



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

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### *The Holy Forefathers* Week of December 28, 2014

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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

As the western Christian world celebrates Christmas, we in the Orthodox Church likewise draw near to the time when we celebrate the supreme mystery of God emptying Himself into the flesh and blood of our humanity, the Word made flesh, the Incarnation and birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Accordingly, this coming Sunday, the second Sunday before Christmas, is the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers in our Orthodox tradition. I have copied the Synaxarion of the day for you here:

#### ***Synaxarion for this Sunday, the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers***

*On this Sunday, in preparation of the Nativity of our Lord, we remember the Patriarch Abraham and his lineage, ancestors of Christ. The story of Abraham and his faithfulness should be read in the Book of Genesis.*

*"Through the connection of the holy Ancestors and Patriarchs, Our Saviour Jesus Christ is Himself also, in a way, the fruit of the faith of Abraham. So, when God makes his voice known to each of us while we are still in the strange land of the passions and worldly vanities, we must like Abraham unhesitatingly leave all that is ours, and follow the divine calling with faith until we*

*reach the Promised Land where, in our turn, we shall be able to give birth spiritually to Christ For, planted in us by faith and Baptism, He has to grow in us through the virtues so as to shine in the light of contemplation. We descendants of Abraham, 'children of the promise' as Isaac was, having become 'sons of God' through the gift of the Holy Spirit, out therefore to see Christ form in us... Let us then for our part become forebears of Christ and continue steadfast in the faith, so that we may keep the feast of his Nativity, saying: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Synaxarion)*

Let each one of us walk in the steps of the Holy Forefather Abraham, trusting in the promise of our Lord that our sins are forgiven and living as did he in the faith that is reckoned as righteousness. Let us also not criticize or disdain those in western Christian traditions who celebrate the feast earlier than do we. We place our disagreements aside and respect those who honor the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ for the sake of the honor shown to Him. We do not respect the actions of those who have turned this sacred time into a festival of greed; but we DO respect the actions of those who celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. As we gather with our western Christian family and friends we should hold ourselves back in the spirit of our fast to be sure, but we do so in ways that do not draw attention to our actions, so as to not pretend in their presence we are in some sense "better" than they, for we are not. For the sake of the love and respect shown to the Child of Bethlehem, we love and respect those who celebrate that Feast on Thursday, albeit thirteen days earlier than do we.

Brothers and Sisters: Walk in the steps of Abraham this week and focus on his example, turning away from sin and trusting in the love and mercy of God, Who gives entirely of Himself to us. Remember that the Child of Bethlehem, is the Man of the Cross, the Risen and Victorious Lord, whose mercy and love for mankind are truly ineffable and without limit. May our faith in Him be reckoned unto us all as righteousness indeed!

**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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