Brethren, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Epistle: Hebrews 9: 11-14

Gospel: Mark 10: 32-45

At that time, Jesus taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and after three days he will rise." And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.

However, when she tried to enter into the Church of the Holy Resurrection, an unseen power prevented her from doing so, once, twice, three times, while others around her entered freely. Taking this as a personal sign to her from God, she was cut to the heart by a profound awareness of her own sinfulness. She immediately repented and decided to change her life, embracing the monastic life (in desert solitude) for over four decades and becoming a saint of the Church.

The Epistle & Gospel Reading

On the Fifth Sunday of Lent we celebrate the Feast of Saint Mary of Egypt, a harlot who became a saint. Saint Mary was a runaway child who went to Alexandria and became a prostitute. In the course of her life, out of curiosity, she once joined a throng of pilgrims who travelled to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) and there she did not cease to lead others to sin.

From harlot to saint by the grace of God! Her feast is set on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, “while the end of Lent is near, so that idlers and sinners may be aroused by repentance, having as an example this saint” (Festal Commemoration, Fifth Sunday of Lent).

Once you were defiled with every impurity, but today through Repentance you have become the Bride of Christ. Desiring the death of the angels, you have cast down the demons with the weapon of the Cross. Therefore, O glorious Mary, you have been made a bride of the Kingdom.

Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, A Year of the Lord, Vol. 3., p. 95.
1. RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION (First Mode)
When the stone was sealed by the Jews
and the soldiers were guarding
Your immaculate body,
You rose on the third day, O Savior,
granting life unto the world.
For which cause the powers of heaven
cried out to You, O Life giver:
Glory to Your resurrection on Christ,
Glory to Your Kingdom
Glory to Your dispensation, O only Friend of man.

2. APOLYTIKION FOR ST. MARY OF EGYPT
(Fourth Mode)
In you, O Mother, is preserved
undistorted what was made in the image of God; for taking up the cross, You followed Christ and by example taught, that we should overlook the flesh, since it passes away, and instead look after the soul, since it is immortal. And therefore, O devout Mary, your spirit rejoices with the angels.

3. HYMN OF OUR CHURCH (Fourth Mode)
Today is the beginning of our salvation,
and the revelation of the mystery of ages.
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin.
And Gabriel proclaims this gift from God.
Together with him we cry out to You, O Theotokos: "Hail thou full of grace, the Lord is with you."

4. KONTAKION (Second Mode)
O Protection of Christians unshamable,
Intercessor to our Holy Maker, unwavering,
Please reject not
The prayerful cries of those who are in sin.
Instead, come to us, for you are good;
Your loving help bring unto us.
Who are crying in faith to you: Hasten to intercede
And speed now to supplicate,
As a protection for all time,
Theotokos, for those who honor you.

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The text includes prayers and hymns in both Greek and English, appropriate for various services and occasions throughout the week, including orthros, divine liturgy, memorial services, and special prayers for specific saints and moments in the Christian calendar.