



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

**306 W. Main Street
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War in Ukraine: What We Can Do
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." (Mark 2:3-5)

Every morning we wake up to the news about more suffering and death in Ukraine. There are now about three million people who have left their country to become refugees. Families have been broken apart; adults and children have been killed; hospitals have been bombed; men and women have died on both sides of the conflict. Whatever political motivations there are that have driven the conflict are now virtually irrelevant in light of what has transpired: War has once again broken out in Europe, and this time, between two nations, two great people, who should be united in their common faith as Orthodox Christians.

Every morning and evening as I hear the worsening news I wonder, "What can we do?" Of course, I speak about us as individuals. Collectively, politics and fears of escalation must be weighed by all the nations of the world. It's not easy for any government to do what we think should be done; there are too many dangerous variables. As individuals, however, the question remains. "What can we do?" Part of the answer to that question has already been given in our little congregation. We can support our

Lenten program this year to give donations for humanitarian aid to the people who suffer. Our congregation has the ability to provide a medical cart for the medical care of children who are affected by the war. We can certainly raise our goal of \$500.00 for that purpose by filling the jar in the back of our church earmarked for that purpose with cash and checks, or by notating a PayPal donation to our church for that purpose; make your donations to "Entrance Mission" as you are able to make them with indication on your check or PayPal donation for the crisis in Ukraine. I will send a single donation on behalf of the church to support the medical needs of children affected by means of a charity reviewed and given a high score by "Charity Navigator."

A more powerful answer to the question, "What can we do," however, is given in our Gospel lesson for the Second Sunday in Lent. A paralytic is brought to Jesus by his friends. Four or more of them carry the poor man to the house in which Jesus is preaching in Capernaum. It is so crowded, that they climb the outside stairs to the roof, and make a hole in it to let down their friend into the gathering where Jesus is. This was no easy task, to be sure! Thatched roofs consisting of mud and straw were nevertheless solid and difficult to break. Out of their love for their friend, they persevere and let him down. And Jesus, perceiving the faith of the entire group of friends, immediately heals the paralytic, through the forgiveness of his sins. You see, this miracle story at the very beginning of the Gospel of Mark illustrates the vital truth that all sickness, all suffering, all violence, all wrong, all war – personal, corporate, political or otherwise – is the rotten fruit of our separation from God. Our only hope as human beings both individually and corporately is reconciliation with God; this, of course, is made possible in our Holy Orthodox Faith by means of the granting of forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance. But more: we come to God not only for ourselves, but also for one another. Just as the friends of the paralytic came to Jesus with their friend, so we must also come to Jesus in prayer, earnestly asking for the healing of people everywhere and anywhere who suffer.

Yes, we can and must donate to help the children of Ukraine! Almsgiving is an essential element of Great Lent, more important I suggest to you than fasting from meat and dairy! But even more important yet is our prayer for those who suffer.

Brothers and Sisters: Let us follow the example of the friends of the paralytic whom Jesus healed and let us pray on behalf of those who suffer in Ukraine. Let us turn aside from politics for the time being and let us perceive the hurt and the suffering that the people on both sides experience because of our common separation from God. Let us pray for reconciliation – reconciliation of all of us to the Lord and through our reconciliation with Him, with one another. This is how we can and should keep a worthy Lent! Let us reach out beyond ourselves, looking not only for our own good and our own salvation, but for the help and salvation of those involved in the war in Ukraine on both sides. These are our friends! Let us bring them to Jesus in our prayer as did the friends of the paralytic whom our Divine and Loving Lord healed in mercy, and let us pray for their reconciliation, for the end of conflict, suffering and death, and for the Peace of God, which alone passes all understanding!

Fr. Elias

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