



**Orthodox Mission of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

***Important or Vital?*
September 25, 2022**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

We have heard a series of lessons these past several weeks that are united by a common theme: the call to follow Him Who is the center and source and giver of all that is vital – the Incarnate Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ! It's important to note that I did not say that He is the source and center and giver of all that is important. I said, He is the source and giver and center of all that is vital.

There is a great difference between that which is important and that which is vital. Last Sunday we heard the parable of the Wedding Feast. Many were invited to that Feast, given by the King. But many of those invited chose not to come. Some had business to transact, others had work to finish. Their business and their work were important. St. Luke tells a few more details in his

version of the same parable originally told by Jesus. One of those who declines the invitation of the King to come to his feast was getting married. What could be more important than that? And yet, the King was angry! Even among those who did accept the invitation of the King there were those who were in trouble; they came without their wedding garments, unprepared, showing up without any care or anticipation of the great honor afforded to them for even being invited in the first place. They were expelled.

There are many things in life that are important to be sure! We need to work to care for our families. Food needs to be provided for our loved ones, our children and grandchildren. Mortgages and rents need to be paid; health insurance needs to be provided. Fields still need to be plowed, business transacted, marriages entered into, children cared for. These things are important, some very important indeed! But only one thing is vital. And that one thing is to follow the One Who is the Source and Center and Giver all that truly matters.

To follow Him is what truly matters. How we do that is not always revealed in detail. The Archbishop of Canterbury in his funeral homily at the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth remarked that we cannot always know “how” to do what God calls us to do, but we always know “Who” to follow. This is true. And yet, guidelines are given, are they not? In today’s lesson, for example, the Lord recites the “*Shema*” in response to the question of the lawyer: *Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.* To this most important of all Jewish teachings, Jesus adds, ... *and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

This is what is vital. The invitation to the wedding feast is given to us all. It alone is vital, because the One Who invites us is vital. He alone is the Source, the Center the Giver of all that is good and true and eternally desirable. He is Life, Truth and the one true Way. To treat His invitation with disdain, as did those who made excuses or came unprepared, is to turn from that one and only thing that is vital: Life Eternal in His presence, participants in the great feast that has no end. And remember the meaning of the Feast we take our leave from today: Joachim and Anna in their hopelessness to ever have a child, did not despair, but turned to the Lord, each of them in prayer and humble supplication. They followed what is vital, and the great blessing what the birth of the one to give birth to God in human flesh. Many things in life are important. But only One is vital: the follow the One Who gave His life as a ransom for many and Who rose from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Fr. Elias

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