



Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg,
MD 21727

<http://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084

The V. Rev. Elias Yelovich,
Rector

The Rev. Anthony Duvall,
Assistant

Thomas Sunday
April 27, 2025

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear. ... By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11: 1-13)

I think these words of St. Paul from his epistle to the Hebrews sums up the importance of this day. Just consider for a moment what we heard in today's Gospel lesson. The Risen Lord and Savior, cruelly put to death upon the cross, appears to those gathered in the Upper Room as they met in fear and confusion about what could possibly come next. Their Rabbi and Master was gone; and soon, they took must have feared the dreaded knock at the door on the part of the authorities coming for them as well. But suddenly, the Lord appears as they gather in prayer and remembrance. He breathes the life giving energy and power of the Holy Spirit upon them, and difficult though it is to even conceive, they see and they believe. But Thomas is not there. And he does not believe. Who could blame him? No one had ever risen from the dead. Only the Lord Himself could give life to the dead, as He had done to Lazarus and the

daughter of Jairus and the son of the Widow of Nain. But to rise by means of one's own power? This had never happened, and Thomas does not believe until he sees.

We know how the story ends. Jesus comes and shows Himself to Thomas; He lets him touch the wounds in His hands, His feet and His side. Be not faithless, He says, and Thomas confesses Him in faith, "my Lord and my God!" The greatest confession of faith in the New Testament.

Clearly St. John records this not for the sake of telling a nice story, but for us who come after. It's been over 2,000 years; we go about our lives quite differently than those of 1st century Judea. And yet, like them, we have the same ultimate concerns: sickness still reigns; violence continues throughout the earth; unkindness abounds; selfishness persists at the expense of those in need; the cemeteries continue to get filled up. Death reigns.

But it doesn't, you see! It is like a serpent whose fangs have been removed. Ugly, fearful to behold and encounter, but ultimately harmless. For the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the one and true ultimate sign of life after death with Him in His Kingdom.

This is our faith as Orthodox Christians! This is our conviction of things not yet seen! The grave is not the final word. The victory of Christ over death, having "trampled down death by death," is the final word. We will live, because He lives! And the words of our Lord to Thomas come down to us through the ages with the same power they had when they were first said to Thomas: "Be not faithless but believing!"

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!
Fr. Elias

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