



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

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

**The V. Rev. Elias Yelovich,  
Rector**

<http://EntranceMission.org>

***The Possibility of the Impossible: Zacchaeus*  
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**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!**

*And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:8-10)*

There are times in life when we commit a sin or carry out an action that is so hurtful that it cannot be sponged away. Like the lament of Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play, who cries, "Out damned spot!" when she realizes that she cannot remove the mark of blood on her hand, the sign of her sin which cannot be made right. Think, for example, of the remorse of a young person, who takes up a weapon and stupidly turns it on his peers. Or, consider the remorse of a woman on a jury who votes to condemn an innocent person of a crime he or she did not commit. Or, the guilt of a doctor who prescribes the wrong medication or who overlooks the sign of a serious disease to the detriment of his patient.

Zacchaeus was such an individual as these. St. Luke notes in his account of Zacchaeus' encounter with the Lord that he was a tax collector, and not just a tax collector, but a "chief" tax collector, in other words, an overseer of tax collectors, supporting and leading other tax

collectors to take money from a subjugated people and send it to the government that had subjugated them. Then, as if that were not enough, St. Luke observes as a kind of double whammy that he was “rich,” having just described in the previous chapter the Lord’s meeting with the rich young man, who turned away when Jesus told him to sell his goods and give the to the poor. It is easier for a “camel to enter the eye of a needle,” Jesus said, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And yet, here only a few verses later, is one among them, a rich man, who undoubtedly stole money to feather his own nest, and to send the tax collections to the dreaded occupying government of Rome. If it is so difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the disciples ask in consternation, then, “Who can be saved?” Jesus responds to them that “with God, all things are possible,” and St. Luke relates the story of Zacchaeus to illustrate it.

The story of Zacchaeus illustrates that in Jesus Christ the impossible becomes possible. Here is a man who is rich, a chief tax collector, unable to make restitution for all of the money he has taken and sent to Rome, unable to make amends for the hurt he has done to the lives of so many people, and yet, when Jesus sees him, He tells him to come down and invite Him to his house, for “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” The story of Zacchaeus is not merely a reminder, but a revelation of the central core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever sins or actions we have committed that have hurt others and ourselves and that cannot be undone or sponged away by any of our own actions – those sins or actions will be made right by God through our faith, our union, with the Lord Jesus Christ. Only He can sponge away the ugly spot of our sin; only He can remove the horrific ramifications of our selfish actions; He, and only He, can undo and make right those wrongs that we have done by the Grace: His Divine Will to seek and to save the lost.

As we approach the Season of Great Lent, Brothers and Sisters, let us pay heed to this story from St. Luke! Zacchaeus is our icon of repentance, not merely illustrating what repentance means, but more importantly, that God waits for our repentance so that each of us, regardless of the depth of our sin, can be reconciled to Him, for truly, “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost,” and truly, as St. Paul would remind his congregation only a few years later, “It is indeed God’s Will that everyone be saved,” impossible though it may seem to be. Zacchaeus is our reminder that in and through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the impossible is made possible for each of us!

Fr. Elias  
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306 West Main Street  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727  
<https://EntranceMission.org>  
717-817-0084