

BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM – THE GREAT WEDDING FEAST

GREAT TUESDAY (Monday Evening) GREAT WEDNESDAY (Tuesday Evening); GREAT THURSDAY (Wednesday Evening)

GREAT & HOLY TUESDAY (CELEBRATED MONDAY EVENING IN ANTICIPATION)

BRIDEGROOM *Matins*: Matthew 22:15-23:39; condemnation of Pharisees, i.e., of the blind and hypocritical religion, of those who think they are the leaders of man and the light of the world, but who in fact "shut the Kingdom of heaven against men. (Schmemmann)

At the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*: Matthew 24:36-26:2; the End again and the parables of the End: the ten wise virgins who had enough oil in their lamps and the ten foolish ones who were not admitted to the bridal banquet; the parable of the ten talents "... Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." And, finally, the Last Judgment.

GREAT & HOLY WEDNESDAY (CELEBRATED TUESDAY EVENING IN ANTICIPATION)

BRIDEGROOM/MATINS SERVICE: John 12:17-50; the rejection of Christ, the growing conflict, the ultimate warning: "Now is the judgment of this world... He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings, has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day."

At the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (Holy Wednesday Morning)* : Matthew 26:6-16; the woman who poured the precious ointment on Jesus, the image of love and repentance which alone unite us with Christ.

3. The Gospel lessons... One warning, one exhortation runs through all of them: the end and the judgment are approaching, let us prepare for them (Schmemmann)

When the Lord was going to His Voluntary Passion, He said to His Apostles on the way: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up, as it is written of Him. " Come therefore, and let us also go with Him, purified in mind. Let us be crucified with Him and die through Him to the pleasures of this life. Then we shall live with Him and hear Him say: "I go no more to the earthly Jerusalem to suffer, but to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God, I shall raise you up to the Jerusalem on high in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Monday Matins)

"Behold, O my soul, the Master has entrusted you with the talent; receive the gift with fear; Repay the One who gave by giving to the poor, and gain the Lord as your Friend; so that, when He comes in glory, you may stand at His right hand and hear His blessed voice: "Enter, my servant, into the joy of your Lord." Though I have gone astray, make me worthy of this, O Savior, through Thy great mercy." (Tuesday Matins)

EVE RECREATED / THE HARLOT ANOINTING CHRIST: The Hymn of Kassiane

“Central to Great Week are accounts of women and their stance before the husband or the Husband - Potiphar's wife, the harlot, the wise virgins, the myrrhbearers, and the Theotokos. Of these, only the nameless Potiphar's wife stands solely for the Old Eve, the first improper Bride. The Theotokos, the wise virgins, and the myrrhbearers stand as anti-Eves, undoing Eve's mistake, and the *harlot* stands as the *Old Eve repenting*, becoming the New Eve through her tears. (Professor, Timothy Patitsas, *The King Returns To His City*, p. 129).”

“Christ is the new Adam, creating the new Eve - the harlot and the Church - again, from his side. *O Thou who hast fashioned Eve from Adam's side, Thy side was pierced and from it flowed streams of cleansing.* After the Mystical Supper, Christ crosses the brook and returns to a garden, the site of Adam's failure. But this time the New Adam will assume a cup of suffering rather than disobey God the Father. The Bridegroom is the New Adam, in every detail but sin, and requires a new Eve. His stripes facilitate her approach. The wounds of Christ, because they are borne in love for man, wound men in turn with love for him. (Professor, Timothy Patitsas, *The King Returns To His City*, p. 135).”

Prof. Patitsas: “That the harlot is held to have anointed Christ is astounding for a number of reasons:

- ❖ It reveals that Christ’s visitation to the chosen people...was precisely at the redemption of harlot Israel.
- ❖ She becomes the prophet who declares God’s choice of Israel's King, despite her impurity.
- ❖ She is held to gain grace by giving grace, or at least the material form of grace (oil).
- ❖ In the harlot’s anointing of the Son, besides declaring him King, she also pronounces his death sentence.

HOLY WEDNESDAY – UNCTION - THE ANOINTINGS – sharing in the double anointing of Life through Death

- ❖ The clergy sprinkle the people with fragrant myrrh or holy oil on Palm Sunday evening, Holy Wednesday evening and Great Friday

UNCTION: historical background – a.) a substitute for Confession (communal confession), preparation for Holy Communion on Thursday, an opportunity to anoint the sick at large.

Patitsas: ... “additionally, the service is intended to heal (make sovereign over disease and death) the Bride of Christ in preparation for her participation in the sacrifice of Christ (The Cross)...It is an anointing in which sickness and health alike proclaim Christ’s glory; it is not a *healing service* but a service of confirmation of the Christians victory in Christ through sickness and health alike. And the entire ministry of Christ to the sick, the poor, and the outcast is here summed up in this gesture (Professor, Timothy Patitsas, *The King Returns To His City*, p. 102-3).”

GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY – THE LAST SUPPER

Who or what is the object of our love?

