



**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>

The Holy Forefathers: God's Love Throughout All of History
December 26, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Through faith You justified the Forefathers, betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles. These saints exult in glory, for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: She who bore You without seed. So, by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us! (Troparion for the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers)

One of my favorite aphorisms relative to life in general, as well as to our faith in particular, is the one that says: *Sometimes, we refuse to see the forest for the trees.* By focusing on details to the exclusion of the big picture, we miss the most important truths. In seminary I had a professor whom I greatly respected, and he would always tell us that we must focus above all things on the big picture of our faith; we must strive to see and remember the actions and Word of God throughout the ages and see the continuity of His revelation in salvation history. Otherwise, we would be like people who analyze and never see or appreciate, like those who might see a Rembrandt masterpiece, for example, and analyze the individual brush strokes to the exclusion of an appreciation of the beauty of the painting itself. The big picture of salvation history is what this Sunday, the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, is all about. The liturgical texts of Vespers and Matins speak of those who came before the birth of the Christ, those who from the very beginning of God's intervention into the history of mankind submitted to God's saving will for the reclamation of fallen humanity. The texts commemorate Holy Forefathers and Foremothers such as Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, the holy prophets who called Israel and Judah to faith and preached compassion, the three holy children in the fiery furnace, Moses, Elias and others who

demonstrated in their lives the presence of God and His divine revelations and actions for the salvation of this lost world. This long line of God's revelations and actions stretches all the way back to the time of the pre-Flood Patriarchs and most especially to Abraham and Sarah, who became the great ancestors, the progenitors of the Hebrew race, the Holy Nation that would give birth to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Orthodox Church, which is the manifestation of the fulfillment of salvation history in the world, proclaims the truth that God has been active in human history since the very beginning. Immediately following the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Lord took definitive steps to protect them and to entice them back to a full relationship of oneness with the Supreme One Himself. These actions and revelations are what we call salvation history, and they came to their apex in the birth of the savior, Jesus Christ. Next week on the Sunday of Genealogy, we will hear the names of the actual blood relatives, the ancestors, of the Incarnate God Himself. But this Sunday, we focus on the powerful reminder that God has spared no expense all throughout history to intervene and to reverse the effects of our self-imposed separation from the One Who alone is our Life and Salvation. While we cannot and must not pronounce definitive judgment on the mystery of who will and who will not be saved, we can know that it is God's Will that all be saved. St. Paul said as much directly to his spiritual son, Timothy, in his first epistle (2:4): *God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*. While He forces no one, He has and will continue to call, invite and entice all people to turn away from their self-centered sinful lives in repentance and come to the fullness of truth in union with Him.

This is a powerful message for us to contemplate this Sunday, the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers: God will never give up on anyone! And through our prayers and our actions to serve Him, we too must never give up on others in our lives as well. There is no limit to the compassion of our God, and soon we will come together to sing the hymns of the Nativity in recognition of the vast extent of His divine love for the Life of the world. Soon we will say once again: *Christ is born! Glorify Him!*

Fr. Elias

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