

Since you have already come into the house of the marriage feast, our holy Church, as a result of God's generosity, be careful, my friends, lest when the King enters he find fault with some aspect of your heart's clothing. We must consider what comes next with great fear in our hearts. But the king came in to look at the guests and saw there a person not clothed in a wedding garment.

What do we think is meant by the wedding garment, dearly beloved? For if we say it is baptism or faith, is there anyone who has entered this marriage feast without them? A person is outside because he has not yet come to believe. What then must we understand by the wedding garment but love? That person enters the marriage feast, but without wearing a wedding garment, who is present in the holy Church. He may have faith, but he does not have love. We are correct when we say that love is the wedding garment because this is what our Creator Himself possessed when He came to the marriage feast to join the Church to Himself. Only God's love brought it about that His only begotten Son united the hearts of His chosen to Himself. John says that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for us."

Saint Gregory Dialogos



**6 September 2015 is the
Fourteenth Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 1:21-24; 2:1-4

Gospel: Matthew 22:2-14

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let us worship the Word, O ye faithful, praising Him that with the Father and the Spirit is co-beginningless God, Who was born of a pure Virgin that we all be saved; for He was pleased to mount the Cross in the flesh that He assumed, accepting thus to endure death. And by His glorious rising, He also willed to resurrect the dead.

Seasonal Kontakion:

In your holy birth, Immaculate One, Joachim and Anna were rid of the shame of childlessness; Adam and Eve of the corruption of death. And so your people, free of the guilt of their sins, celebrate crying: "The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, who nourishes our life."

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Galatians 2:11-16; Mark 5:24-34

Theotokos' Nativity Forefeast; Martyr Sozon

Tuesday: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28

Nativity of the Theotokos; Sophronios of Iberia

Wednesday: Galatians 4:22-27; Luke 8:16-21

Synaxis of the Holy Ancestors of God; Martyr Severian

Thursday: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; John 3:16-21

Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora & Nymphodora; Empress Pulcheria

Friday: Galatians 4:8-21; John 12:19-36

Theodora of Alexandria; Righteous Euphrosynus

Saturday: 1 Corinthians 2:6-9; Matthew 10:37-42, 11:1

Saturday before Holy Cross; Apodosis of Nativity of the Theotokos; Hieromartyr Autonomos



Evangelion

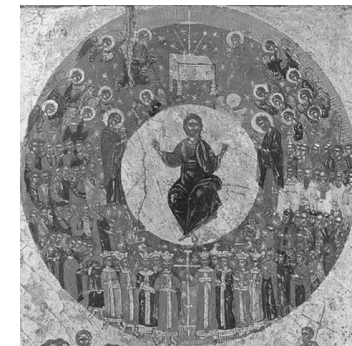
A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

6 September 2015

Where is Your Wedding Garment?

In today's Gospel, we hear of a king who gave a wedding feast. When the invited guests did not arrive, he sent his servants out to find them. But when they were not interested in coming, the king rejected them and sent his servants out onto the roads to invite anyone whom they could find to the banquet.

Jesus Christ often used the imagery of a wedding feast to explain the Kingdom of God. God had been reaching out to His people in the history of salvation that we read of in the Old Testament. Finally, in Jesus Christ, He so united Himself with humanity that this union can best be compared to that of marriage in which the Son of God unites Himself to His Church. God sends out His servants to invite all people to share in this union in the Church. The Gospel tells us that the servants gathered in all those whom they could find, both the good and the bad.



This clearly tells us that the wedding feast is for all people. None are excluded except for those who exclude themselves. However, this Gospel passage also strikes a discordant note by telling us of the man who had come to the banquet without a wedding garment. When the king saw him, he was speechless and insisted that he be thrown out into outer darkness "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This may sound rather unfair to us: How could the king invite all sorts of people to his banquet and then hold it against someone that he was not properly dressed? The Fathers tell us that this man represents a whole group of people and that his wedding garment represents something far more fundamental than mere clothes. The wedding garment in this passage symbolizes an inner attitude that the Fathers refer to as love, righteousness, and a genuine repentance.

We are all welcomed into the Church, the bad together with the good. But this welcome is only the first step, for what really matters is what happens in our hearts.

Thy bridal chamber I see adorned, O my Savior, and I have no wedding garment that I may enter. O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul, and save me.

