

N. AND N.'S WEDDING SERVICE

The Orthodox wedding ceremony is ancient and full of symbols. It lasts about forty minutes and is actually two services in one, but these are usually celebrated together. The first and shorter service is the Service of Betrothal, during which the rings are exchanged. The second, the Service of Crowning, is longer and includes prayers for the couple, the crowning, the sharing of the common cup and a threefold procession.

THE SERVICE OF BETROTHAL

The priest makes the sign of the cross over the heads of the bride and bridegroom three times. He gives the bride, on the left, and the bridegroom, on the right, the wedding candles which they hold during the service. The candles represent the lamps of the Gospel's five wise virgins who, through their light, were able to receive Christ the Bridegroom.

Deacon: Bless, Master.

Priest: Blessed is our God always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy (*after each petition*).

Deacon: For the peace from on high and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy Churches of God, and the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

For this holy house, and for those that with faith, reverence and the fear of God enter herein, let us pray to the Lord.

For our great lord and master His Holiness, Patriarch N., for the Most Reverend Metropolitan N., for the Very Reverend Archbishop N., for the honourable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For the servant of God **N.** and for the handmaid of God **N.**, who now pledge themselves to one another, and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

That there may be granted unto them children for the continuation of the race, and all their petitions which are unto salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

That there may be sent down upon them perfect and peaceful love, and help, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be preserved in oneness of mind and steadfast faith, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be blessed with a blameless life, let us pray to the Lord.

That the Lord our God may grant unto them an honourable marriage and a bed undefiled, let us pray to the Lord.

That He will deliver us from every sorrow, wrath and need, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy upon us and keep us, O God, by Thy Grace.

Calling to remembrance our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us entrust ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For unto Thee are due all glory, honour and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: O God eternal, Who bringest them that are divided into unity and hast appointed for them an indissoluble bond of love: Who didst bless Isaac and Rebecca and show them to be the heirs of Thy promise: do Thou Thyself bless also these Thy servants **N.** and **N.**, guiding them into every good work. For Thou art a merciful God Who lovest mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And unto Thy spirit.

Deacon: Bow your heads before the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: O Lord our God, Who hast espoused the Church as a pure virgin from among the nations, bless this betrothal, and unite and preserve these Thy servants in peace and oneness of mind. For unto Thee are due all glory, honour and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Then the Priest takes the bride's ring, makes the sign of the Cross over the bridegroom's head with it, and says:

The servant of God **N.** is betrothed to the handmaid of God **N.**, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (*Thrice*)

The Priest puts the bride's ring on the end of the fourth finger of the bridegroom's right hand. Then he takes the bridegroom's ring, makes the sign of the Cross over the bride's head with it, saying:

The handmaid of God **N.** is betrothed to the servant of God **N.**, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (*Thrice*)

The Priest puts the bridegroom's ring on the end of the fourth finger of the bride's right hand. Then the best man exchanges the rings three times, the last time making sure the rings are pushed down onto their fingers.

The rings are placed on the right (rather than the left) hand to symbolise the side of Christ, Who sits on the right hand of the Father. They are exchanged three times to show that the weaknesses of one partner are made up for by the strengths of the other. Together the newly-betrothed are complete.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Lord our God, Who accompanied the servant of the patriarch Abraham to Mesopotamia, when he was sent to espouse a wife for his lord Isaac, and didst reveal to him a sign by the drawing of water to betroth Rebecca: do Thou Thyself bless the betrothal of these Thy servants **N.** and **N.** and confirm the promise that has been spoken by them. Establish them in the holy union which is from Thee. For Thou, O Lord, from the beginning hast made them male and female, and by Thee the woman is joined to the man as a helper and for the continuation of the human race.

For Thou, O Lord our God, hast sent forth Thy truth to Thine inheritance and Thy promise to Thy servants, our fathers, Thine elect from generation to generation: look down upon Thy servant **N.** and Thy handmaid **N.**, and seal their betrothal in faith, in oneness of mind, in truth and in love. For Thou, O Lord, hast shown that a pledge is to be given and confirmed in all things. By a ring was Joseph given power in Egypt; by a ring was Daniel glorified in the land of Babylon; by a ring was the uprightness of Tamar revealed; by a ring did our heavenly Father show compassion upon His son. For He said, "Put a ring upon his right hand, kill the fatted calf, and let us eat and rejoice."

Thine own right hand, O Lord, armed Moses in the Red Sea. For by the word of Thy truth the Heavens were established and the earth set upon her sure foundations; and the right hands of Thy servants shall be blessed by Thy mighty word, and by

Thine uplifted arm. Therefore, O Master, do Thou Thyself now bless this putting on of rings with Thy heavenly blessing; and may Thine angel go before them all the days of their life, for Thou art He that blesses and hallows all things, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

THE SERVICE OF CROWNING

Priest: Blessed are all they that fear the Lord.

