

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



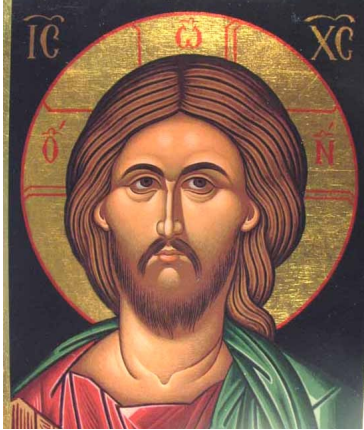
Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory be Forever!



Volume 9 Issue 429 14th Sunday after Pentecost– Parable of the Wedding Feast Sunday, September 13, 2020



There are times when we want to make sure that we are dressed appropriately for what we are doing. Some have to wear uniforms to work or school each day and will be disciplined if their clothing does not meet the standard. Most people develop a sense of what to wear for everything from athletic events to weddings and funerals.

How we dress says something about our attitude toward what is going on and toward others, especially our host, our employer, or those we are gathering to honor or support.

If that is true for us today, it was all the more so for guests at a wedding in the first century, especially the wedding of the son of a king. It was the custom in those days for the host to supply each guest with a wedding garment, clothing suitable for the occasion. Consequently, no one in attendance could have a good excuse for not being dressed in a way that honored the host, the bride and groom, and marriage itself as a sign of God's blessings from generation to generation.

It is understandable, that the king in the parable threw out the guest who was not wearing a wedding garment.

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***14th Sunday after Pentecost ***

Founding of the Church of the Holy Resurrection in Jerusalem

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1: 21-24

Gospel: Matthew 22: 1-14

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

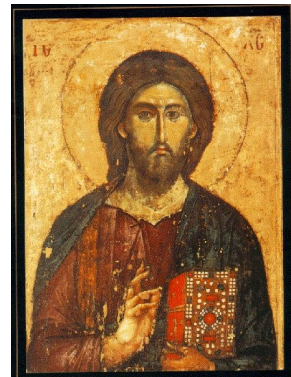
We are dedicated to living out Christ's commandment to, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor,

please call
Fr. Matthew
at 607-280-1586

Glory be to
Jesus Christ.
Glory be
Forever.



Time and the Church, Part 1, by Professor George Mantzaridis

Everything that has contributed to the incarnate manifestation of God in history, with His Crucifixion and Resurrection, have created the last times, the last day, the last hour, which is here and now.

So the last times are not restricted to the end of history, but are already here. The whole period after Christ's advent is the last times. And Christ, Who is 'the Alpha and Omega... he who is and he who is coming', (Rev. 1,8) is the

Lord, the beginning and the end of history. Whoever has Christ, has life (1 Jn. 5, 11). The experience of this life already exists in the Church. Our renewal and glorification in Christ, which we await in the age to come, is also experienced in this life: 'Now we are God's children, and what we will be has not yet been manifested; but we do know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is' (1 Jn.3).

Although the kingdom

of God appears in the world 'through a glass, darkly' (1 Cor. 13, 12) it is still truly present. The symbols by which it is known are not metaphorical or relative, but genuine. The uncreated light of the Transfiguration, of the Resurrection and of Pentecost, as seen by the saints of the Church, is the light of the kingdom of God. It is the real symbol of His presence.

The enormous error made over this point by Western theology, most

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Troparion to St. George

As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God
for our souls
salvation.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshiping with us today. Because of COVID-19, our social hour has been canceled until we receive further instructions from the Department of Health.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

We ask that you keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Olga, Lillian, Meg, Larissa, Stephen, Louise, Marcia, George, Lorraine, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Bonnalee, Vicky, Corella, Gail, Mike, Ron, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Words of Wisdom-Fr. Symeon

What a Christian should take care of is to ask for everything in his life to happen according to the will of God. The will of God is the commands of Christ. The commands of Christ are the will of God: both are identical. We should yearn in our hearts for the will of God and ask for it.

That's all that matters.

There is nobody standing on our way. Persistent-ly and with all the fervor of our hearts let us ask for God's will to be done in our lives.

We may pray again and again in order to make our desire clear in the eyes of God, but in the end let us round up our prayer by saying this: "Yes, my Lord, whatever it is to be done, let it happen according to your will". This is the way to find peace in our hearts.

