



Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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The Fifth Sunday in Lent: *The Two Paths to Salvation* April 6, 2025

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to Him forever!

- The stories of two women on the fifth Sunday in Lent: Mary, the Theotokos, who submitted to God's Will, in spite of the hurt and distress she would face; and, Mary of Egypt, who came later in her life through the grace of repentance.
- For both of them to come before us in the Divine Liturgy on the same day is somewhat of an anomaly; but, the fact that they do gives us opportunity to reflect on the two ways set before us through out lives: the two ways of salvation.
- **First, the Theotokos.**
 - There are not many passages in scripture that tell us about the life of the Theotokos, but two stand out.
 - First, the passage we heard today: The Archangel visits Mary, a young woman, betrothed to an older man, Joseph, so that he could care for her. She had been dedicated to the Lord when she was only three, sent to live in perpetual virginity to the temple in Jerusalem. But when she was old enough to bear children, the Lord sent her Joseph, a widower, to watch over her purity. But God had other plans for her. The Archangel tells her that she is to bear a child, the Son of the Most High. And remarkably, she accepts His will. "May it be done unto me according to Thy Work!"
 - Second, perhaps 30 some years later, she once again submits to the Lord's will and tells others to do the same. At the Wedding in Cana in Galilee: the wine runs out, a terribly embarrassing circumstance for the groom and his bride. Mary appeals to the Lord, and at first He seems reluctant to comply. But Mary understands Who He IS and persists. "Do

- **Second, Mary of Egypt.**

- We all know the story. It's a story of remarkable repentance in the face of horrendous sin. And what surely must impress us in the story above all else is the extreme suffering that Mary of Egypt endures after she repents and follows the guidance of the Theotokos into the wilderness. Mary of Egypt experiences the suffering of remorse, the suffering that leads to weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, to use the familiar phrase. She is redeemed to be sure, but she regrets the harm she has brought upon others through her sin.

- **These are the two paths to salvation.**

- First, follow the commandments; emulate the example of the Lord; do whatever He tells us to do – and His teaching is not private or personal; it is open for all to hear and to see. His preaching, His teaching; His parables; His example; emulate the love He has shown to all; follow His Will with the intent to love God and neighbor as oneself.
- Second, the way of repentance. But never take repentance lightly or for granted. To repent is to turn away from sin, to head out in a new direction; to begin the process of moving forward toward the realization of the Kingdom of God. But it is not to forget the harm one's sin has done to others. Those whom we have hurt, purposefully or inadvertently, must always remain in our prayers, and our love to them must flow out on their behalf for our entire lives.
- The way of obedience – and the way of repentance; we who are disciples of the Lord will know both ways in our lives of love and service. But let us strive above all else to follow the first way, and to live as the Theotokos reminds us – to do whatever He tells us!

Fr. Elias

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