



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Wisdom and Understanding, Tempered by Faith, Enlivened by Love
Week of March 22, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

O Holy God, who restest in the holy place, who art hymned by the seraphim with the thrice-holy cry and glorified by the cherubim and worshipped by every heavenly power, who out of nothingness hast brought all things into being, who hast created man according to thine image and likeness and hast adorned him with thine every gift; who givest to him that askest wisdom and understanding (The Divine Liturgy)

Today Matushka and I took our first trip out to the local grocery store before dawn. There we were at the 6 AM hour with the rest of the aging, or I guess I need to say plainly, elderly population to pick up this or that thing that we needed. The people we saw were diverse. Some were clearly frightened. A very elderly frail man hovered with a mask over his face; a couple in their eighties furtively rushed through the aisles hardly daring to look up or to speak. On the other hand, a few older men gathered in a circle clearly oblivious to the dangers of their lack of social distancing, lamenting the loss of their weekly social gathering at a local restaurant. Some people were frightened, others disdainful of the danger. It was a diverse group that we saw as we picked up our few supplies, representative, I think, of the population at large.

Each week the priest prays the prayer of the Trisagion Hymn while the congregation sings the Trisagion. I have always been struck by the phrase in that prayer in which the priest silently acknowledges that the Thrice Holy One, the Holy Trinity, grants “wisdom and understanding” to those who ask. It has stood out to me ever since I was ordained to the priesthood and prayed the prayer during the singing of the Trisagion. I regularly pray for the bestowal of those qualities which I do not have within myself apart from what God deigns to give me.

Wisdom and understanding are two vital qualities that God is willing to give. We need to ask Him during this time of crisis. We need wisdom to discern what is important; we need understanding to know the truth about what is happening. Among the people we saw at the grocery store early this morning, I think a number of them were simply confused. I must say that I cannot blame them. The truth of what is happening and what should be done to mitigate the crisis has been difficult to come by. They, like all of us, need to understand the seriousness of the threat and take adequate precautions; they, like all of us, need wisdom to know how to proceed for the best way to deal with the serious threat. Each of us must take into account the dangers, not only to ourselves, but to others, if we fail to apply wisdom to that which we must understand, how very much more dangerous the pandemic will be to so many.

More than wisdom and understanding, however, is the need for us to meet the threat with love. This sounds like a cliché, but it is not. Love, Brothers and Sisters, is the fruit of faith. It flows freely from the soul that is united to Jesus Christ. The extent to which the soul receives Him in the heart, to that extent is the heart the font of love, for “God is love.” Thus, wisdom and understanding must be tempered by faith and enlivened by love. Thus, we proceed in our actions in such a way that we give the welfare of others the same attention and priority as we give the welfare of ourselves.

The way in which we move forward during this crisis at Entrance Mission will be the way of wisdom and understanding, tempered by our faith in the One Lord Jesus Christ, enlivened by love.

Wisdom and understanding; faith active in love. These are the qualities we will ask God to give us during this time of crisis.

In Christ our true God,

Fr. Elias

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