



## Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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*On Behalf of All and for All*  
Week of July 24, 2011

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!**

During the past two weeks we have all been horrified by the news. Two weeks ago we heard of a child who was murdered by a member of his own religious community as he took his first try at walking by himself a short distance of six blocks from his home to day camp. He lost his way, asked directions and was misled and killed by the very man whom he asked for help. Last week we sat in stunned horror once again as we heard the news of a bomb that exploded and killed seven people in the Norwegian Parliament; and later we were shocked once again when it was reported that the same bomber had masqueraded as a policeman and entered a youth camp where he killed dozens of youths. And then during the same week the news every night focused on the eleven million people in the horn of Africa who are suffering and dying of a severe drought; now there are hundreds of thousands of refugees in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya without sufficient food and water, because the supplies that have been generously sent by the nations of the world have been prevented from reaching those who need them because of a civil war that is raging in the area. Like you, I am horrified and deeply saddened by these events, and like you I feel so terribly helpless. So much suffering: all of it in some manner because of human sin. I wonder over and over again what we can do to help so many for whom help seems impossible.

On Sunday we heard a short Gospel lesson from Matthew that told the story of our Lord's healing of a paralytic, another for whom help seemed impossible. The paralyzed man was brought to Jesus by his friends; the Lord forgave him his sins, and his paralysis was healed. There are to be sure so many things that stand out in this story: the Lord's compassion; the reaction of the people who gave glory to God at the pronouncement of forgiveness by our Lord and his subsequent healing of the paralytic. But one thing that stood out in the reading of the Gospel on Sunday was the fact that our Lord praised the faith of those who brought the man – not the faith or the man himself - but the faith of those who brought him.

The one thought I have had over and over again about this lesson is how very much like the paralytic's friends we can be. There was nothing they could do to heal the man themselves. But in faith they picked him up and brought him to Jesus. In the same way, brothers and sisters, we must be friends to those who suffer anywhere in the world. And we too, in our prayers of love and of faith, can bring them to the Lord as well; we too can participate in their healing, even as those friends of the paralytic participated in his. Prayer, the Fathers teach us, is a great mystery. By means of prayer we do what the Lord created us to do: we participate in His own pure love for all creation - for those who believe and for those who do not. All are precious to Him.

We are called to live lives of charity and love in His Name to all people, not just to those whom we know and care about in our families, our church or our circles of friends. We are called to care about all people, regardless of their culture, their religion, their apparent worthiness or unworthiness. We proclaim this truth every Sunday when the Holy Gifts are raised at the Divine Liturgy in Offering to the Lord **on behalf of all and for all**, and we have the honor as His disciples to intercede **on behalf of all and for all** in our daily lives as well. Fasting and prayer for the world and for those who are victimized by the sin of the world has been a mark of Christian discipleship from the beginning. And we of this time and place are no less disciples of the Lord than were those who did so at the beginning, and those who brought the paralytic to Jesus in our Gospel lesson.

This week, Brothers and Sisters, I call on you to do likewise. Choose one or two days. Fast in private and pray the prayers I handed out to you on Sunday and copied below in this email. Together, let us offer to Him what we can and what we are **on behalf of all and for all**. Let us pray together as His people for all those who suffer in the world.

- **Prayers for those who suffer in the drought in Africa:.**

*Through the prayers of our holy fathers Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us.  
Amen.*

*Pray the Trisagion Prayers*

*Pray the Lord's Prayer*

*Through the prayers of our holy fathers Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us.  
Amen.*

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mercy.*

*O Master, Lord our God, Who, having heard the prayer of Elijah the Tishbite, for the sake of his zeal held back rain from the earth for a time, and again, for the sake of his prayer, granted fruit-bearing rain: As You are the Master of All, we entreat you: Out of Your deep compassion, grant an abundance of rain to Your inheritance. Overlooking our transgressions, send down Your rain on the drought inflicted lands of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, and gladden the face of the earth, for the sake of Your needy people, children, animals and all who live there. For they look in expectation to You that You give them nourishment in due season. For You are our God, a God merciful and quick to save, and to You we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

*Through the prayers of our holy fathers Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us. Amen.*

**Remember what the LORD has done for you! Give Him thanks and praise! *Glory to His NAME for all things!*** Pray for me, His most unworthy of priests.

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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