



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

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

On Thanksgiving!

Week of November 23, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever; and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever; he who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever. O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalms 135(136): 1, 24-26

Thanksgiving in many ways is the most basic quality of Christian discipleship. The prayer book of our Lord and the prayer book of His Church to this very day is the book of Psalms. And perhaps nowhere in the book of Psalms is the joy of gratitude and love to God expressed more clearly than in this Psalm, the Psalm of Thanksgiving. One can almost hear the antiphonal singing on two sides of a large assembly, as the cantor or the choir recount the faithfulness and love of God to His people by so many acts of divine mercy and rescue, answered by the people of the congregation: *O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!* These very words are often used in Orthodox Christian worship as a communion hymn while the faithful receive the Precious Body and Blood of the Savior in the one true Service of Thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist.

Thanksgiving in the Christian understanding has very little to do with the rituals that most Americans conduct on their national day of Thanksgiving. What began as a heartfelt prayer service on the part of a small group of pilgrims seeking religious refuge in a new land has degenerated into a time of self-indulgence, gluttony and entertainment. While millions go hungry in poorer places here in our country and in so many other countries as well, we will emulate the Pharisee and give thanks for the benefits we have while others like the Publican languish.

Thanksgiving as a foundation of the Christian life signifies a number of very important and very basic things. **First, it signifies dependency on God.** Only one who is dependent on the Lord can be truly thankful, for that one looks to the Lord for all things: sustenance, mercy, forgiveness, life itself, and of course salvation. If we are dependent upon God for our salvation, knowing that we cannot achieve righteousness on our own but only through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, then and only then can we be truly thankful. **Second, our very dependency on God will lead us to share.** Seeing others who have nothing, we who are dependent on the Lord ourselves will not be able to be at peace until we have helped those who have little of the good things that we would have otherwise taken for granted. Thanksgiving to God signifies dependency on God, and a relationship of dependency on God, which we call **faith**, always bears the fruit of **love**. The pure love of charity comes from those who trust in the Lord; only with our hearts resting in Him will streams of living water flow from us in acts of mercy and love.

Thanksgiving is so basic to the Christian that from the very beginning we have called the Holy Supper itself by the word for Thanksgiving, **Eucharist**. Our Lord set the very example when he offered the bread and wine of the Last Supper to the Father in that sacrifice of Thanksgiving that demonstrated the purity of His own dependence on the Father and that bore immeasurable fruits of love and mercy for the life of the world.

Brothers and Sisters, let us recall these truths as we gather with our families tomorrow. Let our gatherings not overshadow our remembrance of the poor, the needy, the outsider at our gates or those whom society disdains. And let us remember that our true Thanksgiving gathering is not tomorrow, but each and every Sunday at the Meal of Thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist; for truly each of us, who would be outsiders ourselves through sin, have been invited to the very meal of heaven. Let us cling to Him in the dependency of faith, and may each of us bear fruits of love, kindness, mercy and generosity to all in need.

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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