



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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Hope and Direction Week of October 28, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

When our Lord said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," we always know that the message He spoke was one that would cut to the quick. Our Lord was truthful and direct in all things, but because people must come to repentance themselves, of their own will, within their hearts, He often pointed out the importance of His message without making blatant accusations against those toward whom it was especially directed.

This first of our Lord's parables has a twofold thrust, **hope** and **direction**: First, it is meant to give **hope**, support and encouragement to His own disciples. Our Lord reminds them (and us) in this parable that all

appearances to the contrary, in spite of all the things that can and will oppose them, the Word they proclaim will not be wasted. That Word, He tells them, will grow, even though the soil may be barren and the rocks plentiful. It will grow nevertheless! But second, He also rebukes those among the religious leadership of His time that they should not be stingy or controlling or self-righteous or legalistic in the way in which the Word of God is sown. Instead, He **directs** them (and us) that they should bring the mercy and love of God to all, not just to those whom they may deem worthy of hearing it or whom they think will respond to it. The merciful, live-giving Word should be sown as freely as the sower in the parable sowed his seed: strewn on soil that looks good and on ground that looks less promising, indeed even on ground that looks barren, dry and hopeless. The Word of God is meant for all – not merely or even primarily for the righteous – but also and wondrously for those who are without hope or any appearance of having any possibility of bearing fruit. For the Word is God's own, watered and fed by the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit. And through His power, the seed that falls even on hopelessly barren and dry soil can nevertheless take root and prosper.

It must be admitted that the history of the Church has sometimes been one of judgment, condemnation, self-righteousness and self-concern; sometimes we have been just as Pharisaical and cold as were the Pharisees of our Lord's time to whom he directed the second thrust of this parable. But in that history there have also been many wondrous examples among the Saints as well as among plain ordinary disciples of mercy and good will who have dared to pray for the hopeless and to reach out *to and for* those who were very poor risks. *That*, Brothers and Sisters, is what our Lord has done for each of us. None of us has shown any qualities that would make us worthy of God's special recognition or care. And yet, He has shown us grace and mercy without end! So you see, we too must respond in like fashion: we must treat others around us this very same way, the way that He treats us. We are to be Christ to our neighbor, indeed, to everyone with whom we work, live, play, study with or meet in our lives. This means behaving toward them in such a way that when they see us, they see not us but the *Lord Who* always chooses to love and forgive; it means praying for those who hurt or insult us, showing kindness to those who are short-tempered or difficult with us; it means asking God to help us to rise above our emotions to do even for our enemies that which we would want done to us. This is so clearly a foundational part of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord, that He made it the message of His first parable, the *Parable of the Sower and the Seed*. **Hope** and **Direction** – that is what He brings to each of us, *hope* and *direction* in our lives of gratitude and service to Him, for truly He alone is the end and fulfillment of each of our lives!

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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