Let us have gladness in our hearts in living according to God's commands, in living according to the will of Christ, who died and was resurrected for the sake of men. Let us accept with great joy all that Christ offers and live the experience of receiving it.

Let us make good use of all the spare time we have during the day and say the short prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, the sinner". This prayer contains everything: repentance, humility, return to God, asking and longing for God. "My God, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me".

Time and the Church, cont'd from p. 1)

notably, is that the symbolic or 'partial' manifestation of the kingdom of God in the world should be understood as metaphorical or relative. This was rejected particularly firmly by Saint Gregory Palamas in his dispute with Barlaam the Calabrian. The light of the Transfiguration, which is the same as the light seen by the saints of the Church, is not a created symbol of the kingdom of God, but a real, physical symbol of it. That is, it is the same light as in the kingdom of God, which is made apparent 'partially', so that it will be accessible to us.

Just as the dawn, which comes from the light of the sun, is the physical symbol or prelude to the sun's appearance, so the uncreated light which is made manifest in the Church is the physical symbol of the kingdom of God (Gregory Palamas, *On the Holy Hesychasts*).

The eschatological nature of the Church is revealed especially in the sacrament of the Divine Liturgy. The celebration of this sacrament is the

central and pre-eminently eschatological action of the Church. It is its Liturgy (= function). It constitutes the perfect community which overcomes



the divisions of space and time and manifests the kingdom of God to the world. Participation in the Divine Eucharist is communion with Christ. It

is participation in His eternal life (See, *Jn.* 6, 33-7). It is entry into His kingdom. These things are not presented metaphorically, but are real features which are presented as experiences to the members of the Church.

The Christian life is of an empirical nature. And the content of this experience is the presence of the kingdom of God. This presupposes that the life of the faithful in the Church is directed towards it and nourished by it. Participation in the kingdom of God means that time is transcended. Just as the presence of the kingdom of God in the world abolishes the divisions of time.

The Liturgy of the Church, the Divine Eucharist, which is the pledge of the kingdom of God, overturns any notion of a sequence of time. It is the supper of the Christ Who offers His body and blood before His Crucifixion, and Who continues to act after His Resurrection.

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For by neglecting to put on the garment he had been given, he was refusing to show respect for the celebration, much less to take part in it in a worthy manner.

Though we often overlook them, there are many times in the Bible when putting on particular kinds of clothing manifests our relationship with the Lord. Adam and Eve stripped themselves naked of the divine glory by turning away from God. As we chant in preparation for Theophany, Christ appeared in the waters of the Jordan in order to clothe the naked Adam with "the first robe," to restore fallen humanity and the entire creation as participants in His divine glory. Remember what St. Paul said of baptism, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27) In the Orthodox baptismal service, the priest puts a white garment on the newly baptized person immediately after he or she comes out of the water with the words "the servant of God is clothed with righteousness..." Then the chanter sings "Grant to me the robe of light, O Most Merciful Christ our God, Who clothes Yourself with light as with a garment."

The connection to today's parable is clear. The wedding garment is our baptismal garment, our putting on Christ, our participation in the healing and blessing of humanity that He has brought to the world. The Savior so often used a wedding feast as a sign of the Kingdom of God. In every Divine Liturgy, we enter mystically into that heavenly celebration, that eternal wedding banquet that is the salvation of the world.

The question for each of us, then, is whether we are living in a way that is appropriate to our exalted identity as participants in this great banquet. Do we act, think, speak, and believe in ways that fit with the beautiful garments Christ has given us? Through the God-Man, we become true participants in the divine nature, nourished by His own Body and Blood. We are not only guests at the wedding, but the ones being united to the Lord in a deep, binding covenant that changes our very identity. As always, God's salvation is personal and organic, fulfilling His gracious intentions ever since He made us in His image and likeness.

The man in the parable had much less responsibility than we do. He had simply been part of the crowd, the good and bad, invited to a wedding on a given day. He would have worn the wedding garment for a short period of time, and doing so would have given him no obliga-

tions once the celebration was over.

