



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Turmoil

Week of December 20, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

(John 16:33)

If there is a word that describes the events of recent weeks, it is the word tribulation. There is tribulation everywhere; tribulation, or turmoil is the substance of the news and of our experience in these pre-Christmas weeks.

Three areas come to mind:

First, the news. As a number of you have expressed to me, so I express the same to you. I cannot even watch or listen to the news without trepidation; if I watch at night, I cannot sleep; if I watch by day, I am sick to my stomach. There are lies everywhere; posturing, hypocrisy, judgmentalism at every turn. How does one negotiate the news about turmoil in our government, about accusations of one political party against the other? Here are some practical suggestions:

- First, recognize that you are above all and in all of Christ. The goal of our lives as Orthodox Christians is to submit to the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who will draw us ever nearer to the Lord Jesus; the goal is for Him to dwell within us, so that we may be transformed and become Christ to our neighbor in need.
- Second, the world and its political systems and parties cannot save. Only Christ can save. Both political parties in our country are defective, because neither party ascribes to the goal of reflecting Christ and accomplishing His will . We cannot be comfortable in either party.
 - Regarding the Democrats:
 - We cannot accept abortion on demand. Abortion quite simply is wholesale murder.
 - We cannot accept the pathetic nonsense of transgenderism. God created us male and female. We are male and female by God’s own creative design. We cannot and must not change who He made us.
 - We cannot accept marriage of lesbian to lesbian, gay homosexual to homosexual. That is an appalling sin, a willful digression of God’s own revealed will in the order of creation.
 - Regarding the Republicans:
 - We cannot accept wholesale corporate and individual greed, leading to the withholding of funds from social programs that would benefit our neighbor in need.
 - We cannot accept cruelty at our borders in any form, lack of charity to our immigrant families who come seeking liberation from violence in their homelands.
 - We cannot accept lack of limitations on gun control. The violence in our streets is appalling. People in our streets have learned to settle their differences with weapons. There should be legal limitations on the possession of lethal weapons.
 - **So where do we belong?** We belong in neither political party. We belong to Christ and must seek to grow in His freely given Grace, the Grace of His own self-giving. We must call a “lie” a “lie,” we must realize that there is no hope in the false promises of any political leader; we must vote our conscience, but with no faith in any worldly leader from any political party in any earthly government. Our trust, our hope and our faith must be only in Jesus Christ.

Second, turmoil by natural disasters. The world itself, the so-called natural order, is in turmoil because of the collective sin of mankind since the fall of Adam. Where there is turmoil, we must reach out the same helping hand as the Good Samaritan offered the man bleeding at the side of the road in our Lord’s parable gave. You have all heard the news of the terrible earthquakes that have come upon the people of the Philippines. Vladyka John in his visit last week reminded us of the many priests, parishioners and parishes we have in our Metropolia there. Quite a number of them have been afflicted by the earthquakes. Churches have been ruined, homes destroyed. The people are living in many cases in tents and will be living in tents during the upcoming holiday season. We need to respond with aide. I am calling for a parish wide effort to collect funds for the people there. Please make your donation to our Brothers and Sisters in the parishes of our Metropolia in the Philippines. How? Over and above your tithe to our parish, bring a check, a donation to our parish, earmarked for the churches and people who

have suffered in the earthquakes. Take some money out of your budget of Christmas gifts, and give generously. I will remit to funds there as directed by our Metropolitan.

Third, turmoil in daily life. Our attitude as disciples of the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ in this Holy Season should be characterized by faith, love and peace. Inner peace. Every day as I travel to work or even to downtown Gettysburg to run errands I am beset by impatient drivers who tailgate, pass me in no passing zones, beep at me for driving the speed limit, and quite honestly wish me ill. When that happens to you, be at peace, and understand the turmoil people feel at this time of year. Schedules are disrupted, personal memories afflict them, self-absorption reigns. People have replaced the sacred nature of the season with an overwhelming desire to acquire, to receive, to celebrate their own comfort. This is of course the character of our entire society as it moves every farther from the Church and the call to submit to the Will of God. Recognize this; pray for the conversion of the people who live in the world and are of the world; be patient and at peace. For us, the season is sacred, the remembrance of the self-giving of God, who came in the flesh for the salvation of the world. That Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, bids us to care and to pray precisely for those who wish us ill and who would call for the crucifixion of the One Who is their and our only hope. This season, Brothers and Sisters, is the season of hope, of prayer, of faith in the Lord, of love and of inner peace. And remember the wisdom and teaching of our beloved Saint Seraphim of Sarov: one man of peace become the means of salvation for a thousand. Soon we will gather to sing, Christ is born! This is what should inspire us as the rest of the world around us descends into turmoil and tribulation.

Be of good cheer, said our Lord! For I have overcome the world!

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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