



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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On the Transfer of Love from the Self to Christ Week of August 13, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

If we move out of our self, whom do we encounter? Asks Bishop Theophan. He supplies the answer at once: We meet God and our neighbor. If is for this very reason that “denying oneself” is a stipulation, and chief one, for the person who seeks salvation in Christ: only so can the center of our being be moved from self to Christ, who is both God and our neighbor....

But for the person, who has found the narrow way “that leads to life,” that is, to God, there is only one conceivable hindrance, and that is his own, sinful will....

But do not be deceived. A Christian “ought himself also to walk even as He walked (1 John 2:6) who did not seek His own will (John 5:30), but was born on straw, fasted forty days, watched in prayer long nights through, healed the sick, drove out evil spirits, had no place to lay his head, and who finally let himself be spat upon, scourged and crucified.

Think how far you are from that. Ask yourself continually anew: Have I watched in prayer a single night? Have I fasted a single day? Have I driven out a single evil spirit? Have I

unresistingly let myself be insulted and beaten? Have I truly “crucified the flesh” (Galatians 5:24), and not sought my own will?

Keep all this freshly in mind....

(Colliander, Tito. The Way of the Ascetics. Chapter 7: “On the Transfer of Love from the Self to Christ.”)

The book of Genesis in the story of the Fall tells us that Satan tempted Adam and Eve with the promise that if they ate of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would become “like God Himself, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). As he always does, Satan twisted the truth in a lie. It was indeed God’s good pleasure that Adam and Eve like all humanity thereafter would grow until His likeness, becoming ever more like Him. But not in the knowledge of evil, only in the knowledge of good – like until Him in charity, mercy, forbearance, patience, kindness, self-giving, sacrifice and service. Satan’s twisted half-truth brought Adam and Eve not into likeness of God, but rather into making gods into themselves – gods of selfishness, anger, resentment, self-service, greed and endless desire for the fulfillment of pleasure. This reality is stated at the very beginning of our scriptures and is the foundational truth that eventually must be met with the great sacrificial self-giving of the Savior.

Thus, the Lord says, “Unless a man deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be my disciple.” When we deny ourselves, and give up our own selfish will to follow the will of the Master, then, as St. Theophan the Recluse said above, then we meet God and our neighbor. For only in the Christ can we love, for truly He has loved us.

The chapter “On the Transfer of Love from the Self to Christ” is therefore elemental in our desire to travel along the path of salvation. Brothers and Sisters, let each of us truly move out of ourselves; let each of us deny ourselves so as to meet God and our neighbor in need!

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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