



**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>

***The Sunday of Three Virtues***  
**January 8, 2023**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**Christ is born! Glorify Him!**

The Sundays surrounding the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord have a common theme: they focus on those who came before in the time of the Old Testament and, in the case of St. Joseph and St. James, who played vital roles in carrying out His mission in the Church. What strikes me about all the people we heard about during the past two weeks is how God worked with common, ordinary people to establish His presence in the world through the Holy nation of Israel. The people He worked with were not supermen or superwomen. They were ordinary people, often with faults and failings. Sometimes they did His will, sometimes they did not. But the Lord never gave up on them. Beginning with Abraham and his elderly wife Sarah, the promise was given, Abraham's faith, his connection, his relationship, his trust in the Lord, was reckoned to him, says the book of Genesis, *as righteousness*. And the history of God's direct involvement and revelation moved forward through the lives of some extraordinary people, like Moses, Aaron, Joshua, etc., as well as some who were participants in spite of themselves, Isaac, Esau, Jacob, and so on. The work of God in and with and under the history of Ancient Judea and Israel proceeded in spite of human sin, in spite of human faults, in spite of human rebellion. All the way the time of the birth of the Savior, which we celebrated yesterday.

The Church continues to focus today so soon after the Feast on people, related to our Lord by blood, who were vessels of the Spirit, sometimes in spite of themselves, and who the Holy Fathers saw as representatives of virtue for us who are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today, we commemorate the Holy Prophet, King and ancestor of Christ, St. David, along with His Protector and Guide, St., Joseph, as well as His half-brother, James, who became the first bishop of Jerusalem, the center of the Church in the first part of the first century. I see these three historical saints as representatives of three prime virtues, set before us as we contemplate our lives of Christian discipleship.

**First, St. David.** The great king and author of many of the Psalms was not perfect, and he was certainly not without sin. After assuming the throne in Jerusalem, he fell in love with a beautiful married woman named Bathsheba and used his powerful position to get her husband out of the way, actually to have him killed. Through the activity of the prophet Nathan, David came to the realization of his profound sin and he repented. The Psalm of repentance that he wrote, Psalm 50, is recited by Christians every day. David's repentance was sincere and profound. Much of what he wrote in the Psalms reflects how he turned from his sin and moved on to serve God after his reconciliation with the Lord. Thus, David is the great saint of one of the prime virtues of Christianity, repentance.

**Second, St. Joseph.** My respect for St. Joseph knows no limits. Joseph was already an elderly widower when the Holy Spirit through the elders in the temple appointed him as the protector of Mary. St. Matthew tells us that he was understandably shocked when he learned that Mary was pregnant and sought to divorce her according to the law. But God intervened. Joseph was visited by an angel and told the remarkable truth, that Mary was a virgin still, and that the child growing within her womb had been created through the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit. Joseph accepted this without hesitation. He was the man of duty par excellence. And when we think of our Christian lives, and what God calls us to do and to be, we would do well to emulate him and seek his intercession. Christian life is to a very large extent about duty. Yes, the motivation for all of our actions must be charity, the sacrificial self-giving love, so perfectly demonstrated by our Lord on the cross. But duty is the structure of that motivation. We do what is right, because it is right, because we are children and heirs of the Kingdom. We do what we do, because it is our duty, whether we feel like it or not. St. Joseph is the great saint of another prime virtue of Christianity, duty.

**Finally, St. James.** St. James, as you remember, was the eldest son of St. Joseph by his wife Salome, who had died. St. James accompanied Jesus, Mary, Joseph as they departed after the Lord's birth, into Egypt. An ancient Middle Eastern icon shows him as a teen, leading the donkey on which Mary and Jesus rode as he walked with his father, Joseph. James grew to become a leading disciple of our Lord, and the first bishop of Jerusalem. He presided over the first Council of the Church in Jerusalem and met with two somewhat disparate disciples by the names of Peter and Paul. James showed true wisdom when he ruled that Peter would lead the outreach to the Jewish community of believers, and Paul to the gentiles. This showed the wisdom of compromise, the willingness to follow the Spirit without taking sides, without forcing confrontation. Just think of how different the history of the Church would have been, if

Patriarchs, Popes and Bishops had the same spirit of compromise in their hearts as did St. James! Or for that matter, just think of how the debacle of our own House of Representatives in DC would have been avoided if those elected to serve would have the Spirit of St. James in their heart. Service in the Spirit of the Lord with compromise and wisdom These are the virtues that are embodied by St. James, the Brother of God.

**This is the Sunday after the Nativity! Three prime virtues: Repentance, Dutiful Service and Compromise with Wisdom: St. David, St. Joseph and St. James.** Let us not only ask for their intercessions, Brothers and Sisters, but let us emulate them in our lives of love and service in the Name of the Newborn Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To Him be all honor and glory forever! Amen.

Fr. Elias

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