



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>

On the Garden of the Heart Week of July 9, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

The new life you have just entered has often been likened to that of a gardener. The soil he tills he has received from God, as well as the seed and the sun's warmth and the rain and the power to grow. But the work is entrusted to him.... He must work without ceasing, be constantly prepared; but even so, the harvest ultimately depends wholly on the elements, that is, on God.

The Garden that we have undertaken to tend and watch over is the field of our own heart; the harvest is eternal life.

Colliander, Tito. *The Way of the Ascetics*. Chapter 3: "On the Garden of the Heart."

The heart, Brothers and Sisters, is the center of our being. It is within the heart that the grace of the Holy Spirit enters in. It is the eye of the heart, the *nous*, as the Holy Fathers call it, that is either clearly focused on Christ or selfishly on ourselves. St. Paul admonished us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." True, the cure has been given; we have been justified by grace! But as with any illness, we must take the medicine willingly; we must turn toward the One Who is ever turned toward us.

To till the garden of the heart, as Tito Colliander speaks of it, means to cast off the burden of sin, to turn the focus of the eye of our heart, the *nous*, away from our own selfish will to the One Who alone gives Life and Health and Salvation: Jesus Christ. It is to turn away from ourselves and our own incessant desires and to turn toward Him and the service he bids us to do to the least of His brethren. As the chapter summarizes:

... St. Isaac of Syria [tells us] to take pains to enter our own innermost chamber and we will see the chamber of heaven.... The heavenly chamber of which the saint speaks here is another name for eternal life. It is also called the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, or quite simply, Christ. To live in Christ is to live in eternal life.

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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