

THE OFFICE OF THE DIVINE AND SACRED WASHING

As printed in the *Great Book of Needs*, this *Office* obviously is intended to be performed in a major Monastery with the participation of the Monastery Superior and twelve of the Brethren. (It is presupposed that the Superior is a Priest, as would be the case in major Monasteries in our times.) Now, however, it is more often performed by the Bishop and twelve Priests. The version of the *Office* intended to be performed by the Bishop will follow this *Office*. (Although the printed *Office* uses various terms for the main celebrant, variously indicating, “Priest”, “He that stands first” (lit., *Predstoyatl*), or “Superior” (lit., *Nastoyatl*), for consistency the term “Superior” is used throughout.)

After the Prayer Before the Ambon, the [Superior], fully vested, exits, together with other Servers carrying lampadas and censers, to the outside of the Great Gates (the western doors) of the church. (The Incense of the Washing is prepared ahead of time by the Ecclesiarch (Sacristan). And twelve responsible members of the Brethren are chosen by him that presides to be washed, among whom must be the Gatekeeper and the Steward.

Normally, the Steward ranks after the Superior in the Monastery ranks and will represent the Apostle Peter in this *Office*. (If there be no Steward, he that ranks immediately after the Superior takes the Steward’s place.) The Superior and the Brethren sit on specially prepared stools.

And all of us, together with the [Superior], sing Psalm 50. And at the conclusion of this, we sing the following, from the Canon of Great Thursday (TONE 6).

Ode 5

Irmos: United by the bond of love, and having offered themselves unto Christ Who ruleth all things, the Apostles were cleansed; and with feet made beautiful, they preached to all the Gospel of peace.

The Wisdom of God Who holds back the unrestrained fury of the waters that are high above the air, Who bridles the deep and restrains the Seas, pours water into a washbasin; and the Master washes the feet of the servants.

The Master shows to the disciples an image of humility; He that wraps the heaven in clouds girds Himself with a towel; and He in Whose hand is the breath of all that exist, bends the knees to wash the feet of the servants.

Then the Stikhera of the Washing are sung, TONE 1 (“Of the Tone”—“Samoglasen”):

O Christ God, Who didst gird Thyself with a towel, and didst wash the feet of the disciples: Wash Thou the thoughts of our soul, and gird us in a spiritual union, that we may do the commandments of Thy goodness.

(TONE 2) Desiring to accept a great and wondrous deed, O Faithful, make haste, reverently, to the precious washing, not for the washing of bodily filth, but for the mystical sanctification of souls. For Christ, our Savior, Who looketh upon the earth and maketh it to tremble, inclineth Himself, and with His feet toucheth the clay, giving firm response to every adverse power. Let us sing to Him with thanksgiving; for unto us that are worthy of being uplifted, He hath shown the way of humility. Save us, O Good One, as the Lover of Mankind.

(TONE 3) Peter greatly desired to have his feet washed by the most-pure hands that created Adam. He heard: "If I do not wash thee, thou shalt not have a portion with Me." Seized with great trembling, he cried unto Thee: "O Lord, not only shalt Thou wash my feet, but also my hands and my head." O, the great gifts of the Master! He maketh His disciples participants of His grace, and He promiseth them a share of His ineffable glory. As Thou didst say at the time of the Mystical Cup that Thou wouldest drink the New Cup with them in the Kingdom of Heaven, so count us worthy of the same, as Thou art merciful and the Lover of Mankind.

(TONE 8) Today, He that is unapproachable in His essence, taketh on the task of a servant; He that adorneth the heavens with clouds, girdeth Himself with a towel and poureth water into a washbasin; He that didst part the Red Sea, inclineth the knee and beginneth to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. When He was washing the feet of His disciples, He said unto them, "You are clean; but not all," signifying His betrayer.

(SAME TONE) It would have been better for thee, Judas, if thou hadst not been conceived in the womb of thy mother. It would have been better for thee if thou hadst not been born, O Betrayer estranged from the Son of God. Because of thee, the assembly of the disciples of Christ was torn asunder, and the True Vine was embraced by the crucified Thief; by thee the barrier was torn asunder, and the Temple not made by hands is torn down by the transgressors. For if thou didst value the myrrh of the sinful woman as being of a great price, how didst thou not shudder to betray into the hands of transgressors the blood of the Holy One? It would have been better for thee if thou hadst not been born, O Betrayer estranged from the Son of God.

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

(SAME TONE) Judas was seized by the dream of the devil, and he fell asleep even unto death. It is the time for us to be vigilant. It is the time for us to be soberminded. Let the heart groan; let the eyelids weep; let the Psalm be sung. For great is the might of the Cross. Christ is at the doors; the Paschal Sacrifice is come. Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Then the Great Litany is said by the Priest or by the Deacon:

While the Litany is being said, the Superior and the twelve Brethren sit.

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

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

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

For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

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

For our Metropolitan (*N.*); for our Bishop [*or Archbishop*] (*N.*); for the honorable Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

For the President of our country, for all civil authorities, and for the armed forces, let us pray to the Lord.

For this holy habitation, for every city and country, and for the faithful dwelling in them, let us pray to the Lord.

For seasonable weather, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

For travelers by land, by sea, and by air; for the sick and the suffering; for captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

For this washing, that it will be blessed and sanctified by the power and action and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

For this *washing*, that it will be for the washing of the filth of our iniquities, let us pray to the Lord.

