



## 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>

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*Glad to see the Lord!*  
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**Christ is risen! Indeed He is Risen!**

**Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

After all these years of teaching as I prepare to retire I must sadly admit that many of my students have come to university with little desire to learn. It sounds odd to say, but it is true. Many come, egged on by expectations of culture or family to get themselves “degreed” so that they can go out and earn a comfortable living. To some extent his desire is certainly on the minds of all students to be sure, but for many of them it becomes the sole purpose of their time at the university. I have tried my best throughout the years, however, to urge them instead to see their time at university as the one time in their lives when they can seek true wisdom and find answers to ultimate questions, to seek the truth for its own sake.

I often find people in the Church who remind me of my typical students. They see Christianity as a means to an end, as a kind of practical eternal life insurance policy. They attend the services, follow the rules and rely on the “magic” that the priest is able to perform within the temple. Many years ago I had a man tell me that he trusted most in what the priest would do for him after he died, in other words, in the final prayers and absolution that the priest would

say in the typical funeral rites. I remarked to him without thinking, "Perhaps you should trust in God instead!"

Everything we do in rites, practices and the entire life of the Church, Brothers and Sisters, exists to draw us closer to the Lord. To draw close to the Lord is not a means to some sort of end, it is the end in itself. Christ is our life; Christ is our hope; Christ is the source of all that is true, and right and good. Eternal life without Christ is hell; but, our union with Him is bliss. As such, the beauty and hope of the Kingdom of Heaven is among us and with us and in us now, to the extent that we are united to Him.

Each year on the Sunday after Pascha I hear this message so very clearly. St. John in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of his Gospel (our Gospel lesson for Sunday) tells us that when Jesus unexpectedly appeared among the ten disciples gathered in fear behind locked doors that they were "glad when they saw the Lord." One of my most respected professors in seminary always pointed out to us what we can so easily overlook: "They were glad to see **the Lord!**" In other words, they were not merely happy to have their hopes in the perpetuation of their lives guaranteed, or to see the beginning of a world movement about to set out, or to feel some sense of accomplishment or justification in their discipleship; but, they were glad "to see the Lord." He was their hope; He was their fulfillment; He was their end; He was the fulfillment of their most ardent desires; He was the manifestation of everything that truly mattered.

The Church exists to bring us, to draw us, to the Truth. When we seek the Truth, Brothers and Sisters, we find ourselves face to face with the Lord. If we see our lives in the Church merely as some sort of divine insurance policy, we miss the entire point of our faith. It is the Lord Himself Who is the object of our hope! To know Him and to seek an ever more perfect union with Him is itself the end, the goal of our faith. He is the fulfillment of our most ardent desires. To be joined to Him is eternal Life and Salvation. To see Him alive and risen after His terrible suffering and death on the cross is the epitome of joy. To see Him and to be joined to Him is the fulfillment of all we could possibly want. Thus, the disciples, and later St. Thomas as well who was not originally present, were "glad to see the Lord." This is what must propel us as well. The Lord Himself is the fulfillment and goal of our lives. To be with Him and in Him and for Him is everything. This is the compelling message of our Gospel lesson on Sunday! One week after our celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead let us also be "glad to see the Lord," and let us go that further step with St. Thomas to confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who rose from the dead, "My Lord and my God!"

**Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!**

In Christ our true God,

Fr. Elias

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717-817-0084