From the Bridegroom Matins of Holy and Great Week

Ordained to Serve the Church

A series on the meaning of Holy Orders

Last week we saw that there are three orders of ministry in the Church and that the bishops are the leading members of the clergy who are called to oversee the Church of God. They serve to make the universal Church present in their dioceses and to unite their local Church to the Church throughout the world.



To Guard the Flock of Christ

Like the Apostles, the bishop is the teacher and pastor par excellence in his diocese and is called to keep his flock united in the love of Christ. He is the one who is ultimately responsible for ensuring both sound teaching and the well-being of the flock that has been entrusted to him. (1 Peter 5:2) A priest can only teach with the blessing of his bishop and he can also only serve the Divine Liturgy on an antimimension that is signed by his bishop. And it is the bishop alone who can ordain priests and consecrate churches.

Unlike priests and deacons, who can be married, a bishop is chosen from among the monastic clergy. And, in order to show the conciliar nature of the Church and the link to the wider Church, a bishop must be ordained by at least three bishops.

The ordination service is rooted in the laying on of hands found in the Acts of the Apostles (1:15-26; 6:2-6), making him a successor to the Apostles. Unlike priests and deacons who are ordained later in the service, a Bishop is ordained before the Scriptural readings in order to indicate that it is his special role to preach and teach the Gospel, and also in order to ordain others. The bishop to be ordained is brought to the Holy Table and asked to make a confession of faith. He vows to uphold the canons and teachings of the Church and promises to assume full responsibility for his flock. He is then brought into the altar and led around the altar three times. All the bishops lay their right hands on his head while he kneels before the altar, holding the open Gospel Book above his head to symbolise the hand of Christ. The senior bishop present prays the prayer of consecration after which the new bishop is vested and proceeds to celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

After the consecration Liturgy, the new bishop is usually presented to his people and is greeted by cries of "Axios, Axios, Axios!" (He is worthy!) He is installed in his episcopal throne and presented with his pastoral staff and mitre, symbolizing his pastoral authority.



Take care to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God, and with the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and with the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the business of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from the beginning and is at last made manifest.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos

On Tuesday we celebrate the birth of the Mother of God, or Theotokos, one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. Most of the direct references to her birth come from one of the apocryphal gospels, the *Protoevangelium of James*, which have been taken up and further developed in the liturgical texts of the Church. However, although the Scriptures do not refer to the actual birth of the Mother of God, they are full of indirect references to it, for the whole history of the Old Testament is a preparation for the coming Christ into our world. And a key part of this preparation was the preparation of the one who was to give birth to the Son of God. In the words of Saint Photios the Great:



Your birth, O Theotokos, brought joy to the whole world, for from you dawned the sun of righteousness, Christ our God. Freeing us from the curse, He gave us His blessings. Abolishing death, He granted us eternal life.

Apolytikion of the Feast

After God had bestowed on man the enjoyment and mastery over everything in the Garden, it was meet for him who was entrusted with so great authority to be disciplined and trained with some command. However, after transgressing this command, the Creator did not overlook His creatures though they had plunged themselves into such great error. It was needful, therefore, that one Person of the Trinity become man, to make it manifest that the re-creation too, like the creation, was their own work. Incarnation entailed a pregnancy and a mother. So it was needful that a mother should be prepared down below for the Creator, for the recreation of shattered humanity. She was to be a virgin, just as the first man had been formed of virgin earth; so the recreation too should be carried out through a virgin womb, and that no transitory pleasure, even lawful, should be as much as imagined in the Creator's birth; for the Lord suffered to be born for the deliverance of him who was a captive of pleasure.

Who then was worthy? Clearly it was she who this day strangely issued from Joachim and Anna, the barren root. It was needful, yea needful, that she who from the very cradle had by a superior reason preserved her body pure, her soul pure, her thoughts pure, should be marked out to be the Creator's Mother. It was needful that she who had been brought to the temple as an infant, who had trodden the untrodden places, should appear as a living temple for Him Who gave her life.

It was needful that she who had been born in a wondrous manner from a sterile womb, and had removed her parents' reproach, should also make good the failure of her forefathers; for she, the descendent, was able to repair the ancestral defeat, who brought forth the Saviour of our race by a husbandless birth, and molded His body.