



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

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

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Now Is the Son of Man Glorified!
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life ... Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:23-25; 31-32)

St. John says that Jesus spoke these words on Palm Sunday shortly after He entered the Holy City. A number of Hellenized Jews had come to Philip, the one disciple with a clear Greek name, asking for Jesus. Like all of us, they came with their own preconceptions, their own experiences in a world that was unjust and violent. The Greeks had conquered the known world and then in time had suffered the same fate as those they had conquered; they in turn had been conquered by the Romans. The Roman Empire ruled the world at that time, and it imposed on the people, Jew and Gentile alike, its own version of justice and morality. The Greeks who came to Jesus knew what the world was like. It was a place of inequity, cruelty and violence. There were those who subjected others, and there were those who were subjected by others. And certainly, among their other preconceptions, these Greeks would have expected this Jesus, about Whom they had heard so much, to bring justice. If what they had heard about Him were true, then He could set things right; He could punish the conqueror, set free the people and

see that vengeance was carried out in fairness and equity.

As such, they must have been perplexed by the words of this Gospel lesson for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. How could they have possibly understood it prior to seeing it carried out with their own eyes? To be lifted up upon the Cross would have been an image of utter horror to them, for no other method of capital punishment would ever be as cruel and humiliating as crucifixion. Thus, for Jesus to speak of his crucifixion as the supreme moment of His glorification, would have been something they could not have understood until long after it had been accomplished.

We approach Him the same way. We know the doctrines of the Church: Jesus suffered on the Cross, voluntarily, as a sacrifice made in place of the one that should be made by each of us. The just punishment of sinners is taken on by the Judge of all mankind. He pronounces the verdict: "Guilty as charged!" And then, He unexpectedly turns about to place Himself in the fetters of justice and suffers the cruel fate of death in our place.

These things we know, at least with our minds. But remember that it is a central teaching of our Holy Orthodox Faith that we must allow our minds to descend into our hearts. We must strive to see things not so much with rational intelligence but with the center of our humanity, our hearts, in which God has placed His Own Divine Image. Thus, for Jesus to say what He said in this Gospel is to make clear that in Him, in the very Godhead Itself, the nature of justice is not violence, punishment or vengeance, but mercy, self-giving, and love for the sake of the other. Only with this realization, the essence of the Gospel, can we be drawn to Him in that union which is propelled and defined by love. Thus, Jesus says to those Greeks who come seeing some form of justice, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all unto myself."

The Cross, Brothers and Sisters, the Exaltation of which we celebrate this Sunday, is the nexus, the meeting place of man with God. The self-giving of our Beloved Savior, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is the Revelation that God in His Essence is indeed "love," as St. John would go on in his epistles to describe Him. Gone are the standards of the world: might making right, violence solving disagreements, justice of punishment and vengeance. In their place is the Kingdom of God, in which all is defined and carried out by Love. Thus, St. Augustine of blessed memory, could say, "Love God, and do as you please!" For the Cross is the means by which we are drawn into that relationship of love with Him; and when we love and trust Him, actions of love will flow from us to our neighbor like those "streams of living water" that He described to the woman at the well.

We will come together his Sunday to bow before the sign and image of the Cross, the true glorification of the God of love, Who gave Himself for the Life of the World. Let us come with gratitude and thanksgiving, and above all, with love for Him, Who has shown us the one alternative to the violence of this world: the way of self-giving love.

Fr. Elias

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