For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

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

Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

The Superior stands for the Exclamation and the Prayers that follow, the twelve Brethren remain seated. (Also, when the Deacon begins to read the Gospel, the Superior and the twelve Brethren are seated.)

Exclamation:

For Thou art the cleansing of our souls, 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.

And after this, the [Superior] prays this Prayer in a loud voice:

O Most-good God, Who art unapproachable in Thy divinity, Who, in the form of a servant, didst become the image of service, and in the likeness of saving humility, didst wash the feet of Thy disciples with Thy pure hands, wiping them with a towel: Do Thou look down even now on us, Thine unworthy servants, who, in this manner imitate Thy most-glorious condescension, and count us worthy to be washed clean of the filth of our flesh and of the impurities of our souls by the touching of this water. Grant unto us the invisible descent of the Most-holy Spirit; strengthen us from the crafty serpent watching for our heel, that being cleansed, we will acceptably serve Thee, Who didst step over the head of the serpent and the scorpion, and every power of the enemy. For unto Thee is due all glory, honor and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Deacon: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

And the [Superior] prays, secretly:

O Lord our God, Who hast shown unto us the means of humility in Thy most sublime condescension, and Who, by Thy will, didst call the last to be first: Do

Thou grant us the grace to serve one another; raise us up by divine humility; preserve us undefiled, washed always with tears *and* cleansed by the illumination of Thy purifying grace, that always falling down before Thee in truth, we may obtain mercy and compassion at Thy dread judgment.

Exclamation:

For Thou art a merciful God and the Lover of Mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory, together with Thy Father Who is without beginning, and Thine All-holy, Good, and Lifegiving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

And after the Exclamation, the Deacon says:

And that we may be accounted worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

And they that are about to be washed sit on prepared stools. And the Deacon begins to read the First Gospel of the Washing. And the [Superior], rising up from the Brethren, says:

Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel. Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Deacon: The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to *Saint John*.

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

And the Deacon reads the Gospel:

The Gospel according to John (*Pericope 44—John 13:1–11*):

At that time: Before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, and the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside his garments,

And when the Deacon says, rose from supper and laid aside his garments, the Superior stands up and takes off his Phelonion.

Deacon:

and took a towel, and girded himself.

And when the Deacon says, and took a towel and girded himself, the Superior girds himself with a towel.

Deacon:

After that He poured water into a basin,

And when the Deacon says, After that He poured water into a basin, the Superior, with his own hands, pours warm water into the basin.

Deacon:

and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe *them* with the towel by which He was girded.

And when the Deacon says, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel by which He was girded, the Superior begins to wash the feet of the Brethren, beginning with the youngest up to the Ecclesiarch (or the Steward; or whoever has the second place in the Monastery ranks); and he washes the twelve, wiping each of the washed feet, and kissing them.

And when he comes to the Steward, the Deacon says:

Then He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said unto Him, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?"

And the Superior says:

Jesus answered and said unto him, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

And the Steward says:

"Thou shalt never wash my feet."

And the Superior says:

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me."

And the Steward says:

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

And the Superior says:

"He that is washed needs not but to wash his feet, for he is everywhere clean. And you are clean, but not all."

Deacon:

(For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”)

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

And after the washing of all of the twelve Brethren, the Superior takes off the towel, girds himself with his tunic, and puts on his Phelonion.*

And the Deacon exclaims:

And that we may be accounted worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

And having gone to his place, the Superior himself reads the Second Gospel of the Washing, in the hearing of all.

Deacon: Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Superior: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Deacon: The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to *Saint John*.

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

The Superior reads the Gospel:

The Gospel according to John (*Pericope 45—John 13:12–17*):

At that time, when Jesus had washed the disciples' feet: and had taken His garments and had sat down again, He said unto them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

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

And after the Gospel, he reads this Prayer, in the hearing of all:

O Lord our God, Who, according to Thy great mercy, didst exhaust Thyself and didst take on the form of a servant; Who, in the time of Thy saving, lifegiving and voluntary Passion, didst condescend to sup with Thy Holy Disciples and Apostles; and then, having girded Thyself with a towel, didst wash the feet of Thy Disciples, giving them an example of wise humility and love toward each other, and saying:

“As I have done to you, so do likewise to one another”: Do Thou Thyself, O Master, be in the midst of Thine unworthy servants who have come to follow Thine example, washing away all filth and uncleanness from our souls, that having washed the dust of transgressions clinging to us, and having wiped each other with the towel of love, we may be able to please Thee all the days of our life, and find grace before Thee. For Thou art He that blessest and sanctifiest all things, O Christ our God, and unto Thee do we send up glory, together with Thy Father Who is without beginning, and Thine All-holy, Good, and Lifegiving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

And when the Prayers are finished, all the Brethren are sprinkled with water from the basin. Then, we enter the church, singing the Troparia from the Fifth Ode of the Canon of Great Friday (TONE 6):

Ode 5

Their feet having been washed, and having been purified beforehand by the partaking of the Divine Mysteries, O Christ, Thy ministers went up with Thee now from Sion to the great Mount of Olives, singing Thy praises, O Lover of Mankind.

“See that you be not troubled, my friends,” Thou didst say. “For now the hour draws near when I shall be taken and slain at the hands of transgressors; and you all shall be scattered, having forsaken Me. But I shall gather you together to proclaim Me, the Lover of Mankind.”

Then, giving out pieces of bread (Antidoron), the Dismissal is made.