent fighting the demons in her mind and flesh, and only by calling on the Mother of God for help was she able to continue.

When Mary was 76 years old a priest monk named Zosimas came into the desert during Lent to pray. He saw Mary and pursued her. She asked him to throw her his cloak, calling him Father Zosimas, though he did not know her. Zosimas listened to her recounting of her sins and spiritual battles.

Mary asked Zosimas to return in a year to the Jordan to give her the Sacred Gifts. When Zosimas returned to fulfill her request, he saw her arrive on the other side of the Jordan, make the sign of the cross and walk across the water. She asked him to return again the next year; he did and found her body. Mary died on April 1, 421 A.D. Zosimas told his brothers about St. Mary, and they kept her story alive in their oral tradition until written down by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in 635 A.D.



Saint John the Evangelist

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