



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

**306 W. Main Street
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See How God Loves You!
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

O women disciples, why do you mingle myrrh with your tears? The stone is gone; the tomb is empty. Behold, corruption destroyed by life! The seals witness that the guards of the godless have watched in vain. Mortal nature has been saved by the flesh of God. Hell is wailing. Go with joy and proclaim to the Apostles: "Christ has slain death as the first-born of the dead. He awaits you in Galilee!" (From the Pentecostarian for the Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women)

If there is one message that comes out of the pages of the New Testament with vibrant clarity it is the message that God loves us, each and every one of us. Every action, every word of our Lord was a demonstration of that message, and it is the key to the entire witness of the Life, Death, Resurrection and Future Return of our Lord. There was an ancient ritual in the Temple of Jerusalem. At the three most important feasts of the Jewish year, the priests would enter the Holy Place and bring out the table of gold from the inner sanctum upon which lay the 12 loaves of bread, known as the "Bread of the Presence" or in some translations, the "Bread of the Face of God." They would hold the table up for all to see and say with great dignity and strength,

“See how God loves you!”

See how God loves you! We often speak of duty and obedience, maintenance of the laws and rituals, adherence to the ancient traditions. But so many of us misunderstand. Our faith is not merely the faith of “do’s and don’ts.” Ours is the faith of Love Incarnate, love born in a stable, laid in a manger, demonstrated in the laying on of hands of healing, words of forgiveness, outreach to the rejected, life to the dead, promise of Life Eternal with the very One Who made us and Who sought each of us who were lost like a Good Shepherd, and eventually laid down His life in ultimate self-giving for the reclamation of His flock. This is the core of the message that so many misunderstand or ignore, many too self-consumed even to look beyond the fleeting moments of their own comfort to gaze upon the river of fire of God’s love.

The Myrrh-bearing women understood. They did not go to the tomb at dawn on Easter Sunday merely because it was the right thing to do, or because they had been ordered to go or because they were seeking acceptance and approval by God or by anyone else. They went, because they loved the Lord, and they went in that love, expecting to find only a dead body. They went out of love to anoint and prepare the physical remains of their Lord and Master for the eternity of a dark tomb. But they did not find a corpse to anoint. Instead, they were greeted by an angel from heaven and the core message of the Gospel that He had risen!

These women stand before us as witnesses of His resurrection and of much more. They stand as examples of what each of us may be, loving disciples of the Lord of Love. If we come to Christ for any reason less than our love for Him, we come unaware of the Truth. The Truth is that the One Who is Risen continues to reach out to us, to lay upon us hands of healing and life, to bind up our wounds, as the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah says, to accept us in our brokenness and in spite of our sin, to give Eternity as free gift. This love had entered the hearts of the Myrrhbearing women, and it was in awareness of Who He really is in His Divine Essence, the Essence of Love Incarnate, that they went to the tomb on that first Easter morning.

For that reason, we can only pray that that same love becomes such a part of our lives of discipleship that we, like them, look beyond the “do’s and the don’ts” into the very heart of our Holy Orthodox Christian Faith – that He is truly Love Incarnate, alive and among us, in the Church He founded on the great day of Pentecost soon to come. Like them, we follow, we obey, we seek to do His Will, not merely out of duty or out of fear, but always and only out of love for Him, the One Who loves us with the pure love of eternal self-giving. This is what the Holy Myrrhbearing Women show us.

Fr. Elias

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