



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

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg,
MD 21727

<http://EntranceMission.org>

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Christian Pacifism in Action
August 6, 2023

**SS. Boris and Gleb. Sunday, August 6 (July 24), 2023.
Monastery of St. Mary Magdalene. Old Forge, PA**

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Today we commemorate the first Russian saints, SS. Boris and Gleb. Their story is a simple one. They were the sons of Vladimir the Great of Rus; and, after St. Vladimir died, they and all of Rus were drawn into a civil war in which St. Vladimir's descendants vied for the throne and power. While their older brothers fought for power, they refused to take part in the violence for power. Rather than fight against their older brothers, they stayed loyal to Christ. They did not even defend themselves when they were attacked by soldiers at their brother's command. They chose to be Christ-like, to follow Him to the end. As such we call them "passion-bearers," those who stayed one with the Lord and took upon themselves the Christ-like quality of pacifism and peace.

We say a lot about peace in the Orthodox Church. And yet we are anything but peaceful. We judge, condemn, rebel, fight, squabble and argue. Sometimes it seems that we do so for important reasons; other times, we seem to do so out of concern for our own place in the sun, our own power.

The very first petition led by the priest, or deacon if one is present, invokes the prayer for peace. "In peace, let us pray to the Lord," we pray. The second petition qualifies it, "For the peace that is from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord." There is no peace, you see, unless it comes from above, unless we open our hearts to the peace of God, which passes all understanding. The Orthodox theologian, Fr. Lev Gillet, writes that our opening petition calls us to assume a state of "inner peace." We who take part in the Divine Liturgy are called to rid our minds "of all confusion, all susceptibility to fleshly and earthly temptations, all obsession with 'worldly cares,' all hostile feelings towards any other person, and all personal anxiety."

This is what visitors look for when they come to visit our church or when they come here to visit your monastery. They are not as interested in the details of Orthodox theology and history as we might be. They are looking to see what the spirit is like in our communities is like. Is it one of peace, the peace that is from above? Or, is it one of anger, resentment, squabbling, judgement? If it is one of peace, then they will probably be back, or what is more important, they will be drawn to Christ, whom we claim to represent. If it is not one of peace, they will be gone, and unless they are strongly motivated for other reasons, they will not look to Christ at all. You and I re His representatives; like it or not, people judge Christ on the basis of what they see in us.

The first Russian saints, Boris and Gleb, were men of peace. They refused to enter into the struggle for power at the expense of anyone. They bore the light yoke of our Lord's example; they were passion-bearers, and that is what He, the Lord Jesus Christ, calls us to be also. What will people see when they come here? Inner peace? Trust in the Lord? Charity for all? Or will they see something else? We are His disciples, His representatives on earth, His servants. Let's be sure to bear the passion of the Savior, so that others may be drawn to Him. Let us follow the example of SS.. Boris and Gleb.

Holy Passion-Bearers, Boris and Gleb, pray to the Lord that our souls be saved!

Fr. Elias

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