



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 Eradicating the Desire for Enjoyment Week of July 30, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

It is said that only a few find the narrow way that leads to life and that we must strive to enter by the narrow door. "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (Luke 13:24).

The explanation is to be found precisely in our unwillingness to persecute ourselves.... The heart remains quite as full of appetites: the roots are not pulled out and we wander around in the tanglewoods that have sprung up in the soil of our self-pity.

Make an onslaught on your self-pity, for it is the root of all ill that befalls you.... You are compassionate only for yourself and as a result your horizon closes in. Your love is bound up with yourself. Set it free and evil departs from you....

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, He said (Matthew 16:24), thereby leaving it to each person's own will – if any man "will" – and to each person's endeavor: let him deny "himself."

(Colliander, Tito. The Way of the Ascetics. Chapter 6: "On Eradicating the Desire for Enjoyment.")

In ancient Rome a cry of discontent often went up from the population to the emperor: "Give us bread and circuses!" The extent to which the emperor complied was often the determination of whether or not he could stay in power. Circuses, that is entertainments, were provided in the form of violent spectacles that took place in the colosseum, the architectural monument to cruelty and violence that still stands to this day. Many early Christian martyrs gave witness (the original meaning of the word "martyr") to the Lordship of Jesus Christ there as they were killed or torn apart by gladiators or wild animals before the public.

We do not engage in the sport of live killing for entertainment today – at least not yet. But the shows and films we produce are themselves filled with made-up fantasies of bloodlust and violence. Our population devours these modern "entertainments" of violence just as eagerly as the pagan population of ancient Rome did at the colosseum. Let's be honest: the more our population gets, the more it wants. The shows and films of our time seek every conceivable way to fill what is apparently an insatiable desire for entertainment.

Our desire for entertainment is symptomatic of our endless desire for enjoyment and personal comfort. We assume that it is our right to look after ourselves first and to be "righteously angry" about any form of injustice that comes against us personally. But what about the hundreds or thousands of millions of people throughout the world who are regularly treated with injustice and are forced by corrupt systems or governments or the cruelty of others to live in squalor? Do we even think about them? Do we pray for them? Do we support them or try in some way to defend them? Do we seek ways of justice for them? What about our neighbor in need?

We cannot be the people whom Christ calls to be His Body in the world until we do as He first says to us, that is, until we *deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him*. This means many things to be sure, but at a very basic level it means to fight in spiritual warfare at all times to turn away from our own self-will, our own desire to find satisfaction and comfort for ourselves. It means to turn away from ourselves to the Lord and to rely on Him in faith, and to bear the fruit of that faith, the love that reaches out to our neighbor in need. Faith without works of love for others is something less than faith; it is, as St. James clearly states in his epistle, dead.

Thus, this chapter, "On Eradicating the Desire for Enjoyment," is an important step in our spiritual journey along the path of salvation. Brothers and Sisters: remember that salvation, denotes spiritual health and wholeness. We cannot imagine that any of us are truly walking the path of salvation if we are seeking only or even primarily the fulfillment of our own selfish desires. Each of us must take up the cross of our Lord, deny ourselves, and walk the path that He walked – the path of self-giving, love and sacrifice for our neighbor in need. This is the sacred

vocation of us all and a basic principle in the “Way of the Ascetics;” may each of us heed the call of our Lord to follow His example in service to one another!

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