



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

The Rev. Fr. Elias Yelovich, Pastor

<http://EntranceMission.org>

St. Nicholas December 19 (6), 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

The truth of thy deeds hath revealed thee to thy flock as a canon of faith, an icon of meekness, and a teacher of abstinence; for this cause thou hast achieved the heights by humility, riches by poverty, O Father and Hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ God that our souls may be saved!

The Troparion of our Father among the Saints, Nicholas of Myra, whom we commemorate this weekend, describes a man who was devoted to the faith, who meekly led his flock in humility and purity, who sacrificed for the good of others and who achieved great riches through the poverty of his own self-sacrifice. This is truly a far cry from the popular image of Santa Claus, who in our time has become little more than a mythological representation of greed and consumption.

The real St. Nicholas was born in the fourth century in the pagan Roman Empire before the time of Constantine the Great. His parents were wealthy, pious Greek Christians, who reared Nicholas in the faith and who died while Nicholas was still young. After inheriting the wealth of his parents, Nicholas refused to accept it for himself. Like many other saints in the history of our Holy Faith, Nicholas heeded the call of our Lord to take all he had, sell it and give it to the poor. He did so, and then as in the days of old, devoted his life to following the Lord Jesus Christ. In time, Nicholas became Bishop of Myra in Lycia,

near his home in the Roman Empire on the southern coast of Turkey. Like many others, he was imprisoned for the faith by the Emperor Diocletian, who persecuted many Christians shortly before the reign of St. Constantine. After he was released St. Nicholas attended the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. He died on December 6, 343, was buried in his See in Myra of Lycia and subsequently moved to Bari, Italy. His relics produced a type by myrrh (oil) call "manna," which continues to this day and which is used for the anointing of the sick.

So many stories are told of St. Nicholas's acts of mercy and of the power of his intercessions, that they cannot be related in a brief description of his life. One of them, however, does illustrate the way in which he became the symbol of alms giving. While a Bishop in Myra, it is told that he helped a poor man who could not provide for his daughters. Knowing that the man would not accept an outright gift, he took some of his own money, wrapped it into a small packet and threw it through an open window in the shoes or stocking that were drying by a fire in the poor man's home. He thus saved the children of the poor man from being sold into slavery and became the very symbol of alms giving during this holy season which precedes our celebration of the Birth of the Savior.

I do not often write about the way in which we are able to help others in our little mission, but this year I give thanks to God for the gifts that have flowed through our little mission for the benefit of those in need. Our members have directly given warm winter clothing to over 35 boys and girls, who will receive their gifts through the Fairfield food pantry distribution today, the eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas; dozens of blankets have been hand-made and sewn for distribution via *Project Linus* to children in hospitals; gift cards have been purchased and given to a needy family in Emmitsburg, delivered today to be distributed by the guidance counselor at the local elementary school; Christmas gifts have been sent throughout the world via "Operation Christmas Shoebox" containing personal items, an icon and treats for children; food for over 35 families locally that we helped assemble will be distributed today in the pre-Christmas distribution. There is more that has been done, and there is much more that can still be done. There is such need! But this one time I share with you my joy over the anonymous gifts that have been given to be distributed in the spirit of St. Nicholas; and, in humility and sincerity I thank God for what you have given freely!

We are a small community, but what we bring and give freely is magnified a thousand times by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as it was when the young boy offered his simple gifts of 2 fish and 5 small loaves, magnified through the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ to feed the 5,000!

It is through us that the humble acts of mercy shown by the great saint, Nicholas of Myra, will live on. It is not too late. We still have time before the season has come and gone to distribute our offerings for the benefit of those in need. Brothers and Sisters, there is still much to be done!

Pray for us, St. Nicholas, that we become equal to you in mercy and self-giving to others, and that we are saved in the saving of others!

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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