



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 Miracle of the Harvest Week of October 29, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." (Luke 8:6-9)

At long last the oppressive heat of the summer appears to be over, and we have finally begun to experience the cooler weather of Autumn. With one night so far in the low thirties the weather forecasters have been saying that the growing season is now over. The harvest is here. What's left in the fields and on the trees must be picked, harvested and gleaned.

No one in their right minds would go out at this point in the year and plant a cash crop. The time for planting, with a few rare exceptions in this part of the world, is the Spring. The Autumn is for harvest and for clearing of the fields in preparation for the snows of Winter.

It is always at this time of year, when the weather reporters tell us that planting is now officially over, that I think of the lesson appointed for Sunday's Gospel, the Parable of the Sower. In that parable the

Lord describes the ancient method of planting, and in many respects it is just as dismal a prospect for success as it would be for us if we started to do our planting this time of year at the approach of Winter, when the weather is getting colder and seeds pretty much fail to germinate. The Lord says in His parable that the sower goes out into the fields, the lanes and byways and takes handfuls of seed, strewing it everywhere he can. Some falls on rock, some on hard beaten ground, some among the thorns and thistles and some on fertile soil. In His description it sounds like the harvest under those planting conditions would be meager indeed.

However, the exact opposite is true. In the circumstance of the sowing of *that* seed, the harvest is miraculous, yielding not a mere one- or two- or even tenfold (in other words, not merely 100 or 200 or 1000 percent) but a hundredfold (100 x 100 percent, or 100,000 percent). The harvest forecast by the Lord is truly a miraculous one.

Originally, it is easy to see that our Lord must have intended this Gospel, this Good Word, to be heard by those were sent out by Him in the world to preach the Word of God, in other words, His Holy Apostles. As they preached the Gospel that our Lord demonstrated, taught and directed them to preach, it must have seemed to them as if very few indeed were responding to it. Instead, they were targeted by the religious establishment of the Temple; priests, Pharisees, scribes and other high officials resented the Gospel brought by the Lord. They resented mercy shown to sinners and others in need, thinking them to be outside of the realm of God's love. They also resented the love and respect shown to the Lord by those who followed Him. Those religious officials reacted with hatred and persecution, eventually even witnessing falsely against Him and calling for His crucifixion. To those early Apostles, the conditions would certainly have seemed just about hopeless: some growth to be sure, but more failure than success.

It was to the Apostles that the Lord most likely first spoke the parable we will hear on Sunday. Conditions for planting may be terrible. The seed of the Word of God may fall hither and yon on barren soil, rocky paths, among the thorns and thistles of those who are interested in their own selfish pursuits with no apparent time for the One Who created and sustains them, and wills for them to be saved at the end. Terrible though it may seem to be, nevertheless, the Lord preaches in His parable that it will succeed. The Word will be heard; people will have their hearts broken by the Good News and indeed follow Him; the harvest will be miraculously abundant.

This, Brothers and Sisters, is the Word of this Sunday: a reminder that what we do in His Name is never done in vain. This is the promise given by the One Who never breaks His promises. To Him be all glory and Honor forever!

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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717-817-0084