“Two events shape the liturgy of the Great and Holy Thursday: the Last Supper of Christ with His disciples and the betrayal of Judas. The meaning of both is in love. The Last Supper is the ultimate revelation of God's redeeming love for man, of love as the very essence of salvation. And the betrayal of Judas reveals that sin, death and self-destruction are also due to love, but to deviated and distorted love, love directed as that which does not deserve love (money). Here is the mystery of this unique day, and its liturgy, where light and darkness, joy and sorrow are so strangely mixed, challenges us with the choice on which depends the eternal destiny of each one of us... To understand the meaning of the Last Supper we must see it as the very end of the great movement of Divine Love which began with the creation of the world and is now to be consummated in the death and resurrection of Christ. (Schmemmann, *An Explanation of Holy Week*, pg. 8).”

GOD IS LOVE / GOD IS LIFE / PARADISE LOST

“Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit contains seed. ***They will be yours for food...*** I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God looked upon all that He had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Genesis 1: 29-31)”

“God is Love (I John 4:8). And the first gift of Love was life. To be alive man was to eat and to drink, to partake of the world. The world was thus Divine love made food, made Body of man. And being alive, i.e., partaking of the world, man was to be in communion with God, to have God as the meaning, the content and the end of his life. Communion with the God-given world was indeed communion with God. Man received his food from God and making it his body and his life, he offered the whole world to God, transformed it into life in God and with God. The love of God gave life to man, the love of man for God transformed this life into communion with God. This was the paradise. Life in it was, indeed, Eucharistic (Living through the offering and acknowledging thanksgiving to God). Through man and his love for God the whole creation was to be sanctified and transformed into one all-embracing sacrament of Divine Presence and man was the priest of this sacrament. (Schmemmann, *An Explanation of Holy Week*, pg. 9).”

The Fall

“But in sin man lost this eucharistic life. He lost it because he ceased to see the world as means of Communion with God and his life as eucharist, as adoration and thanksgiving... He loved himself and the world for their own sake; he made himself the content and the end of his life. He thought that his hunger and thirst, i.e., his dependence on his life on the world -- can be satisfied by the world as such, by food as such. But world and food, once they are deprived of their initial sacramental meaning -- as means of communion, with God, once they are not received for God's sake, and filled with hunger and thirst for God, once, in other words, God is no longer, their real "content" can give no life, satisfy no hunger, for they have no life in themselves... And thus by putting his love in them, man deviated his love from the only object of all love, of all hunger, of all desires. And he died. For death is the inescapable "decomposition" of life cut from its only source and content. Man thought to find life in the world and in food, but he found death. His life became communion with death, for instead of transforming the world by faith, love and adoration into communion with God, he submitted himself entirely to the world, he ceased to be its priest and became its slave. And by his sin the whole world was made a cemetery, where people condemned to death partook of death and "sat in the region and shadow of death..." Matthew 4:16 (Schmemmann, *An Explanation of Holy Week*, pg. 9).”

THE LAST SUPPER – WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Great Week's soteriological vision extends to other aspects of the real ordinary life of man. In the institution of the Eucharist there is already a *political* vision of service ("But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."), a vision of a liturgical polity ("For He has chosen Zion; there has He been pleased to dwell, ruling over the peoples that cry aloud with faith: Glory to Thy power, O Lord.") and of liturgical civics ("be at peace with each other and with all men"). The Eucharist is a political act, going beyond even the concern for the "common good" to the recognition that the good is always held in common and dynamically. The call to liturgize without ceasing is not only other-worldly, but intensely this worldly, because it negates the possibility of a separate, liturgy-free, secular sphere. Finally, it grounds the lives of its adherents in the heavenly liturgy, as they join the angels in the glorification of the Holy Trinity. Christians are only saved to the extent that their lives are assimilated into the rhythms and patterns of the glorification of the Trinitarian God. (Professor, Timothy Patitsas, *The King Returns To His City*, p. 285-6).”

“Such is the wonderful meaning of the Last Supper. He offered Himself as the true food of man, because the Life revealed in Him is the true Life. And thus the movement of Divine Love which began in paradise with a Divine "take, eat..." (for eating is life for man) comes now "unto the end" with the Divine "take, eat, this is My Body..." (for God is life of man...) The Last Supper is the restoration of the paradise of bliss, of life as Eucharist and Communion. (Schmemmann, An Explanation of Holy Week, pg. 10).”

THE BETRAYAL AT THE EUCHARIST

“... this hour of ultimate love is also that of the ultimate betrayal. Judas leaves the light of the Upper Room and goes into darkness. "And it was night" (John 13:30). Why does he leave? Because he loves, answers the Gospel, and his fateful love is stressed again and again in the hymns of Holy Thursday. It does not matter indeed, that he loves the "silver." Money stands here for *all the deviated and distorted love* which leads man into betraying God. It is, indeed, love stolen from God and Judas therefore is the Thief...each year, as we immerse ourselves into the unfathomable light and depth of Holy Thursday, the same decisive question is addressed to each one of us: do I respond to Christ's love and accept it as my life, do I follow Judas into the darkness of his night? (Schmemmann, An Explanation of Holy Week, pg. 9).”

