



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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There is No Risk in Helping Others Week of September 11, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not

winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents.' For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. (Mt. 25: 14-30)

I have always been wary of this parable. Even hearing as a child made me uncomfortable, for I knew that I been given many gifts by God and that I did not use them properly. I always have felt that I fell squarely in the category of those who are like the third servant. And it bothered me that although the third servant had kept the gifts that he had been given safe and sound by burying them into the ground, he had nevertheless been faulted by his master for not using them. That, of course, is what this parable is about: *using the gifts that God gives us*. It is not about the harshness of the master or the cleverness of the first two servants whose investments paid off. It is about the fact that some who received talents used them, and that one other who received them did not use them. The gifts that God gives us are meant to be used, not buried in the ground in selfish fear.

We have been given many gifts at Entrance Mission. I am humbled and grateful beyond words for each of you every time I stand before you in the Divine Liturgy. We have faced many things together: terrible accusations, opinions of people who did not know the whole truth about what happened in the AOC or at St. James, turmoil of doubt and times of trial. But the Lord has blessed our community richly: He held us together in His love during the worst of those times, sending us a new Metropolitan who is both a firm leader and a gentle guide; He found us a new place of worship and provided us with everything we need in order to be what He has made us: a holy people – for indeed, as St. Peter said, once we were no people, but now we are His people; once we had not received mercy, but now, we have received mercy.

It is time to use the gifts He has given us fully! Everything we need for the Divine Services is in place: We have altar, iconostasis, temple, Icons and even the sacred relics of the saints. All has been provided for us to enter into His presence in prayer and praise. A year ago, I would never have been able to imagine what He has done for us and what He has given us. But now, Brothers and Sisters, as we approach our first anniversary together, it is time to go forward and become in deed that which He makes us in Word: a people that will be a blessing to others, a people whom to look upon is to look upon the love of the Savior. So instead of burying the many gifts we have been given in order to keep them selfishly and fearfully for ourselves, let us use them, as the first two servants used their gifts in the parable.

We have much that we will be able to do with the space below us at our little church home on West Main Street in Emmitsburg. There are people who need our help all around us. When we open our hearts and then our doors to them, God will send them. And in the offering of our love for them, God will give us who have been given much, even more – so that His love will flow from us in abundance. As one of us said last week, *there is no risk when we help others!* For our Master is the One Who gives Himself to all people freely.

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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