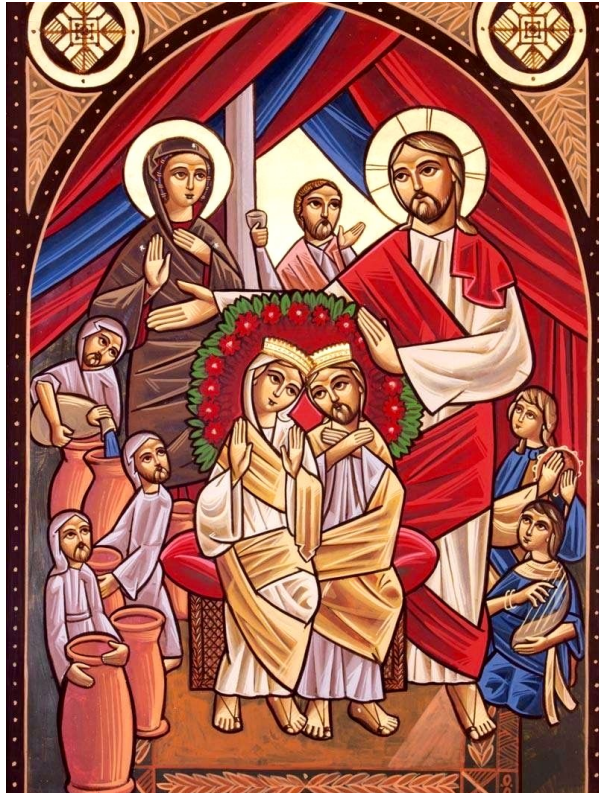
In contrast, our baptismal garment gives us a profound responsibility throughout our lives to live in a way that shines with the divine glory, that radiates the light of Christ to a world so filled with darkness, death, and despair. By putting on Christ, we accept a calling to do and say only those things that reflect His holiness, that flow from His righteousness and love. It is not enough simply to be baptized, for we must embrace the new life the Lord has given us and do all that we can to grow up spiritually into "the full stature of Christ." (Eph. 4:13)

In any demanding group endeavor worth its salt, people like that must eventually get with the program or find something else to do with their time and energy.

There is a parallel truth in the Christian life. We are members of the Body of Christ and must all work together for our collective health and well-being. A wedding celebration is a social event, and so is the Divine Liturgy. We do not commune with the Lord as isolated individuals, but as living members of Him and one another. We show our faithfulness not simply by what we do for a couple of hours on Sunday morning, but most profoundly by whether we live as those who have put on Christ every day of the week, when we are not at Church and are wearing other uniforms or performing other tasks not usually associated with religion.

No matter where we are, how we are dressed, or what we are doing, we still wear the robe of light given us by our Savior. We are never off-duty or out of season as followers of Jesus Christ, and we must live accordingly. If we do not intentionally struggle to do so, we disgrace our high calling and risk excluding ourselves from the Kingdom.

At the end of the day, we must extend the holy joy of the Divine Liturgy into everyday life. That means making our time at work, school, home, and elsewhere an extension of the heavenly banquet, an offering of ourselves and world to the One Who is the source of life itself and all our other blessings. The Second Adam has come to restore the entire creation, turning the water of our most mundane tasks into the wine of His glory. He wants us to celebrate and participate in the heavenly banquet every day of our lives. We will be able to do so only if we act as those who worthily wear a robe of light, as those whose true uniform is the baptismal gown, the wedding garment of heaven.



The Meaning of the Cross-Archimandrite Ioil Yiannakopoulos

When the people of Israel gazed upon the bronze serpent, they were cured. So we, too, are cured when we see Christ crucified. Let's investigate what this cross of Christ's is, what its benefits are and what it teaches us. The cross. In the cross of the Lord we see heaven, earth and hades united. We see God, a human person and the devil. To be specific, we see the love and justice of God in the form of sacrifice, in the following way. People sinned. They had to be punished. The punishment had to be the final penalty, death, because the sin, the fall, of Adam and Eve was hubris against God, since, guided by the advice of the serpent, they wanted to become like God by eating the forbidden fruit.

This death ought to have been double: death of both the body and the soul. At the death of the body, the soul would have been separated from it, and at the spiritual death, the soul would have been separated from God. But how would the love of God have tolerated such spiritual and bodily separation from His creation? But then, if He didn't punish the transgression, or punished the angels instead, that would have been unjust. God proceeded with a sacrifice which combines His love and His justice. That is, Christ became human and was crucified. Through His death on the cross, His soul was separated from His body. This is His first death, on the cross.

