

*What is Important?*  
*Father Frank Matera*  
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During the past few days, I suspect that all of us have discovered anew what is important and what is not important. The storm that we experienced disrupted our lives and made life inconvenient, but if it reminded us of what is important, this storm has taught us a great lesson. Indeed, it has taught us the most important lesson. For when we know *what* is important, we know *what* to do and everything else falls into place. We know what is right and what is wrong; we know what to do and what not to do. But if we do not know what is important, we will spend our lives pursuing what is small and trivial. And so nothing is more important than knowing what is important.

The scribe who asked Jesus “which is the first of all the commandments?” wanted to know what is the most important of all God’s commandments. This was no idle question since the Law of Moses contained six hundred and thirteen commandments, some more important than others. Aware of this, and desiring to please God, the scribe wanted to know which of these commandments was the most important. Was there a commandment that superseded all the others? Was there a commandment that organized all of the others?

It was on this occasion that Jesus provided the scribe—and us—with an answer of what is truly important. The most important commandment is to love God; the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. No other commandment is greater than these. The love of God is the foundation of the moral life, and it makes everything else possible. The love of neighbor is akin to it. For, when we love God, we know that we must love our neighbor as well, and when we love our neighbor, we express our love for God.

But what does it mean to love God? How can we love God whom we cannot see? How can we love God whom we cannot hear? How can we love God whom we cannot touch? Today’s first reading provides us with an answer when it exhorts us to fear the Lord and keep his statutes and commandments all the days of our life. This reading teaches us that we love for God by seeking to do God’s will, by acknowledging that God and only

God rules over our lives. All that we have, all that we are, comes from God. All that we hope for, all that we long for, is found in God. To love God, then, is to be loyal and faithful to God who is always faithful and loyal to us.

To love our neighbor is to do what is good and right for our neighbor. To love our neighbor is more than an emotion or feeling. To love our neighbor is to do what is good and right and right for those in need.

If we know what is truly important, then we know how to live and arrange our lives. If we know what is truly important, it is easier to make the right decisions, to choose between what is right and what is wrong, to discern what will abide and last forever.

We, however, live in a world in which people are not always aware of what is important. And because they are not aware of what is important, they make the wrong choices and bad decisions. For example, modern technology is very important, but it is not the most important thing is life. Our work and our profession are very important, but they are not the most important aspects of our life. Success and achievement are important, but they are not the most important values of life. What is important, and what endures, is our love for God and each other. Pursue this, and everything else falls into place. Pursue this and you will order your life correctly.

In a few moments, we will celebrate the Eucharist and enter into the mystery of Christ death and resurrection. This mystery is what is important. Our participation in the dying and rising of Christ is important. This mystery of Christ's love for us and our love for Christ is what is important. Pursue this, and all else will follow. Live in and by this mystery and all else will be well. Share and participate in this mystery and you will know what is important.