November 20, 2018

Greetings to all the Faithful of St. Andrew's,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

We are now in the Nativity Fast and tomorrow at 10 am we are celebrating the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. This Liturgy is in honor of Mary whom we call “Theotokos.” This title means “God’s Birthgiver” or “The one who gave birth to God.” Certainly the Father has no beginning and His Word which is inseparable from him has no beginning, but this very same Word entered the Virgin and dwelt within her, in her heart and body. She became the Temple of God’s Word.

The Temple of God in the Old Testament was the place where one could meet God and be in his presence; it was God’s House. God is certainly present everywhere, but the Temple was the special place of focus. It was the place where God’s presence could be experienced.

By entering into the Temple, Mary was herself being prepared to be the dwelling place of God. When the Angel announced to her that she was highly favored to give birth to the Coming One she said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). In doing this she acquiesced to be the new Temple of God by the power the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament Temple, made according to God’s prescription, was nonetheless made by human hands. That Temple prefigures the Virgin Mary as a new Temple of God not made by human hands but a human being created in the image and likeness of God. By following the example of the Theotokos, by saying Yes in both word and deed as she did, we submit to God’s will and become a dwelling place for God’s Holy Spirit. God seeks to dwell in us and if we “hear the word of God and keep it” we too will be a dwelling place of God in all that we do, because what we do will be according to his teaching and motivated by a desire to please him. In other words, whatever ministry or service God calls us to perform, we will be doing it for his glory based on his teaching and we too, like the Temple in the Old Testament and preeminently like the Virgin Mary, will be a place where people can encounter God and be in his presence.

Here is the Gospel reading for this Great Feast:

 Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house.  And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.  But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."  But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.". . As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28).

May God bless you all this Thanksgiving Season. During our Thanksgiving celebration we are dispensed from fasting as we dine with our family and friends. Let us give thanks to God for all things and pray for peace for our country and for the world. After our Thanksgiving celebration let us put our leftovers in the freezer and then continue the Nativity Fast as we prepare for the Son of God to be born in Bethlehem!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Herman