



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

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### *Receiving That We May Give: Glory in Service* Week of August 18, 2013

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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

*Thou wast transfigured on the mount. O Christ God, revealing Thy glory to Thy disciples as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light shine upon us sinners. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Giver of Light, glory to Thee (Troparion).*

**The Feast of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ** is celebrated in the Orthodox Church on August 6, in the civil calendar August 19. Since that date falls on a Monday this year, we will observe the Great Feast together at the Sunday morning Divine Liturgy this week. ***It is our custom to bring fresh grapes and other fruits for blessing at the end of the Liturgy, so we may enjoy the symbol they represent of new life, life transfigured, in Jesus Christ.***

The Gospels indicate that our Lord went up on the mountain during the Feast of the Booths, an Old Testament observance of God's presence among men. His transfiguration was a fulfillment of the ancient celebration, for now it has been given through the great mercy of our God for Him to dwell among us through the life, self-giving death and resurrection of the Savior. The God Whom we confess to be our Lord, is the One Who dwells eternally with us through the Lord Jesus, by means of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost upon all flesh.

It is this principle that the apostles misunderstood, when they said, “*Let us make three booths*” after the experience of our Lord’s revelation to them. They wanted to preserve the experience in some sort of material fashion – a building, a tent, a particular limited place and time. But the mystery of the revelation of our Lord was that He is *wherever* and *whenever* the sheep gather around Him, the shepherd: In the Divine Liturgy of course, the self-giving of God in the Holy Mysteries, in all the wondrous ways through which the Lord God pours Himself out for us repeatedly in His Holy Church. But more: In the self-giving sacrifices that we, His people, are to make for one another repeatedly, and most especially, for those who do not deserve His or even want our love, those who persecute us, who harm us, who oppose us, who mistreat us. We, you see, are to be Christ to them, even as our Lord was Christ and loving Savior to those who abused, tortured and crucified Him – even though He had done nothing but to show His love in acts of mercy, healing, resurrection, forgiveness and eternal love. This is what was revealed on the Mount of the Transfiguration, and it is why He rebuked St. Peter so sternly, when the Holy Apostle questioned the revelation of His own death and rejection at the hands of sinners.

The Orthodox Church is the receptacle and purveyor of these truths. But Orthodoxy is a package, not one single thing only: We cannot be faithful to the vocation given to us if we take only a part of the faith to the exclusion of the other parts of the whole: Divine Liturgy without our acts of self-sacrifice for others is a lie, a hypocrisy; and, our attempts to give to others selflessly without first receiving the Lord’s own self-giving grace in the Holy Mysteries is a futility. We cannot be or become the people that God created us to be without continued reception of the Holy Things, poured out for us. But if we receive those Holy Things without allowing them to bear fruit within us, we eat and drink to our own condemnation, as St. Paul said, for that would be mere selfishness.

Holy Transfiguration reminds us of those things. Without the self-giving of our Lord to us, we are nothing and can become nothing. But to receive Him in some sort of mystical union for our own salvation alone is pure selfishness. Brothers and Sisters: let us participate together in that which the Feast proclaims: Let us bow down in worship before the One Who was transfigured on the Mount for our salvation, Christ our True God; and, let us go forth with lives transformed from the slavery of our own wills to freedom of service to one another. We cannot have one without the other.

**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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