



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Life as Sacrament Week of August 12, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

It is always such a great joy for me as a priest to participate in the times of God's blessing to His people. How wonderful to stand before a man and a woman whom God unites in the Mystery of Holy Marriage as a sign of His faithfulness to the Church! How wonderful to pray the prayers of blessing for a mother who holds her child as she returns to the fullness of life in the community of the Church after giving birth! How wonderful to hold that child and sing with the congregation the ancient words of St. Simeon who held the infant Jesus in His arms when His Mother brought Him for His presentation into the Temple of God! These things have all happened within our little congregation during the course of the past couple of weeks: Jorge and Lydia were brought together by God in the creation of a new family, and Joel Michael George was brought into the Temple of our little church and presented to the Lord, even as the Lord Himself had been presented by His Mother in the Temple in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago.

These special times are representative moments of what our entire lives are supposed to be. We sometimes think that the Holy Mysteries are times of some sort of exceptional blessing, that they are meant to happen rarely or only at certain exceptional moments. But the truth is that the Lord created us so that *every* moment in our lives with Him is to be a moment of blessing; *every* moment in our lives

is to be sacramental . All of life is to be one great continual Sacrament. The Lord gives to us – we receive from His Hand – we offer back to Him what He freely gives – and in His mercy and love for us, He returns it to us transformed – greater than what we offered; He makes what we offer to be a means of our life and salvation. This, you see, is to be how it is not just in special moments of time, but in *every* moment of our lives.

This is something that we saw clearly on Sunday morning, when a mother and child came into the Temple for the Rites of Purification and Presentation, just as Mary brought the infant Jesus to the Temple for those same Rites so long ago. The Purification and the Presentation were really one event, for the Purification of the Blameless One consisted in her Presentation, her offering, of her child to God. This action is the very meaning of Sacrament: the child given by God was brought as an offering to God – and the whole world has been sanctified by that offering. And henceforth, every Orthodox mother brings her child to the priest, offers him or her to God in the same manner, and is thereby purified herself in the offering. We receive – we offer what we receive from God back to God – and God – Glory to His Name – transforms that which we give and makes it a means of sanctification. This is what we have seen and participated in during the past several weeks even in our little church gathering.

All of life, Brothers and Sisters, was to have been a continual Sacrament of receiving – offering – and transformation. It still can be. For we, who have turned away from the ancient delusion of self-service in sin are called to the Life Abundant of Sanctification. The Lord gives all things to us freely! Let us offer what we receive – indeed our very selves - back to Him. In so doing, we too will be transformed by Him, becoming a means of life and salvation for those around us. May it be so for each of us!

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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