



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>

There is No Fear in Love September 6, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also. (1 John 4:18-21)

If there was ever a passage of scripture from the New Testament that we should all memorize and imprint on our hearts, it is this one. It describes the two incompatible ways in which people throughout history have approached God: on the one hand, in fear of punishment; or, on the other hand, in love. The beloved disciple points out that only love casts out fear, and that we learn to love God, by knowing and experiencing His love for us. As such, through His love so freely given, we learn to love one another.

Obviously, the world would be a different place if all of us pondered, heeded and lived these words. There is no other passage I would like to have associated with my priesthood more than these. The way we bring people to God is the way of love, or we do not bring them at all.

As you know, many of us have been quite distressed by the tenor of remarks we have seen on that favorite instrument of Satan, the Internet. It is there that people thrust out their chests, swagger about, and throw their opinions around and against one another without discernment or care or regard. This is particularly true on sites such as Facebook and Twitter, where there is very little time spent actually listening or trying to understand what others say; instead, there is only one declaration and accusation and resentment after another, shot like cannonballs against others without regard for the love of the other, without regard for God, Who in the words of the Beloved Disciple, "is love."

I find myself hurt and troubled after even the most cursory visits to Social Media sites like Facebook, particularly when people claim to be representatives of God Most High. I see denunciations, judgments and even implicit condemnations of all sorts. It sickens and hurts me; I find myself wondering how those who represent themselves as disciples or apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ could ever engage in uncharitable behavior with no regard for the basic foundations of our faith. As such, I have removed myself from just about anyone whom I could "befriend" on such sites when I see judgmentalism and condemnation of any sort. It is just too hurtful.

As Orthodox Christians we are to be the people who practice the spiritual disciplines defined and demonstrated by our Lord's teaching and actions. We are to be the people who allow our minds to descend into our hearts, who understand the love of God so freely given to us, and who cherish that love with such simple receptivity of it and participation in it that our hearts overflow like living streams of water with love for one another. Ours is not an intellectual philosophy or theory; the Christian faith is not difficult to understand; it is a faith of participation in the One Who is love and Who gave Himself up for us in love so that we might become the kind of people who share and reflect it in our relationships with other. We will never bring people to the Lord Jesus Christ, unless we speak and act in the love which defines our relationship with Him. No one will come to Christ out of fear; they will come only if they are brought to the Lord of love in love. Jesus said that when He would be lifted up, He would draw all people until Himself. By this He refers to His own loving self-giving for the Life of the World upon the Sacred Tree of the Cross. We are drawn to Him in love only by realizing that His action on the Cross was the ultimate expression of love for us.

Let us, Brothers and Sister, remember this above all things. As the Beloved Disciple teaches: *Perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.*

Fr. Elias

Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 West Main Street

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

<http://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084