



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

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

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Rector

<http://EntranceMission.org>

Me, Myself, and I
August 15, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me ... that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apol'los," or "I belong to Cephas," (I Corinthians 1: 10-12)

Ego Paulou; Ego Apollou; Ego Cephou; Ego <Name your person, party, church, priest, jurisdiction, whatever!> (I am for Paul; I am for Apollos; I am for Cephas; I am for whatever I want to be for!) Fill in the blank.

Me, Myself and I. Our Epistle lesson from the beginning of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians this coming Sunday is all about ***Me, Myself, and I***. This is what **I** think! This is **my** opinion about this or that! **My** choices are better than yours! **My** church is better than yours! **My** politics are better than yours! I am the spiritual son, the spiritual daughter of this or that

famous monk, elder, priest. **I, I, I.... my, my, my... me, me, me!**

It's often a good thing to go back to the original words in the original language of the scriptures. When one can do so, every so often something pops out. This is the case in our Epistle Lesson for Sunday from 1 Corinthians. St. Paul opens his letter to the congregation in wealthy, worldly, immoral Corinth with a scathing and blistering attack on the egocentricity of many of its congregational adherents. It was a difficult group of people to be sure. Corinth, a seaport city, was renowned in the ancient world for its licentious population. It had wealth, and a population of sailors and merchants that came to the city with money and the will to fulfill their insatiable sexual appetites. This was the context of the Christian congregation there. It's as if they had been plopped down on the main strip of Las Vegas, our own despicable sin city. St. Paul will go on in his letter to address immorality within the congregation later, but he opens his epistle with the more serious issue of "party spirit," divisions within the congregation.

It seems that in Corinth there were at least three divisive parties: those centered around the Apostle Apollos, apparently consisting of the intellectual elite who were interested in gnostic philosophy; those centered around the Apostle Peter, consisting of those interested in the ancient rules and regulations of their own Jewish roots; and, those centered around the Apostle Paul, consisting of the rest, the blue-collar majority who looked back to his formation of the congregation. St. Paul takes no sides, pointing out to them that the problem is not with the teaching of any of the apostles, but with the people's own egocentricity. By standing "for" and "against" they are merely asserting their own selfishness, the primacy of their own wills, which they pit against the wills of other members of their congregation. St. Paul contrasts their self-serving intents with that of the image and message of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, a "scandal" and "foolishness" (in Greek, "moronic") to those who are concerned with themselves and their own self-serving positions.

The Cross of Jesus Christ reveals the true Glory of God, which consists not in the blinding glory of this or that wondrous theophany, but rather in the self-giving of the Only One Who cares for and grants Life to the world - Abundant Life as St. John would call it. The Cross is the revelation that the Glory of God lies in His very humiliation, the manifestation of His humility. It is why our Lord could say to the "beautiful people," the "Greeks," who come seeking after Him in the twelfth chapter of the Fourth Gospel, that when He is lifted up upon the Cross, He would "draw all men unto Himself." No one will ever become a disciple, a believer, on the basis of the miraculous and magical supernatural manifestations of God in this world; one becomes a disciple when one realizes the humility of God, the length to which He goes to save us. This is one of the clearest teachings of St. Silouan the Athonite, that God in His inmost nature is "humble of heart."

Brothers and Sisters: If we would follow Christ, then we must strive to be like Christ. We must set aside the insatiable desires of our own sinful wills and turn aside from "**Me, Myself, and I**" to Him. We must put away the will that seeks always to be better than, righter than, higher than; and we must turn in humility to the One Who is truly the "King of Glory" in His own humility, the humility of the Cross. This is what St. Paul is saying to his own troubled

congregation in Corinth, and it is a message that each of us should take to heart in our own discipleship.

Fr. Elias

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