



**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>

He Who Loves His Life in this World Loses It
October 2, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

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.

The lessons for the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross continue the theme of that great feast. Once again, remember that Jesus was speaking to a number of Greeks who came asking about Him. The designation of those who came as “Greeks” meant that they were from a culture that had different presuppositions about life than that of the Semitic Jewish world in which Jesus lived and served. To be Greek was to come from a culture that prized human development, culturally, educationally, physically. It was a culture that looked to the development of the human person, but not necessarily or primarily in relation to God. Although the great Greek philosophers spoke of things divine, for God to be involved in human history would have been both unthinkable and untenable even as a concept. Everything in Greek culture revolved around the development of body, mind and spirit; the human person and its development as the center of all that matters.

For Jesus to say what He said to them would have been shocking: “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, [he alone!] will keep it for eternal life.”

The key to life and its fulfillment is not the development of the human person, but the renunciation of life in this fallen world and the repurposing of that life in union with God. Only one who gives himself up and strives not to develop his own self, his own ends, his own security, his own purpose but rather to seek his self, his ends, his security, his purpose in God will find eternal life, that life in Jesus Christ which St. John describes as “abundant life.” Jesus went on to say to these Greeks who came seeking Him that only when He would be lifted up from the earth upon the cross, would all men be drawn unto Him.

We who are Orthodox see the symbolic representation of these truths every time we enter the church. Our very icons on the iconostasis and on the walls of our temple purposefully employ a kind of reverse perspective: figures in the foreground are smaller than those in the background, the exact opposite of the typical Greek/Roman painting that became so popular in the Renaissance. In the art of the great masters from Italy and Greece, art was meant to represent and glorify the human person as the center of all things. Eastern Orthodox painting in iconography represents not the human person as the center of all things, but God. All things depicted in the art of the Orthodox Church are seen in relationship to God, for He is the center of all things. Therefore, people and objects in the background are larger than those in the foreground, since those in the background are closer to God. All things have value, meaning, their end and fulfillment only in relationship to Him.

This. Brothers and Sisters, is our faith. This core message of the truth is why we struggle to keep our little mission alive, while the common hordes of people around us sleep in or go shopping or seek entertainment on Sunday morning. God alone is the key to purpose and fulfillment in life. All else is extraneous, or worse, idolatry.

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Fr. Elias

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