



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

The One Who Supplies that which is Lacking November 6, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Divine Grace, which always heals that which is infirm, and supplies that which is lacking, ordains, N., the most pious Deacon to be a Presbyter. Therefore, let us pray for him, that the grace of the All-holy Spirit may come upon him. (Orthodox Rite of Ordination of a new priest).

The events of the past weekend are still very vivid in my mind, as I am sure they are in yours. How often do any of us have the chance, the honor, to be participants in the Ordination Rite for a new priest? Not very often, I would suggest. We traveled the distance to the bishop's cathedral church on Sunday morning and witnessed one of the Great Mysteries of our faith: the official ordination of one who was called by God to serve as a priest. It takes some time for a man to discern such a call. Placed within us by the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit, it often comes to fruition when we realize that we cannot be fulfilled in our lives unless we heed it. For some of us, myself among them, it was a firm and vibrant realization only when I turned away from it, and then saw clearly what I had rejected and then in repentance accepted: That God's call cannot be extinguished and that we must not ignore it. To do so leads only to frustration and anguish; to heed it leads to that alone which can satisfy our deepest longings. This realization and the acceptance of my own priesthood reminds me of three qualities of priesthood that I want to write about in this little article. Two of them were explicit in the Ordination Rite; the third is implicit in the practice of the priesthood.

First, the one called to the priesthood is called, because he is called; he is not called because of any qualities or skills or education or characteristics of his personality. He is called, because God calls him, period. This flies in

the face of our normal experience as human beings in a fallen world. We sinful human beings compete and strive always to be better than, to outdo others, to achieve more than our brothers and sisters. This is not the way it is in the Kingdom of God. God calls us to serve, not because we are better than, or have a greater faith than, or have this or that quality higher than – any others. He calls us to service, because He loves us and His fallen creation. The priest does not come with any special qualities other than those which God provides. That is why the bishop prays the short and vital prayer above, that God “supplies that which is lacking.”

Second, the one called to the priesthood is called to preserve and protect the faith, by his proper care of the Holy Mysteries and by his proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is explicit in the Ordination Rite when the new priest is given the XC portion of the Sanctified Lamb to hold at the Holy Place behind the altar as he recites Psalm 50 silently. The bishop places the this portion of the Lamb in his hands and tells the newly ordained priest, *Receive this pledge and preserve it whole and unharmed until your last breath, for you shall be held accountable for it at the Second and awesome Coming of our great Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.* A primary role of the priest is thus to properly administer the Holy Mysteries and to protect, defend and pass on the Holy Orthodox Faith to others. This is a vital role of the priesthood to which a man is called.

Third, is a role of the priesthood that is not explicit, but rather implicit in the Rite, a roll that is so vital and important that it is designated by the very word “priest.” A priest is one who stands *with* and *for*. He stands with God and with the people assigned to his care. He stands for God before the people, and for the people before God. Like Moses and Aaron of old, he mediates the will of God to the people, reminding them Who God IS and what God has revealed His will to be; and he stands before God on behalf of the people, praying for them each and every day, asking God without reservation for their forgiveness, for mercy, for healing, for repentance and eternal salvation.

These three qualities of the priesthood, explicit and implicit, were held before us on Sunday last as we watched and participated in the Ordination Rite of a new priest. But let us also remember that each and every one of us has a call to assume those same qualities in our daily lives as disciples of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. Each of us, whether or not we have been called to Holy Orders, have nevertheless been called to seek and to accept the Holy Spirit who will provide for us what is lacking, to preserve, protect and defend the faith and to share it with others around us in everyday life, and to stand before God in prayer for one another, for those we love, for those who love us, but also and most importantly, for those who hate us, our enemies. We are all called, in other words, to bring Christ to our neighbors and to serve our neighbors in need as if they were Christ Himself in need.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Let us show the love of God to our new priest, Fr. Anthony, and let us practice and live that love by servings as mediators of that love to everyone around us!

Fr. Elias

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