



## Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 W. Main Street  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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*Prayer and Love*  
October 18, 2020

**Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

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

*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6: 35-36)*

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (Matthew 5:44)*

On this coming Sunday, we hear a portion of our Lord's teaching from the Gospel of St. Luke. The Third Evangelist tells us that our Lord came down to a level place where He could be among the people. His teaching was particularly directed to His disciples in His sermon, and among other things, He teaches them to love their enemies and to be merciful to them, even as our Father in heaven is merciful to them. St. Matthew in his description of the same event records even more detail. He says that the Lord taught that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

It is the case, Brothers and Sisters, that we cannot practice love of our enemies without earnest, sincere and deep prayer for them. Many of us know this from experience. I have found that when I am troubled and mistreated by people who for some reason take a dislike to me and work against me that I can only come to love them as Christ teaches by praying for them. I know this from experience, and many times follow the Lord's command not so much because I know that it must be so, but because He commands it. In the practice of prayer for my enemies, love for them grows. This is the only way.

In a conversation I had with Vladyka John this week, he told me the story of how his Spiritual Father, Vladyka Theodore, demonstrated the power of prayer. He said that when Vladyka Theodore prayed, it was deep and intense; Vladyka John said that it was as if one were pulled by his prayer into the reality of the Kingdom. This, Vladyka John said, is how we should strive to pray – not with a multitude of empty words and phrases, but intensely, from the heart.

The way to love our enemies, Brothers and Sisters, is to do as our Lord teaches and as our Vladyka directs: to pray for them intensely from the heart; to ask the Lord with our entire being for their salvation and for every good thing according to the Will of the Lord. This, and only this, will lead us to fulfill the commandment of our Lord – to love our enemies and to be merciful to them even as our Father in heaven is merciful to us who are sinners. May the Holy Spirit guide each of us in the fulfillment of our Lord's command!

Fr. Elias

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