



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>

Thanksgiving November 29, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit ... hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil. (! Thessalonians 5: 16-22)

With these closing words of his first epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul summarizes the basic quality of the Christian disciple of the LORD Jesus Christ: THANKSGIVING. The word for thanksgiving in the original Greek of the New Testament is Eucharist. When we come together as the Church, we come together to give thanks to God for what He has given, for what He continues to give, and for what He will give to us eternally: the gift of Life, forgiveness and salvation.

Today, Brothers and Sisters, we should above all remember this basic posture, this basic attitude of our Christian life. We do not gather with others merely to eat and share fellowship. We gather to give thanks to God. Shame on us all if we forget!

Our national day of Thanksgiving is set aside for us to come before Him precisely to give thanks to God, and to offer back to Him what He freely gives. We enact this truth at every Divine Liturgy, a high point of which is the eucharistic anaphora, or offering: "Thine own of thine own, we offer unto Thee on behalf of all and for all". The priest holds aloft the Holy Gifts and on behalf of the entire congregation offers back to the LORD what He has given: bread and wine to be sure, but also our very lives in service and in love for Him and for one another in His name.

This year is a particularly difficult year for us. We are asked by the medical experts around us to pay particular attention to the well-being of others. We are asked to stay home, to limit our exposure to the deadly virus, which has infected our people like the black death itself. We are told that if we gather outside of our immediate families, we may well expect to be conducting funerals by Christmas.

I pray that our concern for one another will constrain us in our annual Thanksgiving Day plans to pay attention to the original purpose of this day rather than to leave our homes and travel for the mere purpose of food and drink. If any among us do leave our immediate families and unite on this day with our extended families and/or friends I ask you to please consider staying away from our Divine Services this weekend in an abundance of caution and care for others. It is the dreadful nature of the COVID virus to lie hidden, unknown to some without discernable symptoms; thus, it can be passed without anyone knowing that the person or persons so infected are even aware that they are sick. So please, I beseech you, heed the medical experts and stay home if at all possible; use the day not for mere food and drink, but as a day of true Thanksgiving to the LORD! If you do leave home and discern that there is actually no danger to others, then by all means come to receive Holy Communion around 11 AM on Sunday morning. I will turn none of the faithful away who come to receive the Holy Mysteries. But, we will limit our time together in the church itself, once again, out of an abundance of caution for the safety of others.

I wish you all a blessed day of THANKSGIVING to the LORD, our God! *Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit ... hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil.*

Fr. Elias

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