



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

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

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Pastor

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“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Myself”

April 4, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Myself.” (John 12:32)

Why? Why did the Lord have to die upon the cross? Why did He choose to do so, of His Own Free Will?

These questions remind me of a moving account I read in Soren Kierkegaard’s *Training in Christianity*. The Danish philosopher tells the story of how when he was very young his father sat him down and showed him a picture book of famous art works. The young Soren was no more than six or seven years old. He tells of how his father turned the pages of the book. On one page was a painting of a house, on another of a scene from nature, on another a still life of flowers and beautiful arrangements. Then the page was turned and on it was a painting of our Lord’s crucifixion. The young Soren looking at the painting with his young eyes was horrified. He hadn’t yet become numb to the reality of the Lord’s crucifixion that we as adults so easily take for granted. He, on the other hand, was horrified to the very depths of his soul. “Who would do such a thing,” he asked. “The man on the cross,” he said, “must have been a very wicked man, a

man who hurt and killed many people.”

The father replied gently, “No, Soren. He was a kind a gentle man, who healed many who were ill, who comforted the distressed, who taught people to be kind and gentle and loving to one another and even brought people back to life.” Kierkegaard recounts how he could hardly process that information. How could such a thing be done to one who was kind and gentle and loving? How could such a thing be done to One Who brought the dead back to life? This experience of perceiving the meaning of the cross with the eyes of a child led that same child when he was grown up to compose prayers of such beauty that they bring tears to our eyes:

O Lord Jesus Christ, many and various are the things to which a man may feel himself drawn, but one thing there is to which no man ever felt himself drawn in any way, that is, to suffering and humiliation. This we men think we ought to shun as far as possible, and in any case that we must be compelled to it. But Thou, our Savior and Redeemer, Thou who wast humbled yet without compulsion, and least of all compelled to that humiliation in the imitation of which man discovers his highest honor; ah, that the picture of Thee in Thy humiliation might be so vivid to us that we may feel ourselves drawn unto Thee in lowliness, unto Thee Who from on high wilt draw all unto Thyself!

As we approach the Third Sunday in Great Lent, the Sunday of the Adoration of the Holy Cross, perhaps we need to see the truth of the cross with the eyes of a child. The horror of the crucifixion was chosen and freely endured by our Lord to draw all men to Him. It is indeed the sacrifice of our God, the One True God, Who will never stop reaching out to us until we come to Him; it is indeed the limitless compassion of our God, Who takes the sin of the world upon Himself and crucifies it. But let us not forget what the young child Soren saw that day when he first beheld the image of our Lord’s crucifixion. It is in the very humiliation of the cross that the Glory of our God is shown most clearly and by which we are drawn to Him: Not in fear, but in love; for beholding the cross with eyes of a child alone leads us to understand and love the One Who would innocently bear for us what He chose to bear freely.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Myself.” (John 12:32)

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