



**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>

“We Give Thee but Thine Own ...”
September 11, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

We give Thee but Thine own, what ere the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.

This 19th century hymn is one that I grew up with. Each Sunday, back in the days when most everyone was in church on a Sunday morning, we would sing this as a congregation, as the ushers presented the plates of offering to the priest. “We give Thee but Thine own, what ere the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord, from Thee!”

This hymn expresses a concept that has been all but forgotten in our lives. I almost said, our “Christian” lives, but if we are believers, disciples of the Lord, then surely every aspect of our lives is governed by our faith and our love, is it not? The concept I refer to is called “Stewardship,” and it hearkens back to several of the parables of our Lord, among which is the one appointed for this Sunday from Matthew 21, the *Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers*. The parable is crystal clear in its meaning, isn’t it? The vineyard belongs to God, we are merely stewards of it. For the people of ancient Israel who first heard this parable, the vineyard would have been understood as the Vineyard of the Lord, the entire realm and history of God’s

people, called forth first through Abraham and given the sacred vocation of bringing God and His eternal blessings to the entire world. They would have understood that Jesus was criticizing their selfish appropriation of God's realm for their own purposes, ultimately rejecting Him, the Son of God, God Incarnate, so that they could profit from the fruits of that Vineyard themselves. It is easy for us to apply this reasoning to the Church as well, for who could doubt that the history of the Church, both East and West, is filled with leaders who were selfish, money-grubbing, power seekers to the detriment of the well-being of those under their authority. And this in itself would be an entirely reasonable application of its message!

But there is a wider scope to be understood in the interpretation of this parable as well. Everything we have, every scrap or morsel of food, every possession, the world and all that is in it, every moment, indeed every breath, is a part of God's realm, and given to us as means of communion with Him. He does not give us what we have for our own selfish enjoyment, but rather as means of our ultimate vocation as human beings: Our task is to receive with thanksgiving ("Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God!") and to offer back what He so freely gives ("on behalf of all, and for all"). This is the meaning of that most sacred of all moments in the Divine Liturgy when the priest exclaims as the deacon elevates: "Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all, and for all!"

So you see, this parable is a parable of stewardship, which is to say that it is a parable of our ultimate life's vocation as sacrament. God has made all things, and He gives us all things, as a means of communion with Him, so that His gifts can be shared by all and become means of communion with Him for all. If we see our lives in any other way, we miss the point, and as such will never be a peace. St. Augustine began his wonderful "Confessions" with the prayer: "Thou has made us for Thyself, O Lord, and the heart is restless until it finds its resting place in Thee." Indeed it is so. "We give thee but Thine own, what ere the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone, a Trust O Lord from Thee!" Or as we solemnly proclaim at the high point of every Divine Liturgy, "Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all!"

All that there is belongs to Him and to Him alone. For our lives to be fulfilled, we must offer to Him what He gives us, just as we do in every Divine Liturgy, and as there, He will give us back what we have offered as a blessing far greater than we could imagine!

Fr. Elias

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