



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

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg,
MD 21727

<http://EntranceMission.org>

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The V. Rev. Elias Yelovich,
Rector

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***Invited to the Wedding Feast
September 10, 2023***

Sunday, September 10. Pentecost 14. Entrance Church

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

How blessed are those who know their need of God! The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs!

I remember back when I was in college there was a popular translation of the New Testament that was sold in bookstores and readily available in both school and church. It was called "Good News for Modern Man." The American Bible Society published it and made it widely available. I used to read it in place of my now venerable RSV version of the Bible. And it was really not so much a translation of the Greek New Testament as a paraphrase. Of all the passages that I read, the only one I actually remember was the one I just quoted. The First Beatitude: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven*, is what we sing every Sunday. But in the version of the so-called Good News Bible, it read, *How blessed are those who know their need of God! The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs!*

I remember it, because it is so very clear in the meaning of the First Beatitude. To be poor in spirit means to have nothing that would make one spiritually self-sufficient or adequate in the sight of God. It is to know that you are lacking and to trust in the eternal Good Will and Mercy of the Lord to help you, and indeed, ultimately, to save you! In other words, “How blessed are those who rely on God!”

The parable we heard in our Gospel lesson today speaks of a wedding feast. In the first century region of Judea, there was no greater time of happiness and feasting and joy and celebration than a wedding feast. It lasted for days, and all the friends of the groom and his bride would celebrate with them. To be invited to a wedding feast was to receive an honor and to anticipate a time of joyful celebration, dancing and feasting unlike any other. And the wedding feast about which our Lord spoke in His parable would have been especially wonderful, because it was given by the King. To receive an invitation to that wedding feast would have been the honor of a lifetime – to be greatly anticipated and valued.

And yet, in the parable, one by one, the guests decline the invitation. Some had business to attend to, others family. There were even those who mistreated the servants who brought them the invitation. The King is furious! “*Phooey* on those who were invited! Go out to the highways and byways,” he tells his servants, “and bring in good and evil, the poor and shady! Bring them in so that my hall will be filled!”

Who are those people who come? In a word, they were those who appreciated the great honor of invitation by the King and came to the feast. They were those who knew their need of God and came willingly.

We live in a land in a time and place where so very many of those invited to the Feast of God’s Kingdom decline to come. They have lives embellished by riches, hours filled with sports or entertainments of one sort or another; go see how the golf courses fare on a Sunday morning when we gather for the great Wedding Feast of the Holy Eucharist! Perhaps those who do not accept the invitation to the Wedding Feast of the Holy Eucharist think they will live forever? Or perhaps they don’t think beyond the gratification and pleasure of the moment? Or perhaps they take the kindness of God, the King, for granted. Shame on them!

But those of us who come, presumably, know that we need God. We are indeed poor in spirit. We become ill, we see our friends and relatives succumb to sickness and die. We hear of multitudes in Hawaii burned alive in terrible fires, children gunned down in their schools; over 2,000 dead in an earthquake in Morocco; we hear of soldiers on both sides of the terrible conflict in Eastern Europe getting killed, never to return home to their parents again. We come here to receive the blessed promise of forgiveness, life and salvation, bestowed on us by the King of Heaven, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet, the parable contains a warning to us. Yes, we come. But we must do so with a faith that seeks to become ever more like the King Whose invitation we have accepted. Our presence in and of itself guarantees us nothing. As Jesus said, God can make children of Abraham out of the

stones that lie on the ground. We must wear the wedding garment of our faith, active in our love for one another, our service to one another, our charity, and care, our concern for the least of the brethren. This is why Jesus concludes His parable with the chilling words, “Many are called; many are ‘invited,’”; but few are chosen.

Brothers and Sisters: We have accepted the invitation to the Feast. We know our need of God. Let us be the kind of people who have our wedding garments in place – people of faith, people of love, people who seek always and, in every circumstance, to emulate the Master Who has given us the great honor of the Feast! This is the call of our Lord in His parable of the Wedding Feast!

To Him be all honor and glory forever! Amen.

Fr. Elias

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