



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

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

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Thou Shalt Not Tempt the Lord, Thy God!

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, `You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"
(Matthew 4:7)

When I was a boy, we had a family friend whose nickname was "Brit". I never met the woman who bore that inexplicable name, but my family would speak of her frequently. She belonged to a sect called the Christian Scientists. They believe among other things that one should never rely on medical doctors, medical counselors, or medical personnel of any sort for their ailments. One should instead rely only on prayer, the sect taught. Brit followed that teaching and died a horrible death in excruciating pain, because she did not allow herself to be treated in any fashion by the medical personnel who had the means to apply treatment and pain control. The saddest part of it, however, that she died thinking she was at fault for her illness, never realizing that the teachings of her sect had turned the whole concept of faith into precisely what it is not, a work intended to earn the approval of God.

Since I have been an Orthodox priest, I have encountered several other Orthodox priests and

Orthodox laity who have fallen unwillingly into this heresy. I personally believe that this is more the result of a serious misunderstanding on their parts concerning basic Christian doctrine; however, I might be mistaken; it might simply be stupidity. One priest I know quite well teaches that we should not get vaccinated against any potential illness, because, he says, it is a denial of our faith in God. Another says to his congregation that mental and emotional disorders are always the result of lack of faith or a weak prayer life. A bishop that we all know from our previous jurisdiction went so far as to say that it is impossible to pick up any germ or illness in church. Such blatant idiocy should not be tolerated in the Church of Jesus Christ, and I sincerely think that those who publicly teach such drivel should be corrected and brought to repentance or cast out if they persist in teaching the faithful such destructive nonsense!

In our Holy Orthodox Faith, we have a category of saints called the Holy Unmercenary Healers. Quite a few of the faithful I have encountered over the years misunderstand who they were and what they did. The Holy Unmercenary Healers applied the healing wisdom and arts of their time without taking payment. They did this as a service to the poor, following the Lord's command to minister to the "least of His brethren." This is why St. Panteleimon, for example, is usually depicted on his icon holding an open box of medicines and oils. He did not always work supernatural miracles in his healing. He typically healed by means of the medical science of his time. The point is he did so without accepting payment; he served the Lord by serving the "least of the brethren," the poor, who could not afford to pay him.

When we are hungry, we buy or grow food and eat it; we don't drop to our knees and say, "Lord, put the food into my mouth!" God is not our slave or our genie! We get the food and feed ourselves. When we fall and break a limb, we do not pray, "Lord, miraculously heal my broken bone – NOW!" No, we get an ambulance to the hospital for the bone to be set and healed. In all things, of course, we give thanks to the Lord God, Who is always the means by which we are healed through the activity of the doctors, nurses, technicians, counselors, and other helpers of our time. They are His hands, and He heals through them. We do not bypass simple common sense and disdain what they and we can do for ourselves; we do not "tempt the Lord our God!" We see to our needs to the extent that we can, and we seek out others, physicians, counselors, pharmacists, and other medical experts in the same way that those in need sought out the Holy Unmercenary Healers. Through them, the Lord heals us.

As I get older, I find myself less and less willing to "suffer fools." The power of our God is not the power of magic. God is not a genie subject to our whims and commands. We should not trifle with Him, and we should not "tempt Him." Our prayers as well as our actions should be for the welfare of others, not for the denial of basic common sense, God's love in service through the hands and actions of others in our time like the Holy Unmercenary Healers.

When Jesus was confronted by the devil in the wilderness, the evil one tempted Him to use His divine power as magic. The Lord replied, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord our God!" Remember this before you dare to follow the heresy of anyone who teaches otherwise. Every blessing, physical or spiritual, comes from the Hand of God Himself. But He deigns to open His Hand through the service of people like the farmers who grow the food we eat, the scientists who

discover the vaccines and anti-toxins, the physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists who use their learning to ease suffering, the nurses and practitioners who comfort, the pharmacists who discover and apply medicines, and of course the spiritual advisors who work to lead us all to trust in the One Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the source of all blessings. This is our faith; not the nonsense promulgated by anyone who denies the work of God in and through the many healers of our time!

Fr. Elias

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