



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

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg, MD  
21727

The V. Rev. Elias Yelovich,  
Rector

<http://EntranceMission.org>

### *Fear Seized Them All* October 23, 2022

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

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

*And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"*  
(Luke 7:15-16)

It was fairly early in his Gospel that St. Luke recorded one of our Lord's most powerful and memorable miracles. Only a few verses after St. Luke records the essential teaching of our Lord in His Sermon on the Plain, he tells us that Jesus went with a large crowd of people following Him to the city of Nain, less than 10 miles from His hometown of Nazareth. We are not told why He went there, only that as He approached the gates of the city, he met a funeral procession leaving the city. In the days of our Lord, the dead were always taken outside the city and put in tombs away from the living. The funeral procession was leaving the place of the living to the place of the dead, the necropolis, outside the city walls. St. Luke describes the poignant tragedy of this funeral in particular in just a few words of pathos. "The man who died was the only son of a woman, and she was a widow." In other words, this poor woman's only living son was gone, and she would have to live the rest of her life alone, without anyone to provide a means of support for her.

This procession of death was met by the Lord of Life, Jesus Christ. Luke's Gospel has been called the Gospel of "compassion and joy." And in the telling of this miracle of our Lord, St. Luke makes it clear that Jesus approaches the funeral procession with compassion for this poor widow. He goes to the bier on which the body of the man lay, and He touches it – an action that no Rabbi of that time would ever have done, for contact with the dead

was a defilement. He gave one simple command, a command of authority and power: “Young man, I say to you arise!” Unlike the great prophet Elias, who required three dramatic actions to raise the son of the widow of Zarephath, Jesus spoke once and the dead man came back to life. The One Whom Elias beseeched required only a word to bring the man back to life.

Compassion – resurrection – hope – death turned into life: These are all messages we can take away from this story. Like so many of our Lord’s parables, this miracle of our Lord illustrates by means of a few words and one powerful action the question, “What is God like?” The answer is clearly given! He is compassionate, like our Lord; He understands who we are, what we are like, what our burdens are, and He cares. He takes the dead ends of our lives and turns them into new beginnings. He takes the most hopeless of those realities that each of us must face, and He overcomes them – hopelessness turns into hope, death into life, fear into love.

It is, however, this last contrast between fear and love that is in some ways most representative of our own situation here and now. After seeing this great miracle of resurrection and witnessing firsthand the way in which the Lord showed compassion, the people did not rise up and worship Him; instead, St. Luke reports that they were overcome by fear. This is always the way it is when God enters our lives unexpectedly or uninvited. We live our lives pretending that He does not exist, paying little or no heed to Him as we go about our lives, our work, our studies, our entertainments, or whatever. But when we see His actions unexpectedly, we either deny the truth of what we have seen or we cringe in fear, fear that He is real and that He knows everything about us, that he sees the truth of our sins, hidden though they may be. We experience the fear of judgment in His presence, and even in the face of such a great miracle as this, when we cannot deny the truth of what He has done, we become afraid.

This is no less true of those who lived in the time of Jesus than it is for us today. People were just as able to carry out their religious duties the same then as now, without the intimate awareness of God’s indelible presence. They too were able to ignore Him, to forget Him, to fill their time with actions or endeavors that had nothing to do with Him and His presence. And so, they saw this great miracle before their eyes, a miracle that revealed the undeniable presence of Him Who sees all and knows all, they were afraid – afraid of judgment, afraid in awareness that nothing was now hidden or secret.

This lesson from the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke does not deny the reality these truths – that in the presence of the Lord Who created us, we too will be afraid. But it simultaneously proclaims a deeper truth that we must not forget: that He is the God of compassion, Who knows our weakness, Who remembers as the Psalmist said “of what we are made,” and that nevertheless chooses in His great mercy to love us and to save us, even as He did when He interrupted the procession of death with a touch and a command to rise. This is our God, the God of our salvation, the One Who knows everything about us and yet loves us nevertheless!

Fr. Elias

Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 West Main Street

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

<https://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084