



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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The Election is Over Week of November 10, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

The slogans have been discarded and the commercials taken off the air. The outrageous claims of both political candidates have been silenced to everyone's relief. Thinking back over the claims made, it is clear that both sides were guilty of a tremendous deception. One side claimed "strength in unity," while the other promised to make America "great again." It is clear to me that both sides made impossible claims, since neither side had the slightest idea about what is necessary for their promises to be fulfilled. There is indeed strength in unity, but unity is an impossible dream unless it begins with submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Equally empty is the claim to "make America great again." America, like every nation of the world, can be great only if its citizens turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in humility and repentance and follow His commandments. To be unified means to first be unified with the Lord Jesus Christ; and, to make our nation great means to submit to the Only One Who is great in love and in mercy, the Incarnate Savior. So you see, both political movements, as well as the candidates who headed them, are doomed to failure, unless they first come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and bear the fruit of that faith, love in service to others. No one of us should have fallen under the spell of either political candidate or party or movement, for we are disciples of the Lord Jesus, and Him only do we serve. If we were momentarily deluded into thinking that either political movement held the keys to

future fulfillment of justice and mercy, then let us admit our foolishness and return in true repentance to the Only One Who is the fulfillment of all or our most ardent longings, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is our hope; he alone is our fulfillment.

Today in my Freshman Symposium class at the university we discussed these concepts in light of the literature we have been pondering all semester. The students are preparing to write their major paper of the course. The topic is to assess on the basis of what they have read what is truly essential in our humanity; in other words, what matters above everything else according to the literary masters we have been considering. With the election as a backdrop and the text of such noted Christian writers such as Shakespeare, Dr. King and C.S. Lewis recently read, the discussion today was intense. But every so often there is this or that student who has a sudden flash of insight.

The student today who saw the light, so to speak, kept me an hour after class discussing with great anxiety what she would focus on in her paper. As we spoke about the works we had read, I asked her to consider what insights of the writers that we had read were relative to our faith in Jesus Christ. "What did you read," I asked her, "that gives you guidance on how you should act and on how you should react to the intense feelings of people on both sides of the political disagreements through which we have just lived?" She went through the texts one by one, and then, after a pause of silence, said that the one text that revealed better than any of the others what really matters, what is essential for us in the fulfillment of our humanity, was the passage I assigned to them at the beginning of the course from the Gospel of St. Luke, the *Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (our Gospel lesson from last Sunday). Imagine that! I could have wept for sheer joy! At last! At last a student who sees!

Our entire purpose in life, she said, can be seen in the message of that parable. Our lives should be about giving thanks to God for what He has given us and then sharing those gifts with others. This, she observed, is not what the rich man in the parable did; instead, he kept his riches for himself and threw crumbs at the poor beggar at his door. To be human, to experience our "essential humanity," what really matters, is service to others.

Yes! That is most certainly true. One student saw it clearly. One student understood that the claims of the political candidates that divided and judged and hurt and mocked and lied to the people – that those claims were not only impossible but irrelevant. Because, you see, what matters in our lives is only one thing: the Lord Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him. And like Him, the purpose of our lives is fulfilled in the self-giving and service to others.

The election is over; the lies stopped; the slogans and commercials silent. It's time to get back to our lives and to that which makes us truly human. It is our union with the Lord that leads to unity with one another, and it is He, and He alone that will make us and our nation great – to the extent that we turn to Him in faith and in love. He and He alone. No political promise, no political movement, no political leader. Only Jesus Christ can be and indeed is LORD! Only He is our true God!

Remember what the LORD has done for you! Give Him thanks and praise! *Glory to His NAME for all things!* Pray for me, His most unworthy of priests.

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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