

# **CELEBRATING THE MOTHERHOOD OF THE MOTHER OF GOD**

**Meditations by Fr. Deacon Dr. Joshua D. Genig**

**On St. Matthew 2:13 – 23**

*(Gospel for the Synaxis of the Mother of God, 26 December 2016)*

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Burton, MI

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you're keeping score at home, these days it seems as though evil is winning by a landslide.

Aleppo is still smoldering. Berlin is literally putting the pieces back together. Tensions are mounted in Russia and Turkey. And high-jacked planes, rather than ship-wrecked boats, now land on the island of Malta.

But if you like your troubles a bit closer to home, in our advanced, civilized, first-world country, children—babies, like the little baby Jesus—still go to bed hungry at night. Bigotry flourishes. Racism of all kinds runs its course. And even in Detroit, a city that's being rejuvenated by the day, there were over 1,700 violent crimes committed last year, and over 4,000 more regular, run-of-the-mill crimes. Kids are bullied and are bullying others. Clean water is a luxury in some parts. And, day-by-day, the joy of Christmas, the joy of being a child, is being traded for very grown-up troubles in a very upside-down world.

This is nothing we don't know, of course. But sometimes it's good to remember the state of things. And, even more, it's good to remember our way forward.

Think back to those days when you were a child. Remember the joy of Christmas. But also remember this: when things got really bad, when you couldn't imagine them getting any worse, who was it you wanted most?

If you're like me, there was a time in our lives when we just needed our mom.

And that, it seems, is why we are all here today for *this* Feast, this all-encompassing Feast of the Most Holy Mother of God, this most ancient celebration of her role in our salvation, this most ancient **celebration of her motherhood**.

And, yet, what is most remarkable about this day is the choice of the Gospel reading.

You might expect a reading from the cave in Bethlehem or one speaking more directly about the person of Mary. But, instead, we are given the story of the Holy Family, and not just the Holy Family as such, but the Holy Family on the run, as it were.

And, most remarkable of all, it's a story...that doesn't even mention her name.

Yet, it is a story that puts her front and center, if we only have, as Jesus says, eyes to see and ears to hear. For, at the center of that family on the run is the Mother, His Mother, and our Mother too.

And it is with her at the center that God's great reversal, begun so long ago, begun all the way back in Eden, when that fallen angel—the deceiver—whispered a dying word into Eve's ear; it is with Mary at the center—as Gabriel, the Gospeler, whispered into her ear a word of life and salvation; it is with her at the center that this great reversal is taking on speed, as we can see so clearly today.

In days of old, you remember, the children of God fled wicked Pharaoh and escaped his wrath by **leaving** Egypt. But today, with her at the center, the children of Israel all bundled up into one holy child—her child and this world's child too—today, he flees the new and greater Pharaoh, Herod himself, but he does so by doing the unthinkable: He does so by going back **into** Egypt. And, thus, he shows us in no small way that, in Him, and in Her, the God who made us has now come into our world, into our lives, into our troubles, into our fears, into our very own selves, and he has come to make all things new.

You can imagine that journey to Egypt. The fear. The terror really. The way that evil seemed to be winning the day. But that is really what makes this feast so sublime. She is known, not by her name or her fiat or her sanctity—at least not today. No, today she is known as **mother**.

And not for Him alone. She is **our** mother. She is **our** protector. She is **our** guide. She is **our** hope.

Dear friends, as we make our **own** journey into Egypt this coming year, fleeing the evil of whatever “Herods” the world and the devil may throw at us, may we find in her, what she was for Him. May we find a mother. A mother who dearly wants all her children home again in the new and greater Eden that will have no end.

*Through her prayers, and the prayers of all the saints, may God have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and loves mankind.*

