



**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>

***Not in Drips and Drabs*
May 15, 2022**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Of old an Angel came down to the Sheep's Pool and healed one man every year, but now Christ doth cleanse endless multitudes by divine Baptism (Canon of Matins of the Sunday of the Paralytic).

The story of our Lord healing the paralyzed man has been appointed for our hearing this Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Pascha so that we may understand the power of Holy Baptism. Remember, in the ancient Church catechumens were catechized during Great Lent and Baptized, Chrismated and given their first Holy Communion during the Feast of Pascha. After the Great Feast was over, the Church wanted them to reflect on the deep meaning of that which they had received. And no lesson in all of scripture is a more powerful reminder of the power of God's work in Holy Baptism than this lesson from the fifth chapter of John.

The context of this story is the gathering of people who were sick and suffering under the five porticos of the Pool of Bethesda. Every so often, they believed, an angel would stir the waters of that pool of cleansing, and if you could get into the pool in time, you might be healed of your illness or malady. The miracle of God's power came to them in dribs and drabs, one little drop at a time. Only one person who was quick and who got into the waters before any others might be healed. The rest were out of luck.

In the midst of all of these people was a quadriplegic. Totally paralyzed, he could not even drag himself off his mat to fall into the water. His situation was totally hopeless. Nevertheless, he went, hoping beyond all

hope that a drop of healing grace would come his way.

The hopelessness of this poor man and the context of the bits, dribs and drabs of God's power, are set in stark contrast to what Jesus does, and to what His actions reveal. God does not give Himself to us in dribs and drabs; He gives Himself to us totally and completely. The Great Mystery of Holy Baptism is the symbol of that limitless Self-Giving in the truest sense, for that first and great Mystery that each of us have received makes present that which it symbolizes: Life over death, forgiveness of sins past, present and future, the presence of God in every circumstance and seemingly hopeless situation of our lives.

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The contrast between the hopeless situation of the paralytic who waited for dribs and drabs of grace in vain and the superabundance of God's own self-giving Grace in Holy Baptism was held before the congregation of newly Baptized Christians to remind them of the power of their Baptisms, newly administered. Life in this world so widely separated from God in the rebellion of sin and selfish pursuit of the passions is hopeless apart from Christ. Sin leads to death; fear of death leads to the pursuit of false securities and more sin. The cycle is endless and hopeless, as hopeless as the situation of the paralyzed man in the story. But Christ is Risen, and He gives Himself to those who are Baptized as a pledge of forgiveness, life, mercy, unfeigned love in and through all circumstances of this life that would otherwise be hopeless. Holy Baptism is the sign and symbol of our hope in Him. Thus, a few verses after our lesson from the fifth chapter of John, the Lord says,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:25-29)

This, Brothers and Sisters, is our hope; and it is our only hope! We do not wait for dribs and drabs of grace, like the poor man who lay on his pallet under the porticos of the Pool of Bethesda. We have received the superabundance of His unlimited Grace, the Grace of His own Self-Giving, in our Baptisms. Because to know Christ is to know the Father, the hour is coming for each of us when we are in our own tombs that we will *hear His voice and come forth*. This is our sure and steadfast hope, a hope that we will not have in vain, for Christ is Risen, and the power of death has been broken!

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Fr. Elias

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