



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

306 W. Main Street  
2nd Floor Loft  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

The Rev. Fr. Elias Yelovich, Pastor

<http://EntranceMission.org>

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***“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them!”***  
**Week of November 6, 2011**

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**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

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

*“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, Father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”*

These words were spoken by our Lord in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus that we heard yesterday in our Gospel lesson. Only St. Luke includes this story in his Gospel along with several other Parables that are unique to the Third Gospel. Luke alone tells of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son and the Publican and the Pharisee. In all of these parables there is an emphasis that is beloved of St. Luke, an emphasis on our Lord’s love for the most wretched of people: the poor man Lazarus with sores on his body that are licked by dogs, the prodigal son who soils his youth with selfishness and immorality, reducing his humanity to the desire to eat the pods that the swine he must tend are fed; the act of love shown by a disgusting Samaritan, while the outwardly pure priest and deacon pass by the wounded man lest they be soiled and rendered liturgically unclean; and the plea of mercy on the part of the despicable tax collector, whose hopelessness is met with the supreme joy of

forgiveness and justification. We gladly remember the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, but squirm with some discomfort at the hearing of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Is it not so that we recognize ourselves all too plainly in the person of that Rich Man? Who among us does not feast sumptuously every day while the nouveau poor struggle to pay the costs of heat, food and light?

The parable is a strong reminder that the road to hell is one that we ourselves pave step by step and take all too willingly. It is the road of self-service, self-gratification, self-comfort, self-interest, self-reward, self-serving. As we look to our own needs and desires, as did the rich man, we travel farther and farther away from union with God, for He made us to love one another and to care for one another.

The terrible thing is that the Lord has revealed His will to us for millennia, and we have done our best to ignore Him. He gave us the Law through Moses and the many examples of the prophets who called every generation to mercy, truth, compassion and care for those who were downtrodden. The Rich Man in the parable knew this call from the Lord, but he chose the path of self-service, while Lazarus sat outside his dining hall, content to eat the scraps that were thrown his way. And finally at the end, when Lazarus was taken by the angels to the bosom of Abraham, and the Rich Man to that place of torment that he had created for himself, even then, because his self-serving personality was set, even then he tried to use Lazarus for his own purposes, attempting to send him off to do his bidding like some sort of hireling. The choices we make all through life form us truly. And that which we become by virtue of those choices carries over into the life to come. Thus, the time for repentance, the time for change is now.

As for us, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has not only given the Law and the Prophets, but He has Himself entered into our history, become a part of our lives, poured Himself out for us, blessed us with every Grace and Mercy, suffered and died at the hands of lawless men, and rose from the dead for us. These things He did for us, as it is said so very clearly in the Anaphora at every Divine Liturgy: *For the Life of the World. For us and for our salvation.* To be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ means above all to live not for ourselves, but to die to ourselves and to live to Him - for others. It means to live a life of change, or repentance, in which we strive in every moment of our lives to be Christ to our neighbor. It is to see the mistake of the Rich Man in the parable and to learn from it; it is to allow ourselves through the Divine pull of the Holy Spirit to become ever more like our Lord in our love for others. This we are all able to do while we are still in the body. *Let us do so, Brothers and Sisters, before the time comes when we can do so no longer!*

**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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717-817-1669