THE BRIDEGROOM SERVICE (CELEBRATED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING IN ANTICIPATION – MATINS FOR THE LAST SUPPER LITURGY ON THURSDAY MORNING)

LUKE 12: 1-40

The Betrayal

Kontakion: “In seeking the heights. Receiving the bread in his hands, the betrayer * in secret extends those very hands receiving * from the priests the price of Him * who had fashioned mankind with His own hands. * And he remained incorrigible, Judas the slave and the knave. [SD]

Discipleship

Oikos: As we all draw near with fear to the mystic table, let us receive the Bread with pure souls, remaining beside the Master, that we may see how He washes the feet of the Disciples and dries them with the towel. And let us do as we have seen, being subject to one another and washing one another's feet; for Christ himself has ordered this, as He declared it before to His disciples. But one did not listen, Judas the slave and the knave. [SD]

SYNAXARION – What is being re-membered

On holy and great Thursday, the godly Fathers, who have arranged all things well, received from the divine Apostles and the sacred Gospels and in turn handed down to us, that today we should celebrate four things: the sacred Washing of Feet, the Mystical Supper (that is, the tradition of what we know as the awesome Mysteries of Holy Communion), the High Priestly Prayer, and finally the Betrayal itself.

GOSPEL READING

⁸“But I say to you, everyone who shall confess in Me before men, the Son of Man also shall confess in him before the angels of God. ⁹“But the *one* who denies Me before the face of men shall be denied before the face of the angels of God. ¹⁰“And everyone who shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but to the *one* who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven... “Be taking heed and guarding yourselves from all covetousness, for not in the abundance of that which one possesses is his life... ³¹“But be seeking the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. ³²“Cease being afraid, little flock, for your Father is well pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³“Sell your possessions and give alms... ³⁴“for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also....³⁹“But know you this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched and not

let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰“Ye therefore also keep on becoming ready, for in the hour you think not, the Son of Man cometh.” [Lk. 1:1 - 12:40]

"When the glorious disciples were enlightened at the washing of their feet before the supper, Then the impious Judas was darkened, ailing with avarice And to the lawless judges he betrays Thee, the righteous Judge. Behold, O lover of money, this man who because of money hanged himself. Flee from the greedy soul which dared such things against the Master. O Lord, who art good towards all men, glory to Thee!"

VESPERAL LITURGY OF ST BASIL THE GREAT (HOLY THURSDAY MORNING)

Christ fulfills all forms of Jewish Liturgical Life in Himself. The “old” cult had now become “new” in Christ, and the Judeo-Christians were now part of a messianic society that found redemption in the sacrifice of Christ. Christ brings a NEW meaning to the meal and identifies himself as the one *offering* and being *offered*.

"Come, O faithful! Let us enjoy the Master's hospitality:
the Banquet of immortality!

In the upper chamber with uplifted minds,

let us receive the exalted words of the Word, Whom we magnify."

At Vespers, the stichera on "O Lord, I have cried" stress the spiritual anticlimax of Holy Thursday, the betrayal of Judas:

"Servant and deceiver,

disciple and betrayer, friend and devil,

Judas has been revealed by his deeds.

While following the Master, he plotted His betrayal... "

After the Entrance, three lessons from the Old Testament:

Isaiah 50:4-11; the beginning of the prophecies on the suffering servant of God.

The epistle reading is from I Corinthians 11:23-32; St. Paul's account of the Last Supper and the meaning of Communion.

The Gospel reading (the longest of the year) is taken from all four Gospels and is the full story of the Last Supper, the betrayal of Judas and Christ's arrest in the garden.

The Cherubic Hymn and the hymn of Communion are replaced by the words of the prayer before Communion:

"Of Thy mystical supper, O Son of God,

accept me today as a communicant; For I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies, Neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss, But like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom."

It was in the context of the Last Supper that Judas had decided to betray the Lord: We must always be watchful!

*At the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul and at other Patriarchates as Autocephalous Churches, the Holy Chrism is blessed during the Liturgy on this day; but the rite does not take place every year. At this service the “reserve sacrament” is consecrated to be used during the entire year for visitations to hospitals and shut-ins.

WASHING OF THE FEET FOLLOWING THE LITURGY

“He who is clothed with light as with a garment is girded with a towel... He who gathers the waters of the sea like a wineskin pours water into a bowl. He who covers the upper chambers with water, with water washed the feet of his disciples. He who measured heaven with his hand’s span and holds the earth in his grasp, with his undefiled palms wipe off the feet of servants. He for whom every knee bends, of those in heaven, and on earth and under earth bowed his neck to the attendant servants. The angels saw and recoiled; heaven beheld and shuddered; creation observed and trembled.” Cyril of Alexandria

Hymn Holy Thursday Evening – The Crucifixion

“Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross. (3x) He who is King of the angels is arrayed in a crown of thorns. He who wraps the heavens in clouds is wrapped in the purple of mockery. He who in Jordan set Adam free receives blows upon His face. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. We venerate Thy Passion, O Christ. (3x) Show us also Thy glorious Resurrection.141”