The couple advance and the Choir sings after each verse: Glory to Thee, our God, Glory to Thee.

Priest: They that walk in His ways.

For thou shalt eat the fruit of thy labours.

Blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house.

Thy sons like young olive plants around thy table.

Behold! Thus shall the man that fears the Lord be blessed.

The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

Yea! And thou shalt see the sons of thy sons. Peace be upon Israel.

(Now follow the declarations of the bride and bridegroom giving their Christian names and surnames in a loud voice, as legally

required by the Registry Office in the UK - if the church is licensed for this):

Bridegroom: I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, **N.**, may not be joined in matrimony to **N.**

Bride: I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, **N.**, may not be joined in matrimony to **N.**

Bridegroom: I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, **N.**, do take thee, **N.**, to be my lawful wedded wife.

Bride: I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, **N.**, do take thee, **N.**, to be my lawful wedded husband.

Now follow the declarations of the Orthodox service:

Do you, **N.**, have a good and unconstrained will, and a firm intention to take unto yourself this woman, **N.**, whom you see here before you?

And the bridegroom answers, saying:

I have, Father.

The Priest again:

You have not promised yourself to any other bride?

The bridegroom:

I have not promised myself, Father.

And immediately the Priest, looking at the bride, shall enquire of her:

Do you, **N.** have a good and unconstrained will, and a firm intention to take unto yourself this man, **N.** whom you see here before you?

And the bride answers, saying:

I have, Father.

The Priest again:

You have not promised yourself to any other man?

The bride:

I have not promised myself, Father.

Deacon: Bless, master.

Priest: Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy (*after each petition*).

For the peace from on high and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy Churches of God, and the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

For this holy house, and for them that with faith, reverence and the fear of God enter herein, let us pray to the Lord.

For our great lord and father His Holiness, Patriarch N., for the Most Reverend Metropolitan N., for the Very Reverend Archbishop N., for the honourable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For the servants of God N. and N., who are now being united to one another in the community of marriage, and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

That this marriage may be blessed as was that in Cana of Galilee, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be granted chastity and fruit of the womb as is expedient for them, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be made glad with the sight of sons and daughters, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be granted the gain of fair children and a blameless life, let us pray to the Lord.

That they and we may be granted petitions that are unto salvation, let us pray to the Lord

That both they and we may be delivered from every sorrow, wrath and need, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy upon us and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Calling to remembrance our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us entrust ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For unto Thee are due all glory, honour and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O God most pure, Maker of all creation, Who through Thy love for mankind, didst transform a rib of Adam the forefather into a woman, and bless them and say, "Increase and multiply, and have dominion over the earth," and, by union, declare them both to be one flesh, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder;

Who didst also bless Thy servant Abraham and open the womb of Sarah and make him the father of many nations; Who didst grant Isaac to Rebecca and bless her offspring; Who didst join Jacob to Rachel, and from them show forth the twelve patriarchs; Who didst unite Joseph and Aseneth together, and as the fruit of their procreation didst grant them Ephraim and Manasseh; Who didst accept Zachariah and Elizabeth and show their offspring to be the Forerunner;

Who from the root of Jesse according to the flesh didst bring forth the Ever-Virgin, and from her was made flesh He Who was born for the salvation of the human race; Who through Thine ineffable grace and great goodness didst come to Cana of Galilee and bless the marriage there, to show that Thy will was lawful wedlock and procreation therefrom; do Thou Thyself, O

Most Holy Master, accept the prayer of us Thy servants; and as Thou camest there, be also here with Thine invisible protection, and bless this marriage and grant these Thy servants **N.** and **N.** a peaceful life, length of days, chastity, love for one another in the bond of peace, long-lived offspring, grace upon their children and an unfading crown of glory.

Count them worthy to see their children's children, keep their bed undefiled and give them of the dew of heaven from on high and of the fatness of the earth. Fill their houses with wheat, wine and oil and every good thing, that they in turn may give to them that are in need, granting also to them that are here present with them all their petitions that are for salvation.

For Thou art a God of mercies and of compassions and love for mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory, together with Thy Father Who is from everlasting and Thy Most Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Thou priest of mystical and pure marriage and Giver of the law of the marriage of the body, guardian of incorruption and good provider of the things of life: do Thou Thyself now, O Master, Who in the beginning didst create man and appoint him as the king of creation and say, "It is not good for man to be alone upon the earth; let us make a helper fit for him" and taking one of his ribs, didst make woman, whom when Adam saw, said, "This is now

bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, and she shall be called Woman, for she was taken out of Man.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh and "what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." And now, O Master, Lord our God, send down Thy heavenly grace upon these Thy servants, **N.** and **N.**, and grant unto this Thy handmaid to be in all things subject unto the man, and to this Thy servant to be the head of the woman that they may live according to Thy Will.

Bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Abraham and Sarah; bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Isaac and Rebecca; bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Jacob and all the patriarchs; bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Joseph and Aseneth; bless them O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Moses and Zipporah; bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Joachim and Anna; bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Zachariah and Elizabeth. Preserve them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst preserve Noah in the Ark. Preserve them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst preserve Jonah in the belly of the whale. Preserve them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst preserve the holy Three Children from the fire, sending down upon them dew from Heaven. And may that joy come upon them which the blessed Helen had when she found the precious Cross.

Remember them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst remember Enoch, Shem and Elijah; remember them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst remember Thy holy forty Martyrs, sending down upon them crowns from Heaven; remember, O Lord our God,

the parents who have brought them up, for the prayers of parents make firm the foundations of houses.

Remember, O Lord our God, Thy servants the bride and bridegroom who have come together in this joy. Remember, O Lord our God, Thy servant **N.** and Thy handmaid **N.**, and bless them. Give them fruit of the womb, fair children, and oneness of body and soul. Raise them up like the cedars of Lebanon, like a well-cultured vine; grant them offspring in number like unto full ears of grain, so that having sufficiency in all things, they may abound in every good work that is pleasing to Thee. And let them behold their children's children like newly-planted olive trees round about their table; that finding favour in Thy sight, they may shine like the stars in Heaven to Thee, our God. And, together with Thee, be glory, might, honour and worship to Thy Father from everlasting, and to Thy Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Holy God, Who didst shape man from the dust and from his rib didst fashion woman and join her unto him as a helper for him, for it seemed good to Thy Majesty that man should not be alone on the earth, do Thou Thyself now, O Master, stretch forth Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling place, and join together this Thy servant **N.** and this Thy handmaid **N.**, for by Thee is a man joined to a woman. Unite them in oneness of mind, crown them in one flesh, grant them fruit of the womb and the gain of fair children, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the

power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Then the Priest, taking the crowns, signs and crowns the bridegroom, giving him the image of the Saviour on it to kiss, saying:

The servant of God **N.** is crowned for the handmaid of God **N.**, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (*Thrice*)

Then he signs and crowns the bride, giving her the image of the Mother of God on it to kiss, saying:

The handmaid of God **N.** is crowned for the servant of God **N.**, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (*Thrice*)

Priest: O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honour.

The crowns are held over the heads of the bride and bridegroom by the groomsmen. The crowns represent the crowns of martyrdom as marriage involves mutual self-sacrifice. They also symbolise that the bride and bridegroom become the king and queen of their 'kingdom', i.e. their home or domestic church. Finally, the crowns are signs of the glory and honour which God bestows on them during the sacrament of marriage.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Priest: Peace be unto all

Reader: And to thy spirit.

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: Prokimenon, in the eighth tone.

Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stones. He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it unto him.

Choir: Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stones. Thy asked life of Thee and Thou gavest it unto them.

Reader: For Thou shalt grant him a blessing unto the ages of ages; Thou shalt make him glad with joy at thy countenance.

Choir: Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stones. They asked life of Thee and Thou gavest it unto them.

Reader: Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stones.

Choir: They asked life of Thee and Thou gavest it unto them.

Deacon: Wisdom

Reader: The Reading is from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Ephesians. (5:20-33)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: Brethren, give thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even

as Christ also loves the Church and gave Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the bath of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it might be holy and without blemish. So ought husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and warms it, even as the Lord the Church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church; however, let every one in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Priest: Peace be unto thee that readest.

Reader: And to thy spirit. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Deacon: Wisdom

Choir: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Reader: Thou, O Lord, shalt keep us and preserve us from this generation and for evermore.

Choir: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Deacon: Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Priest: The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St John. (John 2: 1-11)

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, Glory to Thee.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Priest: At that time there was a marriage in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were called to the marriage. And when there was not sufficient wine, the mother of Jesus said unto him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it." And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, holding twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said unto them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said unto them, "Draw some out now, and bear it unto the governor of the feast." And they took it. When the governor of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, not knowing from whence it had come (but the servants who drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called in the bridegroom and said unto him, "Every man at the beginning sets forth good wine, and when men have drunk well, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana in Galilee, and made manifest His glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, Glory to Thee.

The Priest gives the Book of the Gospels to the bride and the bridegroom to kiss, and then the Deacon says the following litany. After each petition, the Choir sings three times: Lord have mercy.

Let us all say with our whole soul and our whole mind, let us say.

O Lord Almighty, the God of our fathers, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy great goodness, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.

Again we pray for mercy, life, health, peace, health, salvation, and visitation for the servants of God **N.** and **N.**, and for the forgiveness and remission of their sins.

