



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>

All Saints June 14, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst! He is and every shall be!

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Peter 2:9)

The words of the Holy Apostle Peter spring to mind as we prepare to celebrate the First Sunday after Pentecost, the Sunday of All Saints. In the Holy Orthodox tradition we reserve the Sunday following the Great Feast of Pentecost for commemoration of all saints, i.e., those who have cooperated with the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit to such an extent that the light of God's own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, shone through their words and deeds in their own lifetimes. The Church has recognized many people throughout the ages who have shone with the light of Christ; those so recognized have been placed on the Calendar of Saints. I remember them every Sunday by placing a morsel of prosthora for each so commemorated on the diskos next to the Lamb, and by naming them individually during the Prayer of the Anaphora at the Divine Liturgy. Of course, there are many people whom that Church has not so recognized, who are

nevertheless recognized by God Himself. All who allow the Holy Spirit to dwell within their hearts and who allow the light of Christ to shine in their words and deeds are indeed properly speaking called saints. The word “saint” means “Holy One,” in other words, one who is united to Jesus Christ and made holy by Him. All of us are called to be saints in this true sense of the meaning of the word.

I am often troubled by the way in which many people approach the saints. I have seen people come to the saints throughout the course of my priesthood as if the saints were their own magical possession, their own genies in the bottle, so to speak. Such people come to the saints looking for something, and once they receive what they ask for or move on to other sources of help, they forget the saints. The saints, Brothers and Sisters, are not magicians, given to us merely for the fulfillment of our wants or desires, noble or desperate though those wants or desires might be. The saints are recognized by the Church precisely for our benefit as examples. It is their words and their actions that we are to emulate. We see in them the strength of faith that unites them to the Lord, even in times of martyrdom. We see in them the very qualities of God Himself: love, peace, patience, humility, joy, gentleness, mercy. When we read about the saints we see normal people like us who in the midst of their lives have chosen the one thing needful, the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. They hold before each and every one of us that possibility. As one of my confessors never forgot to tell me, “You too are called to be a saint!”

How is it even possible to contemplate the possibility of growing into such true and enduring sanctity? It is possible by holding tight to the actions and words of the Savior Jesus Christ! It is possible by seeking to do His will, to follow His teaching, to understand and accept His immeasurable love, shown to us in the Cross and in the victory of His resurrection. It is possible by praying for God’s Own Grace to guide us, to correct us and to enlighten us in our pilgrimage through life, to ever seek ways of becoming more and more like Him in thought, word and deed. This, Brothers and Sisters, is what we see in the saints. They are not our magicians or genies, but rather our true brothers and sisters who stand beside us as we work out our salvation, and who pray to that end for us without cease. This is how we must be for one another as well: “holy” and ever declaring “the wonderful deeds of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!”

Fr. Elias

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