



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

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

The basic prayer of early Christianity is represented in the phrase: *Marantha. Come Lord Jesus!*

As the Church formed in the earliest days after Pentecost, the Lord's Apostles and Disciples faced persecution, disdain on the part of the prevailing cultures surrounding them, mocking, scorn, and disapproval from family, friends, acquaintances and virtually everyone with whom they lived and worked. Yet, they persisted. Few in number, at times locked behind closed doors for fear of the Jewish and Roman authorities, fearful of spies within their midst: they persevered. Many became witnesses to the Lordship of Jesus Christ through their own martyrdom. Many were rejected and cast aside, unable to move forward in their earthly jobs or careers. Yet, they persisted and boldly proclaimed their faith in the Lord. They knew He would return again and usher in the New Age of His Kingdom in all of its glory and majesty. They prayed, *Maranath. Come Lord, Jesus!*

What did these early Christians discern that others around them did not? What did they see or know or understand that the multitudes around them did not see or know or understand? This question is answered in the lesson we will hear in Sunday's Gospel lesson from the 18th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel:

As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. (Luke 18: 35-43)

The blind man in the miracle story from Luke would not have been able to pass a simple quiz on the content of Orthodox Christian doctrine. He would not have known anything of the creed, for it had not yet been written, or for that matter, even anticipated. He was simply a blind man with no ability to see with his physical eyes, with no hope of ever seeing, living a life of misery in the darkness of blindness, begging and having to be taken by the hand and led from one place to another, without even the benefit of a Seeing Eye Dog. He sat, begged and allowed others to come and go, to pass him by as he waited for a few coins to be thrown his way. Yet, when Jesus of Nazareth comes by, he cries out for mercy, for healing, for the creation of new eyes to see the world around him. Jesus answers his cry with the statement, "Your faith has made you well."

What is this faith that the Lord praises in the blind man? Apart from most of the multitude surrounding him the blind man was aware of his hopeless condition. Others would pass by, somehow refreshed or titillated with their encounter with the famous Rabbi, *Yeshua Bar Josef*. They would go home to their families, continue to live their lives as they had lived them before, some perhaps gradually "seeing" as they contemplated their meeting with Him. But the Blind Man was already aware of his great need for Him; there was simply no hope. He hears the approach of the One so famous, and He desperately cries out. He acknowledges his need for that which only God can give, and so he cries out to Him: "Son of David, Messiah of God, have mercy on me."

Back in my college days a new translation of the New Testament came out as I was taking my first courses in Greek. I remember it well. It was called, "Good News for Modern Man," and it was really more of a paraphrase than a translation. In general, I do not read paraphrases of the Bible; I prefer the literal translation of the Greek into English. But as I struggled to translate the Greek of the New Testament myself in class, I used that paraphrase to get some sense of what I was doing, and one phrase from the Beatitudes of our Lord stuck out. The first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," was translated in that paraphrased New Testament, "How blessed are those who know their need of God."

This has stuck in my mind ever since, and it is indeed demonstrated by the action of the Blind Man. What set him apart from the multitudes? The same thing that sets us who are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ apart from the multitudes in our time. We, like him, know our need of

God. We know that we cannot heal ourselves, that science and medicine cannot save us ultimately, and that only God can do that. This life, filled with injustice, inequity, hurt, violence, war, sickness, suffering, disappointment, the disdain of others who do not approve of who or what we are, the hopelessness of so very many people upon this earth – this life will end in death. And none of us can reverse the inevitability of it. Our hope, our only hope, lies in God, and like those early Christians, we too look to Him, to return and to usher in His Kingdom which will truly have no end. Like the Blind Man, we cry, “Son of David, have mercy on us! Come Lord Jesus! Maranatha!”

Faith, Saint Paul said in his letter to the Hebrews, is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen” (Hebrews 11:1). It is to know one’s need for God, to realize the hopelessness of life without Him, and turn to Him in simple supplication, *Lord Jesus Son of David, Messiah of God, help me! Have mercy on me! Come, Lord Jesus!* This is what each of us do every time we come to Him in the Divine Liturgy or in prayer. This, Brothers and Sisters, is faith: Oneness with the One Who alone can and will come and save us!

Fr. Elias

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