



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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Sowing by Example November 1, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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

A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold. (Luke 8: 5-8a)

It is perhaps in the parables that we come closest to the actual words of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The telling of parables was not invented by Jesus. Parables were a common method of illustrating clear and simple truths about the truth of God's intervention in human history to those who heard them. They were told by many Rabbis of that era. Typically, they were simple comparisons. It is when we stick to the simplest illustration of the parables without indulging in allegorical interpretation that we come closest to the actual teaching of our Lord.

The "Parable of the Sower and the Seed" which we will hear in our Gospel Lesson on Sunday is a perfect example. Clearly, our Lord was teaching His disciples about how they were to share the Good News of salvation to the multitudes. Proclaiming the Good News, He says, is like what happens when a sower goes out to sow some seed. Jesus reminds His disciples that a sower is indiscriminate in his sowing; he tosses the seed everywhere. Some goes here in fertile soil, some goes there in rocky, barren or rocky ground. It seems as if the harvest will be scant under those conditions; but, surprisingly, the harvest is anything but scant. It is plentiful beyond all expectation. The sown seed bears fruit, He says, not just a measly ten-fold (which would be ten times

what is sown), but a seemingly impossible hundred-fold (a hundred times what was sown, or to put it another way, 100 times 100 % of what was sown).

To the disciples this must have seemed not only highly improbable, but almost ridiculous in possibility. No seed is returned a hundred-fold in its outcome. It could only be possible by means of God's own miraculous intervention. In other words, the seemingly impossible task of reaching the multitudes around us with the proclamation of God's love, God's forgiveness, God's call to reconciliation will be blessed by the miracle of the Holy Spirit, even though it seems not only unlikely, but actually quite dismally impossible to expect any harvest in this faithless and godless time.

The question must be asked and answered, however, as to how we, the present-day disciples of the Lord Jesus, go about sowing. The vast majority of people around us are entirely concerned with their own well-being to the exclusion of the needs and concerns of those around them. God does not even enter into the reality of their consideration for most people. For those who do consider Him at all, however, He is typically seen as someone who is to be consulted only in times of extreme need. It never occurs to them that His revelations and His teachings are to be assiduously followed in light of God's intent to transform us into a new people according to His own divine image and likeness. How do we reach such people?

The only way, Brothers and Sisters, is by our actions, by our examples. We must be the embodiment of the one, true alternative to the selfishness, the truth-lessness and violence. To sow God's seed is always more a matter of actions rather than words. We can go stand on a soapbox in the middle of a busy intersection in NYC or Philadelphia; people would remember what they saw in such instances, but their lives would probably not be changed as they hurried by. However, if they see us acting in a way that shows charity, mercy and forgiveness to our enemies; if they witness us trusting in our One Lord, Jesus Christ, even in the midst of suffering and dying; if they witness us showing concern for others in this dreadful pandemic (by striving not to spread our germs to one another) – then they will be affected; they will remember.

To sow the seed of God's Word is to allow Christ to live within us, and to be merciful as He is merciful; to trust in Him in spite of our poverty of spirit, to be peacemakers and not to repay evil for evil, violence with violence or selfishness with more selfishness. It is to be Christ whenever and wherever we see those for whom He is and can be the only alternative – the alternative of forgiveness, mercy, truth and Life Eternal. To that end may each of us be sowers of the seed of God's own life-giving Word!

Fr. Elias

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