



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg, MD
21727

The Rev. Fr. Elias Yelovich, Rector

<http://EntranceMission.org>

Our Profound Respect for the Mother of God in our Family, the Church August 26, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

In giving birth thou didst keep thy virginity, and in thy repose thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos. For thou art the Mother of Life, and thou hast passed over into Life. And through thine intercessions, from death thou dost redeem our souls.

When my brother and I were growing up at home in Bethlehem, PA we were part of a family that had only three major, unspoken, and clear principles. God came first, then family and then education, in that order. My parents were both first generation Eastern European immigrants, and they brought these clear principles with them when they settled in the Lehigh Valley to find work in the vast steel mills that were once there. We never missed church, unless we were sick; we took part in every family event from the time we were infants; we were taught to respect our elders, our clergy and our teachers without reserve. We attended dinners, weddings, funerals together from childhood on. Birth, marriage, death were all parts of the human experience, unavoidable, sometimes joyful, sometimes sad, sometimes to be supported, other times to support. There was none of the present-day nonsense of trying to “protect” us from the realities of life. My parents took their faith with them in whatever circumstance life brought, and by example, they taught us to do the same. This profound respect for family, clergy and educators was the fruit of their profound respect for God, the One Who alone was their steadfast hope in life and in death, the One Who had given them their elders, their clergy and their teachers. We often forget that the Church is much, much more than an institution. The Church is family. The head, as St. Paul explained on more than one occasion, is our Lord Jesus Christ. To know Him is to know the Father. To come to Him is to come through the self-giving grace of the All-Holy Spirit. In our family, the Church, He gives us leaders to oversee, to bless, to mediate, to guide: our Metropolitan, our Bishop and the clergy they bless to

serve in the Lord's Name within the congregations so formed.

This past weekend the Subdeacon, our catechumen and I were truly blessed to participate in the central event of our Church family, the Divine Liturgy, presided over by our Metropolitan Alexy and our Bishop Nicholas. Within that Liturgy we all experienced what the love of family centered and rooted in God is like. Our Hierarchs directed us and helped us to carry out our roles as priest and subdeacon. It was such a joy to meet our Metropolitan and to serve with him in the Liturgy and to speak with him thereafter! A visiting chanter from our parish in Toronto chanted the Megalynarion to the Theotokos with such profound respect and love, that tears came to our eyes. She was able by means of her skill and the musical tradition of her Middle Eastern Christian heritage to transport us back to the first century, the first community of our Church family, and to express what we so easily overlook: the *profound respect* that the early Christians had for the Mother of God, the Mother of Life.

We western Christian converts often miss the most important point of that reality. We have this or that explanation about who she is, sometimes couched in heavy theological explanations that tickle our brains but miss our hearts. The truth is that the early Christian community, our first Christian ancestors, did not need complex, rational explanations to understand who she is. She is the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of Him Who gave Himself for the Life of the World, Who rose again after the third day in the tomb to bestow Life on that very creation which had turned against Him and had, by means of false testimony, brought Him, albeit willingly, to the cross. They loved her because they Loved Him. And as such, their primary attitude when they spoke of her, was one of profound respect, respect that has no peer, no equal to any other person in this life. It is a poor analogy, but it is similar in my mind to the profound respect my brother and I had when the names of our Godparents were mentioned at home: *Botra* and *Boter*, we called them. To even utter their titles was for us to bow our heads, for they were like our parents; they had brought us to the fount of Holy Baptism and cared for us when our parents were ill or away.

This, Brothers and Sisters, is the way we should approach the Mother of God. Forget the rational explanations, the philosophical theories we have from our western roots. Instead, we should approach her, speak of her, speak to her, with that profound respect that comes from the heart, not the mind, for she is truly the Mother of Life, the one who intercedes for us and with us out of the love of her Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

On Friday evening we will come together on the Eve of her Dormition, her falling asleep, for the Divine Liturgy at 6 PM in our little church home. We will come with profound respect as the Holy Apostles did so long ago. God willing, I will see you all there when we will sing together the wonderful Troparion of her Dormition: *In giving birth thou didst keep thy virginity, and in thy repose thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos. For thou art the Mother of Life, and thou hast passed over into Life. And through thine intercessions, from death thou dost redeem our souls.*

Fr. Elias

Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple 306 West

Main Street

Emmitsburg, MD 21727 <https://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084