



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>

Men and Women for Others June 21, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst! He is and every shall be!

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (John 14:15)

I have found myself returning to these words of our Lord from the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John frequently of late. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." They are in my heart and in my mind today, because we begin that part of the year following the Feast of Pentecost that some call "ordinary time," and we hear in our Gospel Lesson from St. Matthew's Gospel the call of our Lord to the first disciples: "Follow me!"

What does it mean to follow Jesus?

For St. Peter and those with him, it meant that they completely re-ordered their entire lives. They saw in the Lord something irresistible, something different from what they encountered in the temple or synagogue in the ranks of the religious structures of their time. St. Matthew uses the word, "immediately." They "immediately" were changed by their encounter with Jesus. What did they see in Him? Surely, they saw the attributes of God Himself, whether or not they knew it then: love, forgiveness, mercy, humility. They encountered a man, the Son of Man,

Himself, Who was totally the man for others. Totally. This, they would certainly have seen, and this was certainly a part of what attracted Him to them. Thus, they re-ordered their lives and followed. "Immediately."

To follow the Lord Jesus for us in our time and place surely means the same thing. Do we see Him and love Him as the One Who came for the Life of the World? Do we see Him and follow Him as the man for others with the intent to emulate Him? Do we come to His Church wanting to be men and women for others? If not, why do we come at all? Surely, it is inconceivable that we would care to be saved for life with the One who is the man for others if we did not want to emulate Him and be men and women for others ourselves! Salvation, Brothers and Sisters, is never an individual or private matter. We cannot be saved by ourselves, for ourselves. We are saved insofar as we are joined with Him, and insofar as we keep His commandment, to love one another as He loves us. We are saved insofar as we are joined to Him to care for the welfare of others, to work for their good, to give of ourselves to and for others as He gives of Himself for us. Salvation is communal, not private!

There are many who call themselves disciples and followers of our Lord, but who do not follow his commandments. There are many who say they belong to His Church, and yet who did not seek to do what is for the welfare of others. Such people see salvation as a personal, private matter. And yet the Holy Fathers tells us rightly that we cannot be save on our own. Salvation means communion with Him and with others. The very sign of one who is being saved is the sign of love, caring for others, looking out for their benefit.

To follow Jesus is to emulate Him, to seek union with Him, to do His commandments. As He was totally the man for others, we must be men and women for others as well. This is what it means to follow Jesu: to show love, forgiveness, mercy and humility. To seek in all things to be as He is for us, to be men and women for others.

Fr. Elias

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