



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Masks and Slavery to One Another Week of April 8, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

"... but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10: 44-45)

Much of the activity at our home these days centers around masks. Of course, we have our regular work to do: lectures to prepare, students to advise, grandchildren to watch, meals to prepare, prayers to be said at the appointed times – three times a day for those suffering from the coronavirus. But most of Matushka's time is spent cutting and sewing. Masks. She has sent them to relatives and now is making them for the cancer survivors at UPMC in Pittsburgh where our daughter receives her regular chemo treatments. The metastatic breast cancer patients there have begged her for them. A template for the masks is available from many sources. The one Matushka uses comes from NYC, where three layers of dense material are put together with a pocket for the insertion of a Number 4 coffee filter. This does not filter out as many viruses as the N95 masks used by health care workers, but it prevents a large amount of viruses from being spread by the person who wears the mask. That's right: the mask does not protect the wearer, but others who might be infected by the wearer. To wear the mask is to protect others, not

yourself. To wear the mask is to do a work of charity for others. It is for the benefit of others. To wear the mask is to serve.

This is very clear. I went to the post office to mail a shipment of masks off to Pittsburgh yesterday. It was my only outing apart from church, where I go for the Divine Services to pray for the sick and the dying. When I got to the post office I was shocked to see the workers running around without masks or gloves. I said something to one of the clerks, who responded, "I'll take my chances." I responded with a very brief summary of what I wrote above, "The mask is not for your protection, but for ours. I wear the mask," I told the clerk, "not to protect myself from you, but to protect you from me as a potential carrier of the virus." The clerk was amazed; and, I wondered, where he had been hiding not to know this basic fact. Our daughter, a physician in NYC, told us this ages ago; and, last week the governor of our state appealed to us to wear the mask as a protection to others. The news from the medical community has been clear. The only way to account for the huge numbers of people infected with the deadly virus is to acknowledge that it can be spread by people who are carriers and who do not know they are carriers. Therefore, wear the mask to protect others. Keep your distance physically from others. That is the message.

This, Brothers and Sisters, is not rocket science. Jesus taught His disciples in Sunday's Gospel lesson recorded by St. Mark that it was to be our way to be servants of one another; actually, He used the word in Greek, "doulos," which means not "servant," but "slave." Slave. We are to be slaves of one another.

The final parable we heard prior to the beginning of Great Lent was that of the Last Judgment, in which He taught that the ultimate criterion of our judgment would be an examination of our servanthood, our slavery, to one another. Again, this is not rocket science. We stay away from communal gatherings, because we do not want to infect one another. We wear the mask in public, because we do not want to infect one another. We do what is inconvenient, because we do not want to infect one another; we do not want to hurt or harm one another in any way.

Some of you have seen things on that God disgusting source of arrogant and prideful social media, Facebook, that say otherwise. Heretics and false teachers of all sorts have advised their misguided flocks to forget the need to look out for others, to gather communally and to go about business as if there were no danger. Shame, shame, shame on them! Their actions and words are not of Christ! Our responsibility is to be servants of one another, and not to put others in danger by our prideful actions in service to ourselves. Our responsibility to be servants, to be slaves, as Christ is servant, slave, to us.

Wear the mask for the sake of others. Allow yourselves to be inconvenienced for the sake of others. Look out for the welfare of others. Let a foundational cornerstone of your existence be caring for the welfare of others. Teach this to your children. Stand for these principles before others who deny them. Be a martyr - a witness (which is what the word "martyr" means) before the self-serving multitudes of this present age. Do not allow yourself to be misled. Look out for one another; live for one another. For the sake of our Lord's self-giving service to you, do likewise to others. Remember Whom you are to emulate: The Lord Jesus Christ, and none other! He is One Who said, "... but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the

Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Brothers and Sisters in Christ: I adjure you by the Living God: Do likewise!

In Christ our true God,

Fr. Elias

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