

Eucharistic Miracle of ST. MARY OF EGYPT

EGYPT, FOURTH-FIFTH CENTURY



This Eucharistic miracle is related in the life of St. Mary of Egypt who lived in the desert for 47 years. The account of her life was written by the Bishop Sofronio of Jerusalem in the 7th century. St. Mary is said to have walked on the Jordan River to reach the opposite bank and receive Communion from the Monk Zosimus.



Marcantonio Franceschini,
Last Communion of St. Mary of Egypt (1690)



Emile Nolde, *Death in the Desert*



Jordan River



Monastery of St. Paul



St. Mary of Egypt. Diocesan Museum of Milan

We are told that when St. Mary was 12 years of age she left her parents and went to Alexandria. There she led a very dissolute life for 16 years. One day she came upon a ship about to set sail with different groups of passengers. She inquired who they might be and where they were going. She was told they were pilgrims sailing toward Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. She decided to join them. When on the feast day she tried to enter the church, she was seized by a mysterious force. Fearfully she raised her eyes to an image of the Holy Virgin and was overcome with a deep sorrow for the sinful life she had led until that day. Only then was she able to make her way into the church and worship the True Cross.

She did not remain in Jerusalem. "If you go

across the Jordan you will find peace" was the message of the Madonna. The following day after her confession and Communion she made her way across the Jordan to the desert of Arabia.

There she lived for 47 years in solitude encountering neither men nor beasts. Her skin shriveled, her hair was long and white, but the promise of the Virgin proved true, she found her peace of soul.

One day she met up with the Monk Zosimus and asked him to bring her Communion each year. One year Zosimus arrived with the Eucharist, but Mary did not show. In great sorrow Zosimus prayed: "Lord, my God, King and Creator of all, do not deprive me of my

desire, but grant that I may see this holy woman." Then he thought, "Now what will I do if she appears, there is no boat around to get me across? I will not achieve my wish." While he gave into these thoughts, Mary appeared on the opposite shore and Zosimus was consoled. Then he saw her make the sign of the Cross over the water and walk out on it as though it were dry land. When 12 months had passed Zosimus returned but was unable to find the mummified remains of the saintly penitent. A lion had dug her grave and buried the body.