



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

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

“Because I Live, You Shall Live Also!”
May 1, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

“I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. (John 14:18-19)

On Thursday evening last week, a number of us gathered together to pray Matins of Great and Holy Friday. This particular service was the very first that I encountered when I went searching for an Orthodox experience back in 1986. I attended the service at a small church with only a handful of people, and I remember that the service went on so long and that there was so much incense in the little space that I could barely make it through three-quarters of it. But it created an indelible impression on me nevertheless, for never before had I experienced the Passion Narratives from all the Gospels read in one setting, and furthermore in a setting that was communal. There is a special quality about the Thursday evening service during Great and Holy Week. We hear everything from each of the four Gospels, and we hear it together. In many ways it is the foundational Service that is necessary for us to fully apprehend what happened on the first Pascha, when the women go to the tomb and find not a corpse, but the living, resurrected Lord.

The first of the twelve Gospel lessons on Thursday evening is the longest; it covers five chapters of the Gospel of John. Priests often say that once that lesson has been read, the corner has been turned and the fulfillment of the entire week is in sight. This is not only because this first lesson represents almost

half of the entire text to be read in the service, but because the narrative preserves the essence of the Christian hope. Jesus speaks to His disciples about what is going to take place, but more, about the meaning of what is going to happen. *"I will not leave you desolate,"* He says. *"I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also."*

"Because I live, you will live also." I wonder how the Holy Apostles with Him at the Last Supper could possibly have understood what He meant at the time. First, at the Last Supper at which He established the ongoing Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, He had shocked them by girding a towel and washing the dirt of the dusty desert climate off their feet. He, the Master, willingly took upon Himself the role of a servant, reminding them that they were to treat one another similarly, in service to one another, and they too were to put on the robe of humility in their community. Then, He takes the bread of their meal and says that henceforth, it is His Body; He takes the wine, as the Gospel says, "the fruit of the vine," and says that henceforth when they gather together in that communal meal, it is His Blood. He bids them to do this in "remembrance of Him," a phrase which in the original Greek means not "remembering," but "recreating," or "making present," a "symbol" in its original powerful meaning, the making present of that which it signifies or represents.

It was at such a communal gathering on the first Pascha that He came and stood among the ten disciples present, clearly discernible, clearly real, clearly present. Only Judas Iscariot who had hanged himself and Thomas were not there on that first gathering, when the Holy Apostles were still together behind locked doors. Then, eight days later, He came among them again. This time, Thomas was present. He too discerned the real presence of the Lord, and was forgiven for his doubt, allowed to probe the nail wounds of his hands and the wound of His side where the soldier had pieced Him with a lance. "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe," Jesus said. And we have gathered together ever since throughout the sad course of over two-thousand years as empires have wreaked violence upon one another and as they have risen and fallen. The one consistent hope that has united us together is the presence of the Living Lord among us and the real hope that His presence alone can give, that because He lives, we shall live also, as He we heard on Thursday evening of Great and Holy Week when the priest reads the first of the twelve Gospel lessons.

This hope, Brothers and Sisters, is what we are about in our little Entrance Mission. Kingdoms, empires, countries come and go. Violence persists, not only between nations, but in our very streets. People are born, and people die. But through all of it, there is the communal gathering of the faithful. The Lord Jesus comes to us just as really and truly as He came to the Holy Apostles on that first Pascha. And each time He comes, He reiterates that great promise of promises, that because He lives, we shall live also. Not life as mere existence, but Life as union with Him, to grow eternally in that union, from glory unto glory. This is our Paschal Hope, and we will hold tight to it amidst all circumstances until our final breath.

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Fr. Elias

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