



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

**306 W. Main Street
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<http://EntranceMission.org>

Living Water
May 22, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst ... (John 4:9-15)

The story of our Lord's encounter with the Samaritan woman is unforgettable. Jesus is in Samaria, a region to the north of Judea in which the descendants of those Jews who intermarried with the Assyrians who had conquered them lived. He stops for a drink of water from the ancient well that had been dug by Jacob, the ancient patriarch himself, and meets a woman who is drawing water from it. Among the many facets of their conversation, a conversation that is itself memorable, since Jesus was a Jew and a man, neither of which would have typically spoken with a Samaritan woman. But Jesus reaches out to all who are on the fringe, and He allows Himself in His need at the hot noon hour to be served by one who was herself a seeker and willing to minister to His need. In the course of the amazing conversation that follows, Jesus speaks of "living water," of the "water of Life" which He can give to all who seek it. The Samaritan woman thinks He is speaking of "living water" in the sense of "flowing water," such as one would find in a spring. But Jesus explains that He means something quite different; He says, "The water that I shall give ... will become ... a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman responds with those words that have become the essence of the prayer of all who seek the

Lord: "Sir, give me this water, that I many not thirst!"

When I was a new seeker, investigating Orthodoxy as the faith that I might embrace, I sat in on a number of lectures at St. Vladimir's Seminary during the years in which I served a small congregation in the New York metropolitan area. I was curious to hear what some of the professors there had to say about the faith, and one of the most memorable teachers I encountered there was Fr. Alexander Schmemmann of blessed memory. He once said the most amazing thing, something as memorable to me at that time as the words of our Lord must have been to the Samaritan woman. Speaking about the Holy Eucharist, Fr. Schmemmann observed that the Precious Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is the only "living food" we eat; all other food, he said, is dead; it has to be kept in a refrigerator to keep it from rotting. The Eucharist, however, is alive. We partake of it so that we may partake of Life Itself. It is "Life giving," Life with a capital "L." It is the food of Life in Christ, the food of Life Eternal.

I never forgot that lecture, which I attended as a seeker of the Truth back in the late 1970's. It played a major role in my conversion some years later to Life in Christ in the Orthodox Church. In the same way, the encounter of our Lord with the Samaritan woman led her to be the very first of the Samaritans to come to Christ. "Living water," the "water of Life." This is what Christ brings and offers to all who will receive, to all who will receive Him! Once again from the Gospel of John we have a reminder of the great power of Holy Baptism, indeed of all the Holy Mysteries, but in this case of Holy Baptism in particular. For remember that the lessons of the Paschal Season were all chosen by the Holy Fathers to help the newly baptized and chrismated Christians, received into the Body of Christ on Pascha, meditate and grow in their understanding of what their Baptisms actually imparted: Life Eternal, union with the Lord Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection, the beginning of an eternity of growth in that Grace which is the very self-giving of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Life with a capital "L."

Brothers and Sisters, as we move on in our liturgical lives within the season of Pascha, let us remember the great and unequalled Gift that we have all received in our own Baptism, renewed in the Self-Giving of the Incarnate God Who Alone gives us the Living Water, the food of His own Precious Body and Blood, the only food that we can ever receive that is truly alive, that gives that for which our souls hunger and thirst, the Grace of Oneness with Him, Whom to know is to Know the Father Himself.

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Fr. Elias

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