



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>

What an Onion Teaches us about Salvation Week of February 26, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Once upon a time there was an old woman who had died and found herself in hell. She complained to Satan that her assignment to the netherworld was a mistake.

Satan told her, "You've been a greedy, selfish woman all your life. Surely, this is where you belong."

The woman thought a long time, trying to recollect some shred of altruism in her life. After several minutes she exclaimed, "Aha! I did a good deed once! I gave an onion to a beggar."

Satan replied, "Oh, yes. That is right. You pulled an onion out of the ground in your yard and handed it (bulb, stalk, and all) to a beggar at the fence."

At that very moment, God's hand descended into hell, holding the onion out for the woman to grasp. Holding onto the onion with both hands, the woman found herself miraculously being pulled up and out of hell.

As she rose, to the woman's horror, dozens of people began to grasp at her legs and ankles, and as they were pulled up along with her, yet more people grasped onto the lower-most people's own legs and ankles, until it seemed that the bowels of hell clung like an endless chain from a single woman's body and the onion to which she clung.

Though there was great weight tethered to the onion, the connection remained secure and God's hand continued to lift everyone up out of hell. Remarkably, the onion held; it did not fray.

More and more people who had previously been doomed for eternity found themselves slowly, miraculously, being raised from hell by way of the woman's firm grasp on the onion. There were soon thousands, and after several minutes millions of people hanging from the onion.

Yet the onion held fast.

Halfway to heaven, which is a long distance up from hell, the woman looked down at the vast human chain following her.

She was angry and resentful that these people -- who may have done even less good in their lives than herself -- should be so easily redeemed by virtue of simply clinging to her spindly old legs. She was also afraid, and so exclaimed in a great shout, "If all of you grab on to me like this, the onion will surely break and I will not get to heaven!"

So, resolving not to allow anyone to harm her chances for redemption, the woman began to kick and smash the people hanging from her legs and ankles and toes. One by one as she struck them they fell, with each loss of a handhold causing tens of thousands of people to plunge back into hell.

But with each kick -- though the physical load grew lighter -- the onion began to fray. And as the onion frayed, the woman, in her anger and haste, began to kick more ferociously still, thinking that it was the weight of hell's denizens -- and not her anger and selfishness -- that tore at the onion.

She kicked until but one person remained clinging to her left big toe, with yet another endless chain of people dangling from him. Millions of people hung from that precious, single toe. Still, the onion held though it was severely frayed. But the woman couldn't bear the risk of losing her only chance to join God in heaven, so she kicked at the last remaining person; and as the person lost his grip, the onion snapped, and the selfish old woman -- from a great height, having made it almost all the way to heaven -- fell back into hell.

Dostoevsky, Feodor. "The Parable of the Onion." *The Brothers Karamasov*. Web. 22 Feb. 2017. URL:

<http://kundaliniandcelltowers.com/parable-of-the-onion.html>

On the Sunday of the Last Judgment a few days ago we heard the final parable of our Lord recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the Parable of the Last Judgment. We hear the parable each year as we approach the Great Fast, and yet I wonder how many of us truly "hear" its profound message. The

substance of our judgment will be the way in which we have or have not shown charity to others, for the Lord said, “Insofar as you did so the least of these my Brethren, you did it unto me.”

Many Christians that I have met throughout my life seem to misunderstand this basic principle. Many think only of their own wellbeing and focus entirely on the “faith” and “good works” that they struggle to maintain so that they will be saved on the Last Day. They forget that there is no salvation for one who is concerned only for oneself. The very word “salvation” denotes the health and wholeness of an individual who has taken on the “likeness” of God in such a way that he or she becomes like God in mercy, in charity, in concern and care for others, just as our Lord preached in the Parable of the Last Judgment.

Dostoevsky’s Parable of the Onion illustrates the same truth. The old woman in the parable fell back into the pit when she tried to free herself from the many people who sought to be saved with her. All she needed to do was to allow God to pull her up out of hell; and, if she had done so, hell itself would have been emptied. There is great truth in this. If we are concerned only for ourselves and resent or even forget the needs of others around us, then we too, Brothers and Sisters, will be denied that which God would freely give to all. The path to salvation begins with charity to others; the moment we forget about ourselves and turn to others around us who desire to be saved no less that do we – that is the moment we begin the path toward health and wholeness that is salvation.

This year, Brothers and Sisters, let us keep the Great Fast not only as a time of fasting, but more importantly as a time of almsgiving and charity and prayer for the least of our brethren; and, let us never forget that in so ministering to them, we minister to the Lord Himself.

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 West Main Street

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

<http://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084