



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

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### *Showing Others the Face of Christ* *May 19, 2024*

#### **Brothers and Sisters in Christ:**

#### **Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!**

About a week ago on Saturday afternoon I took advantage of one of the few clear days without rain that we experienced this May and got on my riding lawnmower to mow what I call the “lower 40” of my lawn. I have a set of noise cancelling earphones that double as an FM radio receiver, so I tuned them in to the classical station from Hagerstown and DC. Each Saturday afternoon, the station typically broadcasts a performance of an opera from the Met in NYC. On that particular Saturday it was Puccini’s “Madame Butterfly,” one of the most beautiful operas I have ever heard and also one of the most tragic. But in the time I tuned in, it turned out to be the intermission, and the station was presenting an interview with one of the lead tenors in the opera.

I do not recall the name of the man who was being interviewed, but I very much remember what he said. He said that when we have people in our lives that we care about or that we love, it is a great tragedy for us not to tell them; for they might not know that we love them or even care about them if we do not tell them or show them that we care about them or love them clearly.

Of course, Puccini’s operas are all about tragedy – about the terrible things people do to one another, about how they do not tell one another how they care about each other or love each other; or, more often, how they treat one another in ways that are uncaring, or unloving. No one writes more beautiful music about such situations than Puccini! But how awful it is when people are hurt by insensitive

actions that are cruel or uncaring or unloving. And how wonderful it is when they are told that they are loved and cared for, and better yet, that they are treated accordingly.

Today, we commemorate ten people from the Gospels who had experienced the care and love of our Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that they were tightly connected to Him – so tightly that they followed Him to the foot of the cross and beyond – all the way to the empty tomb on the first Pascha morning. Eight of them were women: Mary the Theotokos, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha of Bethany, Joanna, Salome, Mary the wife of Cleopas and Suzanna. Two were men: one a Pharisee and the other a respected member of the Sanhedrin: Nicodemos and Joseph of Arimathea. We have heard their stories in part throughout the holy days of Great and Holy Week, particularly Great and Holy Thursday and Friday. Today, we heard parts of their story once again in the Gospel from Mark.

The question to ask is why they were so connected to the Lord? The answer is simple and clear: It is because He was always, always able and willing to treat them and every human being with whom He came into contact with compassion, dignity and respect and to offer them His acceptance and forgiveness of their sins. This, Brothers and Sisters, is no little thing.

What do people see when they come to us and to our churches? Do they see rigid leaders more concerned with money, rules, laws, rubrics, buildings, property, vestments, glitz or other externals rather than with Christ? What do they see when they come to us? Do they see people preoccupied with themselves, with being right, with having their own way? Do they see pride? Pride in being Orthodox in contrast to being Catholic or Protestant? Or, do they see faces of Christ? Faces that are filled with compassion and love for every creature, faces that reflect hearts that are truly merciful and seek redemption for every creature in God's creation?

These are the questions that we should be asking today when we contemplate the devotion of the Holy Myrrhbearers. They were joined to Christ, because He had first reached out to each and every one of them in compassion first! And this, Brothers and Sisters, as I have said earlier, is indeed no little thing! It is life, salvation, visitation and the source of our eternal hope! To Jesus Christ be all honor and glory forever! Amen!

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

Fr. Elias

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