

SAINT MARY OF EGYPT

Mary of Egypt was a beauty
She used to paint the town
She had so many lovers
She never settled down.

She lived in Alexandria
A city full of thrills
With nobles, kings, and merchants
To attend her every will.

But Mary got an itch to see
A country far away
So she charmed a boat of sailors
And they took her on her way.

They took her to Jerusalem
The city of the Lord
And there along the dusty streets
She joined the throbbing horde.

She wandered lost and aimless
Not knowing where to go
When she saw a group of Christians
Walking soft and slow.

On their way to worship
At the temple of the tomb
They invited her to join them,
"With us there's always room."

Quite awkwardly she marched along
The narrow crowded road
But feeling strangely peaceful
On with the group she strode.

And when they reached the Holy Church
The pilgrims all went in,
All except for Mary
Who was prevented by her sin.

The Blessed Theotokos
Stopped her at the door.
She was frozen in her footsteps
She could speak and walk no more.

The Blessed Virgin told her,
"Go to the mighty Jordan
And join some holy sisters
And there your soul unburden."

Saint Mary of Egypt did obey
And when she reached the river
The Holy Spirit came to her
To heal her and deliver.

She lived among her fellow nuns
But often she would roam
Deep into the desert land
She now considered home.

One day she wandered further still
And found herself a cave.
She stayed to pray and meditate
And serve God as His slave.

And when she'd grown older
Her hair turned white as fleece.
Her clothes fell down into a pile
Of rags around her feet.

Then one Lenten afternoon
The Spirit moved her soul
To walk out on the desert
And leave her dismal hole.

The Spirit told her, "travel west
The direction whence you came
And there you'll find a Holy monk
Good Zosimas by name."

She went west towards the Jordan
The sun behind her back
And met good Brother Zosimas
Walking with his pack.

Sent off from his fellows
To make his Lenten travel,
For 40 days to lay at night
Upon the desert gravel.

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When Zosimas saw Mary
So beautiful and black
He trembled and was frightened
And dropped his little pack.

He asked her to have mercy
And bless his weary soul
To pray to God on his behalf
To make his spirit whole.

And Mary said, "Good Zosimas
It's you who me must bless.
I've lived a life unholy
And full of wretchedness.

"Please hand to me your cape
That I might cover up my shame
And pray that God would save me
That I would not His rage inflame."

Then Zosimas obliged her
And handed her his cloak
But rather than agree with her
These words to her he spoke:

"Good mother of the desert
You are surely not a wretch.
Please pray to God in heaven
Your arms to Him outstretch.

"Please pray that He'll have mercy
Upon my tired soul,
That He take this sinful heart of mine
And make it good and whole,

"That He'll also call the hearts of those
Who shun the Christian way,
Who try to quench their passions
With merriment and play.

"Intercede on their behalf.
Pray that they all repent,
That they'll bear their crosses daily
Throughout this holy lent."

At this the woman of the desert
Raised her hands in prayer
And Zosimas looked at his feet,
Careful not to stare.

But as she prayed an hour or more
The monk became concerned
And thus becoming restless
His eyes to her he turned.

He looked and saw that she had risen
Off the desert sand,
Her words of prayer so full of love
For fallen fellow man.

Floating up to heaven
The prayers made Mary rise
And like a waft of sweet perfume
She lifted toward the skies.

And when she'd finished praying
She told him of her life,
Of her wicked ways in Egypt,
Of times of toil and strife,

Of how she'd struggled through the years
To purge herself from sin,
Of how she'd wrestled demons
Bringing passions to an end,

How finally at the feet of God
Her burdens she did cast,
How He raised her from the ashes,
How her soul was free at last.

Upon telling such a story
The tears of joy did flow.
She praised the Lord of heaven
And her face began to glow.

Then Zosimas responded,
"Blessed is the Lord
Who has shown you love and mercy
And has sent you your reward.

"You have indeed been chosen
To light the path of men
To show them true repentance
And to guide them from their sin"

And then she said to Zosimas,
"Please, save me from my pride
And my tale to no one,
keep it hidden deep inside.

"Until the day I leave this earth
Keep the story sealed
And then, when I'm departed,
The report may be revealed."

And then she said, "Return my friend
To your brothers by the river
And next year on this very eve
There meet me and deliver

"The Mysteries of Jesus,
Of our Savior, Christ the King
That I might receive His blessing
His supper to me bring"

With this she turned and vanished
To the desert whence she came.
Then Zosimas remembered,
He hadn't asked her name.

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A year had past and on the evening
Of the Paschal Supper
He took the Holy Sacraments
And went down to the river.

He waited there for Mary
As she had thus requested.
Then darkness filled his weary mind
And his devotion tested.

"What if she is not coming?
What if she was a dream?
And if she comes there is no boat
To cross this mighty stream."

But as his doubts did cloud his head
He looked and saw the figure.
Upon the Jordan's moonlit face
Walked the Holy sister.

Upon reaching the nearer shore
He fed her sweet communion
And agreed to meet her every year
For a blest and bright reunion.

And when another year had passed
He set forth once again
To meet the lovely desert saint
Who'd triumphed over sin.

He brought with him the wine and bread
To consecrate and give
Unto the Holy lady
Who had showed him how to live.

But as he looked around himself
And surveyed the blessed spot,
He saw the sand and sky and heat
But the lady he did not.

Then, off in the distance
He saw her on the plain
And even in her lifeless face
Her beauty still remained,

Her arms lay folded on her breast,
Her face turned toward the east
Her eyes were closed, her mouth was sealed,
She had died in total peace.

On viewing such a witness
To the greatness of her deeds,
Good Zosimas became unsure
Of how he should proceed.

Then he saw some writing
That was scribbled in the sand,
A message from the lady
Written by her dying hand.

"Good Brother will you bury me
Beneath this blessed dust?
I bequeath my empty carcass
It to you I do entrust."

And then the feeble Zosimas
Began to dig a pit
But the ground was hard and crusty
And it made him want to quit.

And to the south and to the east
He looked towards Holy Zion
And there, not more than ten yards thence,
He spied a giant lion.

When he saw the creature
Fear did shake his heart
But set unto his noble task
The monk did not depart.

Then to his astonishment
The creature dug the ground
Near the spot where Mary lay
And then they lowered her down.

They blest her lifeless body
Then commended God her soul
And then the mammoth desert beast
Covered up the hole.

Then Zosimas looked up to heaven
And thanked our God above
That he'd known such saintly witness
That was shown him by her love.

When he reached his brother monks
He told to them the tale
Of the lady God had led him to
And her faith that did not fail.

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