



## 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>

## *The Purification of Creation* January 17, 2021

**Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**Christ is baptized! In the Jordan!**

*The whole of our earthly life, from birth to our last breath, in the end will look like one concise act. Its content and quality will be seen in a flash. Imagine a glass of the clearest crystal full of water. A glance will tell whether the water is clean or not. So will it be with us when we have crossed into another sphere.... (St. Sophrony. His Life is Mine. Chapter on Concerning Repentance and Spiritual Warfare.)*

When I first read these words of St. Sophrony, I realized that they would stay with me forever. The quality, purpose, intent, motivation, substance of our lives is seen by God clearly; a mere glance reveals all. Who among us can claim that He will see no impurity within us? Who among us dares to think that his or her life will be revealed as clear, as clear as an unpolluted glass of water? I am reminded of a science experiment we once conducted with one of our children. A glass of water with red dye is presented; a drop of some purifying agent, some substance like peroxide or bleach, is put into the dyed water; immediately it clears up and the water is pure again.

The Great Feast of our Lord's Baptism is now upon us. I smile to think of how many priests, theologians and bishops miss the point of it. So many of them debate the issue of why our Lord submitted to Holy Baptism when He is clearly without sin. The issue needs no debate; the Holy Tradition of our Orthodox faith understands and proclaims it clearly. The Lord submits to Holy Baptism not to be cleansed, but to cleanse. He allows the Holy Forerunner to baptize Him in the River Jordan, not to be purified by the action, but to purify. The Lord enters the water to make it pure, so that His purification of creation itself can flow through the rivers and streams even as they flow into the sea and throughout the world; He comes for baptism not for His sake, but for ours.

There is no way in which any of us will ever be able to claim to be whole, or pure or spiritually healthy without Him. Without the purification of His presence, His oneness with us, we will all be like the clouded or stained water described by St. Sophrony. One glance will reveal who and what we are and have been. But the presence of the Lord can, does and will purify us. Only if we submit to Him and allow Him into the chamber of our heart and follow the guidance of the Holy Forerunner to "decrease that He might increase," will any of us be healed, purified and made whole.

On Monday evening, Brothers and Sisters, I will call down the Holy Spirit on the water in that Great Blessing which we will once again celebrate for the Feast of the Holy Theophany. Christ does not need baptism, but we need Him! We need the purification of His Divine Presence to sanctify, to purify and to save us. Without Him, we can do nothing; without Him, a single glance will reveal the impurity within us. Only He can make clean that which we have soiled.

The Liturgy and Great Blessing will begin somewhat before 6:00 PM on Monday evening, January 18 (5), the Eve of Holy Theophany. The best time to come to receive the Holy Sacrament and to partake of the Holy Water will be between 7 and 7:30. God willing, I will see you all then!

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Fr. Elias

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717-817-0084