



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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The Samaritan Woman Week of May 10, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

[4] He had to pass through Samaria. [5] So he came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. [6] Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. [7] There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

These few verses from the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John are a part of the story we heard in our Gospel lesson last Sunday, the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (Photini, Svetlana, Clara, Fiona as she is called in various cultures). Samaria was of course the area of Palestine where the descendants of those who had intermarried with the Assyrians lived. They had erected their own temple in ancient times, a temple that was not accepted as a valid place of worship by the pious Jews of Jerusalem. The Samaritans were considered impure by pious Jews; they were therefore despised and outcast by the people of Israel.

The Samaritan woman stands out even among the unrighteous Samaritans, however; even there she would have been considered chief among sinners. Having lived in sin with five men, she would have been considered a harlot, pure and simple. It was to this woman that Jesus makes his request, "Give me a drink."

The holy Fathers in their writings on this passage make much of the fact that it happened at the sixth hour (i.e., 12 noon), the very hour when Eve fell into sin through the guile of the serpent, and the very hour that the Lord would hang upon the Tree of Life on Great and Holy Friday. At that very hour Jesus asks the most sinful of women in a race of unrighteous, despised people for a drink of water. Rather than correcting her, chastising her or condemning her in her sin (which is surely what most of the faithful would be tempted to do), He first reveals His own need to the sinful woman and thereby opens the door to an exchange that reveals and allows grace to pour forth. He approaches a broken person from among a race of broken and despised people not from a position of superiority or righteous judgment, but from a position of gentleness and humility, first allowing Himself to be “one” with the person whom He alone can help.

There is much more about this story that can be said to be sure. But for the moment, Brothers and Sisters, think on this simple action of the Lord. If you would help those who are broken around you, take a lesson from the action of our Lord and Master. Do not approach those who are broken in sin from a position of judgment or condemnation. Approach them in humility. Open the door by allowing yourself to be one with them; allow yourself to be human with them, for truly it is the case that you are broken yourself, albeit in ways that may be different from those whom you would help. If our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is not broken or sinful in any way can do this with a woman like the Samaritan woman, should we not do likewise ourselves, who are far more like her in our own brokenness?

The encounter of our Lord with the Samaritan woman bore great fruit. She was led through His humility to repentance, and she became a blessing to her children and to many people of Samaria who were brought to Christ. This simple act of humility brought the Light of Life to so very many that day, the very hour of the day in which Eve fell, in which the Salvation of the World Himself hung upon the Tree of the Cross for the Salvation of the world. As He shows us so very clearly, we will help no one if we do not first humble ourselves before them!

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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