



Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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As If
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Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

- Every so often a phrase comes to mind that fits perfectly with the theme of our faith as Orthodox Christians in light of this or that particular lesson from Holy Scripture
- The phrase that comes to mind today is one of only two words: “As if.”
- Let me explain:
- First: in light of our Gospel Lesson from Matthew.
 - Jesus heals two blind men. To do such a thing is nothing less than an act of creation. Re-creation, one might say, of that which was destroyed by life in a fallen world, a world in rebellion against the Creator
 - The other accounts of this or similar stories make it very clear. In one of them, the story from John’s Gospel, chapter 9, he makes mud from his spittle and the red clay of the earth in a stunning act of Creation, making, creating new eyes for the man to see.
 - But curiously in today’s account, he tells the blind man and those who witness the miracle to say nothing about it to anyone. In fact, the words of the Gospel specify clearly that he told them “sternly” to be quiet about it.
- Biblical scholars call the Lord’s reticence to be known as a “miracle worker” the Messianic Secret. Jesus wants those who see these signs of power and divine authority to be quiet about it, because He did not come as a miracle worker, a “magician” of sorts, but rather for a much greater purpose – to submit to death on a cross so that He could fill the darkness of our death with the power of His Divine Life
- The early Christians knew instinctively what we as Orthodox Christians profess: that the world will remain in a state of semi-darkness until the Lord returns and totally destroys the power of evil.
- In that day, everything, like the eyes of the blind man, will be made new. A new heaven and a new earth. We look forward to that in faith and in hope.

- But what is to happen until then? Are we merely to live hoping to somehow escape the violence and selfishness of the present era?
- No. God did not create us as one of my Orthodox teachers, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann used to say, to be either “ghosts” or “corpses.” He created us to live in a world free from sin, a world united to Him. We rebelled, but as we say in the prayer of the Anaphora every Sunday, but He will return again to raise the dead and usher in the fulfillment of His Kingdom
- But until then, we must live “AS IF” that had already happened. This is why St. Paul could say so clearly in the closing words of his magnum opus, the Book of Romans, that we must help one another, and do that which so many people consider impossible, “bear one another’s burdens.”
- In other words, we must live “as if” He had already returned. We must live “as if” the Kingdom of Heaven is present, all in all, in this life, now.
- Clearly, we all know, that we cannot build that Kingdom in this life unless everyone is joined freely, of their own free will, to Him.
- But we must live “as if” we could. We cover for and bear the sins of others. We refuse to limit our acts of empathy and mercy to this or that limitation. Sure, we know that providing medical care for the poor will raise our taxes. Obviously. But we are of Christ. And we live “as if” the future were present now, giving freely for the well being of others.
- Sure, we know about the 2nd amendment; so what? We are of Christ! Guns are dangerous. We oppose them in the hands of those who would wield them to hurt, because we live “as if” He had returned.
- Of course we oppose violence of any kind: war, disagreements, misuse of the freedom of others; love is like water; it always flows to the lowest point. We care for the weak and the vulnerable, infants, children, women who need help bearing their children; we do not condemn or judge, for we live “as if” the Lord had returned.
- This so-called in-between time is our time to shine. We pray for those in need; we reach out to those who have fallen; we bear their burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- We live and do and act and care for others “as if” the future were already present.
- Such a small phrase with such deep meaning.
- Remember it! Live and do and be light to those in darkness, hope to those in despair, peace to those who are violent, the one great alternative to those who are in darkness
- Live “as if” He has already returned!

Fr. Elias

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