



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

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

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***On Not Judging Others*  
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**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

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

*Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. (Matthew 12:15-16)*

There are indeed times in the ministry of our Lord that He told His disciples to keep silent about Who He Is. And there are times when He chose to confront His opponents with the truth directly. We remember with particular clarity the sharpness of His denunciations of those who kept the outward regulations of the faith, but who were internally corrupt in their hypocrisy. Our Lord's denunciations in the form of the "woes" of Matthew chapter 23 are particularly memorable: *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness!"* (Matthew 23:27)

Nevertheless, throughout most of His ministry, our Lord strongly cautioned His disciples to keep silent about Who He really Is. This caution, which Biblical scholars call the "Messianic Secret," has the apparent purpose of keeping His ultimate revelation secret within the community of discipleship until it would be openly revealed through the events of Great and Holy Week and Pascha.

Much of Christian life, therefore, is about waiting – waiting for the right time. If we go onto the Web and browse around this or that group purporting to be Orthodox, we see that many have never learned the importance of waiting for the right time to say what they want to say. Their opinions strike the seeker of truth as little more valuable than the barking of a stray cur. To share the teachings of the Church is one thing, but to judge those whom we think violate those teachings is another. Every confessor knows how important it is to listen and to help and to guide, rather than to judge. All a good confessor looks for is the willingness of a penitent to recognize actions that are sinful and to repent of those actions, at least to the extent that one can repent; it is this earnest desire to repent that a confessor looks for, even if a penitent is still struggling with whatever sin holds him captive.

St. Matthew emphasizes that God in His essence is humble and merciful. God's justice, the so-called "iustia Dei," is mercy. We must be patient and wait for the fulfillment of His mercy, and we must strive in every action to be merciful ourselves. For of what benefit is the destruction of anyone if they have not been given every opportunity to be saved? How can any of us, who wallow in our own sin, dare to point the finger at anyone – anyone, who in this life struggles and falls? Our judgement of others, our denunciation of others, is nothing other than denunciation of ourselves. "Judge not, lest you be judged," our Lord has taught us.

As a priest growing well into my latter years I have less and less tolerance of those who condemn others in their "false righteous" judgment. We who stand in the presence of God each and every Sunday when the Holy Spirit descends to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ should stand with our heads bowed in humble recognition of who we are and what we are not: We are those who come to Christ, not because we are "righteous" or better than others in our midst, but because He calls us sinners to repentance, just as He calls everyone in our midst. Therefore, our prayer for those whose sin irritates us, should be for them to walk the eternal paths of repentance and salvation with us, and we should allow the Lord to be the final judge when He comes again in that great and glorious last day. Then we will see clearly what He has taught from the beginning, that the execution of His judgment is truly the bestowal of mercy.

Fr. Elias

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