



72<sup>nd</sup> Year

December 15, 2024

Pamphlet #50 (3733)

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## **THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Luke 14:16-24, Matthew 22:14)**

### **Many are invited, but few are chosen**

*The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"*

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### **THE INVITATION TO THE GREAT BANQUET**

The parable of the Great Banquet, which is read on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, clearly symbolizes the Church, expressed in the mystery of the Divine Eucharist. The invitation

to participate in the great banquet is an invitation to become members of the Church, to commune of the Body and Blood of Christ.

## **The invited guests**

A certain man invited those who seemed to be his dearest friends to a banquet, to spend a few hours in his joy. However, these people, one after another, scorned his invitation, each for his own reason. One had bought a piece of land and did not have the time. Another had bought five pairs of oxen and had work to do. A third had married and was not inclined to respond. After they refused to come, the host invited the poor, the sick, the homeless, and the socially marginalized to the banquet.

## **Church and Eucharist**

This invitation to the great banquet, which is the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, is addressed to each of us personally and continues in the Divine Liturgy. In the Divine Eucharist, the "recapitulation of the entire divine economy," the Church is realized as the Body of Christ and communion of the Holy Spirit, and at the same time, the nature and character of the mystery of the Church are revealed as a mystery of divine-human communion.

## **Going to Church**

The Liturgy is the mystery of the Assembly. We must steadfastly know and remember that we do not go to the Church for individual prayers, but to gather as a Church. And when I say, "I'm going to Church," this means "I'm going to the Assembly of the faithful, so that I with them form the Church, to become what I became on the day of Baptism, that is, a member of the Body of Christ. I go to confess before God and people the mystery of the Kingdom of God."

## Our participation in the Divine Eucharist

Unfortunately, even today, it seems that not everyone is aware of the ecclesiological significance of the Divine Liturgy and the Holy Mysteries. Either we view them as mere religious duties, as opportunities for individual perfection and salvation, or as actions left exclusively to each person's individual desire, piety, and preparation. How sad it is, therefore, if we refuse God's invitation because we are absorbed by earthly matters, or when we commune so that we may fulfill an obligation, or for tradition, or for goodwill. Furthermore, others do not commune because they consider themselves unworthy. Saint John Cassian writes: "We should not avoid Holy Communion because we consider ourselves sinful. We must come more often for the healing of the soul and the purification of the spirit, but with such humility and faith that we consider ourselves unworthy. For it is the holiness of Christ and not our own that makes us worthy to approach and receive the holy Gifts."

Frequent Communion is the ideal of ecclesiastical community. It is not an obligation at all. It is an act of love and worship towards God, "to draw near and commune, as long as we are blameless as per our spiritual father" (St. Gregory V, Patriarch of Constantinople).

Let us not refuse the invitation to the Banquet of the Divine Eucharist, so that we do not deprive ourselves of the joy of our communion with God.

† F. A.

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December 15, 2024: 11th Sunday of Luke

The Holy Forefathers;  
Eleutherios the Hieromartyr and his mother Anthia (2nd century).

Pl. 4th Tone – Eothinon: 3 – Epistle: 2 Timothy 1:8-18 –  
Gospel: Luke 14:16-24, Matthew 22:14

NEXT SUNDAY: December 22, Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ  
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40 – Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

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*ΔΙΠΤΥΧΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ,  
ΗΜΕΡΟΔΕΙΚΤΗΣ ΤΟΙΧΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΕΤΗΡΙΔΑ 2025*

*(DIPTYCHS OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE,  
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