



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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Perfect Love Casts Out Fear Week of September 23, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. (I John 4:18-19).

One of the very last parables that our Lord told before the events of Great and Holy Week was the **parable of the talents** which we heard in our Gospel lesson on Sunday (Matthew 25: 14=30). How often we have heard it, and yet how easy it is to miss its central point. It seems clear enough that our Lord told it to expose the selfish attitude of the religious leaders of His time: they had taken the great treasure God had entrusted to them and buried it, just like the one servant in the parable. They had betrayed the trust which God had shown in them. Instead of sharing the news of God's love and mercy, they sought to control and preserve. Their actions – like the actions of some many of us - were the actions of selfish and fearful men, who are too timid to trust in the love of the Master and who therefore cannot act in love themselves.

Fear always paralyzes. When we fail to keep our eyes on the mercy and love of God, which He has demonstrated over and over again, we become fearful and selfish. We take what God gives and hold

onto it for ourselves, thinking that there is security in so doing. But there is no security other than in God; and, there is no way for us to do God's will, unless we let go of ourselves and rely on His good will for us – His love. That's why St. John said in his first epistle that perfect love casts out fear. When we rely on the love of God for us, then we are free to let go of our fear, and then we are able to be the kind of people God calls us to be.

It is interesting to note that in our Lord's parable, **only the servant who buried the talents given to him was fearful** of his master's anger. The other servants simply took what was given to them and used it. They were free, because they had no fear of retribution or punishment. Our fear, Brothers and Sisters, is what paralyzes us. And for no reason! For the Lord has revealed to us over and over again that He is the God of mercy and love for mankind, that it is truly His will for us to be saved. Only our fear paralyzes us from doing the very things that our Lord calls us to do.

Perfect love casts out fear! The love of God for each of us is truly perfect, and if we accept that love in humility, then we can reflect that same love to others. But we cannot and will not do so if we are fearful about our security or our place or our status or our wealth or our success or our future. We must let go of those fears and trust in God, and then and only then will be free to share the treasure given to us – only then will we become the kind of people that can do God's will and be a blessing to others.

God has blessed us with a superabundance of opportunity to serve. Glory to God for giving us so many talents, so many treasures; glory to God for entrusting us with such a wondrous responsibility! Let us joyfully serve together in love!

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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