Priest: For Thou art a merciful God and lovest mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Lord our God, Who in Thy saving Providence didst vouchsafe by Thy presence in Cana of Galilee to show marriage to be honourable, do Thou Thyself now preserve in peace and oneness of mind these Thy servants **N.** and **N.**, whom Thou hast been well pleased to join together. Show their marriage to be honourable; preserve their bed undefiled; be well-pleased that their life together may be undefiled and vouchsafe them to attain unto a ripe old age, keeping Thy commandments with a pure heart.

For Thou art our God, the God of mercy and salvation, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy upon us and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That the whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.

After each petition the Choir sings: Grant this, O Lord.

An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

Forgiveness and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

Things that are good and profitable for our souls, and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord.

That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and a good defence before the dread Judgement Seat of Christ; let us ask of the Lord.

Having asked for the unity of the Faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us entrust ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: And vouchsafe us, O Master, with boldness and without condemnation to dare to call on Thee, the Heavenly God, as Father, and to say:

Choir: Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Deacon: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Then the common cup is brought and the Priest blesses the cup, saying the prayer below in a low voice:

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O God, Who hast created all things by Thy might and made firm the world and adorned the crown of all things created by Thee, do Thou, with Thy spiritual blessing bless this common cup which Thou givest unto them that are joined together for the communion of marriage.

The Priest, in a loud voice:

For blessed is Thy Name and glorified is Thy kingdom, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Then the Priest gives the couple the cup to drink from three times, first to the bridegroom, then to the bride, saying: I will drink from the cup of salvation; I will call upon the name of the Lord.

The act of sharing a common cup of wine symbolises that everything is shared in marriage – joys and burdens alike.

Then the Priest joins the bridegroom's right hand to the bride's right hand and lays his stole over their joined hands. He leads them three times around the stand in the middle of the Church (the stand which holds the Cross and Gospel), while the groomsmen hold the crowns above their heads.

The husband and wife are taking their first steps together in marriage. The Church, in the person of the Priest, leads them on the path they must walk, with the Cross going before them and the Gospel at its centre. During this threefold procession, three hymns are sung, the first words of which are proclaimed by the Priest. The second hymn is to the holy Martyrs, reminding the newly-married couple of the sacrificial love they are to have for each other.

Choir (in Tone 5): Rejoice, O Isaiah, the Virgin is with child and has born a Son Emmanuel, both God and man, and Orient is His Name; magnifying Him, we call the Virgin blessed.

Choir (in Tone 7): O holy Martyrs who fought the good fight and have received your crowns, pray to the Lord that He will be merciful to our souls.

Choir (in Tone 7): Glory to Thee, O Christ God, the boast of the Apostles, the joy of the Martyrs, Whose preaching is the Consubstantial Trinity.

Then the Priest removes the crowns, taking first that of the bridegroom and saying:

Be exalted, O Bridegroom, like unto Abraham, and be blessed like unto Isaac, and be multiplied like unto Jacob, walking in peace and doing in righteousness the commandments of God.

He then takes the crown of the bride and says:

And you, O Bride, be exalted like unto Sarah, and be glad like unto Rebecca, and be multiplied like unto Rachel, rejoicing in your husband, keeping the limits of the Law, for so is God well-pleased.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O God, our God, Who didst come to Cana of Galilee and bless the marriage there, do Thou bless also these Thy servants, who, by Thy Providence, are joined together for the communion of marriage. Bless their comings in and their goings out, multiply their life with good things; accept their crowns in Thy kingdom, preserving them spotless, undefiled and without reproach, unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Deacon: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the All-Holy, Consubstantial and Life-creating Trinity, one Godhead and one Kingdom, bless you and grant you length of days, fair children, prosperity in life and faith, and fill you with all earthly good things, and vouchsafe you to obtain the promised blessings through the prayers of the holy Mother of God and of all the Saints.

Choir: Amen.

Deacon: Wisdom.

Choir: More honourable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim, without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word, true Birthgiver of God, we magnify thee.

Priest: Glory to Thee, O Christ God our hope, glory to Thee.

Choir: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Give the blessing.

Priest: May He Who by His coming to Cana of Galilee showed marriage to be honourable, Christ our true God, through the prayers of His most pure Mother, of the holy, glorious and all

praised Apostles, of the holy, God-crowned sovereigns and equal to the Apostles, Constantine and Helen, of the holy, great-martyr Procopius and of all the Saints, have mercy upon us and save us, for He is good and loves mankind.

Choir: Amen.

After the priest's prayer 'A prosperous and peaceful life....', the choir sings "Many years", wishing the couple many years of blessings. The couple kiss the small icons of Christ and the Mother of God on the holy doors and the guests come up onto the steps in front of the altar to congratulate the couple.