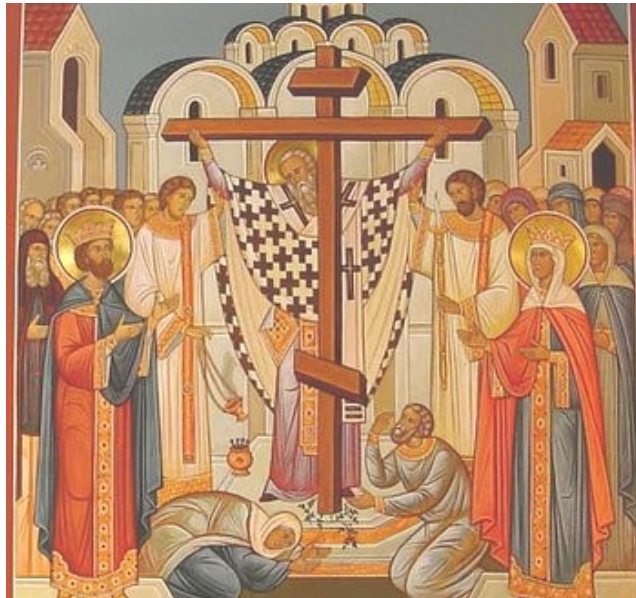
Then He was abandoned, was separated from the Father: 'God, my God, why have you abandoned me?', He cried aloud on the cross. This is the second death, the spiritual separation from God the Father, so that Christ's human nature could drain the cup of sorrows. In this way, through the sacrifice of His Son, Who gladly accepted it, He was not unjust to anyone. On the contrary, He satisfied both His justice and His love. He satisfied His justice, because a victim was found, who was Christ. He satisfied His love because nothing is more satisfying to love than when it suffers on behalf of the loved one.

God on the cross did not show merely His justice and His love, but also His wisdom, through this combination of His loving-kindness towards us, and His almighty power, because, through the weakest means, His death, He overcame our greatest enemy, death. So on the cross are manifested divine love and justice, God's loving-kindness and His all-encompassing wisdom. Also on the cross, the human person and the devil are present. The human person is present with its intrinsic value and the devil with his wickedness.

And what better to weigh the value of the human soul

against than the sacrifice of Christ on the cross? The human soul is so precious that the Son of God was sacrificed for it! The value of a piece of material can be determined by the cost of the cleansing material we use to clean it. If, for example, we were going to use a cleansing fluid to clean a piece of material and the fluid was of greater value than the material, we wouldn't bother. For us to clean dirty material with expensive cleansing fluid, the material itself should also be of great value. So if God wanted to clean the material- our soul- with His blood on the cross, we may conclude what great value the human soul must have, since it has been cleansed with the blood of God's Son, on the cross.

The cross also shows the wickedness of the devil, the weight of sin. Nothing else could have counter-weighted sin but the cross. A sin on the part of Adam and Eve, which occurred thousands of years earlier, brought the sinless Son of God to such a terrible death on the cross. How heavy sin is! The burden of sin is also evident on the cross from the hatred crucified Jesus had for it. The hatred



of crucified Jesus for sin can be seen from the decision. He agreed to be killed, because, through death He could expunge sin. How heavy sin is to attract such hatred from

Christ. This is why we see the whole wickedness of Hades exposed on the cross. And it was exposed so that it could all be included in its destruction. How great is God's wisdom. So the Cross of the Lord weighed God with His properties; our soul with its value; and the devil with his evil.

In 600 B.C., the law-maker and philosopher, Zaleucus, passed a law against adultery, whereby the adulterer would have both his eyes put out. Unfortunately, his only son was caught committing this offence. As a just man, the legislator had to apply the law, but as a father he loved his son and didn't want to leave him sightless. In order to balance justice and love, he decided to have one of his own eyes put out and one of his son's. In this way, by the removal of two eyes, the law-maker applied the law but made sure his son was not completely blind either, thus applying his love, as well.

Something similar, though much more sublime, took place in the redemptive work of Christ. God forbade sin to Adam and Eve on pain of death, but they sinned anyway. And the punishment for this was death. In order to show His love for us and to apply the death penalty as required by justice, He became a human person and died on the cross, showing His love and enforcing justice, as we saw above. On the cross, Christ suffers as God and Man and redeems the human race from our punishment.