

## THE RITE OF THE WASHING OF THE FEET ON GREAT THURSDAY

As done in parish churches following the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great<sup>1</sup>

### PREPARATIONS

*Well in advance of the service, twelve men are selected by the Priest and instructed to bring with them to the service easy-to-remove slippers or thongs.*

*A large basin and pitcher is placed in the sanctuary, together with two large, white towels (and two large safety-pins). Immediately prior to the service the pitcher will be filled with warm water mingled with rose water.*

### THE SERVICE

*Following the Dismissal of the Vespereal Divine Liturgy, the holy doors and curtain are closed, and the Deacon consumes the remaining Holy Gifts at the prothesis.*

*The Priest and Deacon remain fully vested.*

*Two chairs are set in the center of the solea, facing each other (north and south), leaving space between them for the Priest to kneel with the basin and pitcher.*

*The pitcher is filled with warm water mingled with rose water.*

*The twelve men remove their shoes and stockings, and shod themselves in easy-to-remove slippers or thongs. They then assemble on the solea, forming a line of six on either side (north and south), with each line ranked in descending order from eldest to youngest.*

*After asking the Priest's blessing, the Deacon opens the curtain and holy doors.*

*Standing before the holy table, facing east, the Priest and Deacon make three metanias, and the Priest kisses the gospel book and the holy table, while the Deacon kisses only the southwest corner of the holy table.*

*After asking the Priest's blessing, the Deacon exits the sanctuary through the north door and takes his place on the solea, makes three metanias, then lifts his orarion and intones:*

**Deacon:** Bless, master.

*Blessing himself with the sign of the Cross, the Priest intones:*

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

**Choir:** Amen.

**Priest:** Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

O heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things, the Treasury of good things, and Giver of life: Come, and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O good One.

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<sup>1</sup> The Jerusalem Rite, done by bishops in their cathedral churches, follows a different order.

**Reader:** Holy God (*thrice*) ... Glory *and* Both now ... All-holy Trinity ... Lord, have mercy (*thrice*) ... Glory *and* Both now ... Our Father ...

**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 ages of ages.

**Choir:** Amen.

*(The Apolytikion in tone 8)* At supper the glorified disciples were illuminated by the washing of the feet. But Judas, the traitor, was stricken and darkened with the love of silver, and to lawless judges, O righteous Judge, he delivered and surrendered Thee. Wherefore, O lover of wealth, behold him who for its sake hanged himself, and flee the insatiable soul which dared such things against the Teacher. O Thou whose goodness pervadeth all, O Lord, glory to Thee. (*thrice*)

*Still standing at his place on the solea, the Deacon lifts his orarion and intones:*

**Deacon:** Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.

**Choir:** Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

**Deacon:** Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

**Choir:** Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

**Deacon:** Again we pray for our (Metropolitan *or* Archbishop *or* Bishop), *N.*, and all our brotherhood in Christ.

**Choir:** Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

*The Deacon bows, enters the sanctuary through the south door and takes his place at the southwest corner of the holy table, while the Priest says the following prayer:*

**Priest:** O Lord, all-good and gracious God, unapproachable in Thy divinity, who didst take on the form of a slave and the likeness of a servant, who art the model of saving humility, washing the feet of the Disciples and wiping them with Thine immaculate hands: Look Thou also upon us, Thine unworthy servants who imitate Thy most glorious condescension, and account us worthy to be washed of the pollutions of the flesh and the stains of the soul by the touching of this water. Grant that the All-holy Spirit may invisibly descend upon us. Preserve our souls and bodies from the suggestions of the ever-watchful, crafty evil one, that having been cleansed, we may worship Thee in an acceptable manner, trampling upon serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy.

For Thou art the Cleansing of our souls, and unto Thee we ascribe glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

**Choir:** Amen.

*Still standing at his place at the holy table, the Deacon lifts his orarion and intones:*

**Deacon:** And that we may be accounted worthy to hear the holy gospel, let us beseech the Lord our God.

**Choir:** Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

**Deacon:** Wisdom. Stand upright. Let us hear the holy gospel.

*Turning to face the people, the Priest blesses, them, saying:*

**Priest:** + Peace be to all.

**Choir:** And to thy spirit.

**Priest:** The reading from the holy gospel according to John the Theologian.

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

**Deacon:** Let us attend.

*Standing in the holy doors, facing west, the Priest chants the appointed gospel pericope in two sections, as follows:*

**Priest:** *(John 13: 3-11 – the Gospel Book, page 319)*

*After chanting this first section of the appointed gospel pericope, the Priest, still standing before the holy table, removes his phelonion and hands it to the Deacon who lays it aside. The Deacon then assists in girding the Priest with one of the large white towels (fastening it around his waist with the safety-pins); the second towel is placed loosely around the Priest's neck. The Deacon then gives the Priest the basin and pitcher (containing warm water mingled with rose water).*

*The Priest, carrying the basin and pitcher, exits the sanctuary through the holy doors and, facing west, kneels between the two chairs in the center of the solea, placing on the floor before him the basin and pitcher..*

*Then, coming two by two (one from each side), the twelve men come to sit on the chairs and remove their slippers or thongs. The first (eldest) man places his bare feet in the basin, and the Priest pours warm water mingled with rose water over them, dries them with the towel from around his neck, and kisses the feet. The feet of the second man are washed in the same manner. Then these first two men stand and return to their places in the congregation as the next two (one from each side) come to sit on the chairs to have their feet washed. This procedure is repeated until all twelve men have had their feet washed, dried and kissed by the Priest. The chairs are removed by the last two men as they leave the solea.*

*During the Washing of the Feet, it is traditional that the Chanters repeatedly chant, slowly and melismatically, John 13:5 until the Washing is completed:*

“Then He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with a towel with which He was girded.”

*Having completed the Washing of the Feet, the Priest stands, places the basin and pitcher on the floor beneath the icon of the Master Christ on the iconostasis, and enters the sanctuary through the holy doors.*

*The Deacon removes both of the towels from the Priest and assists him in putting on his phelonion once again.*

*The Priest, standing in the holy doors and facing west, continues the service by chanting the second section of the appointed gospel pericope, as follows:*

**Priest:**           *(John 13: 12-17 – the Gospel Book, page 320)*

*At the conclusion of the gospel pericope the choir chants:*

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

*Turning to face the people, the Priest blesses, them, saying:*

**Priest:**           + Peace be to all.

**Choir:**           And to thy spirit.

*Lifting his orarion, the Deacon says:*

**Deacon:**       Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

**Choir:**           To Thee, O Lord.

**Deacon:**       Let us pray to the Lord.

**Choir:**           Lord, have mercy.

*Standing before the holy table, facing east, the Priest bows low and says the following prayer:*

**Priest:**       O Lord our God, who didst empty Thyself according to Thy great mercy and didst take on the form of a servant; who at the time of Thy saving and life-giving and voluntary Passion didst account Thy disciples and apostles worthy to sup with Thee; who gavest unto them the example of humility and love for one another, saying, “As I have done unto you, so ought ye to do unto others.” Likewise, O Master, be Thou present even now in the midst of Thine unworthy servants who seek to follow Thine example, and do Thou wash away every spot and stain from our souls; so that, being cleansed from our sins which cling to us like dust, and wiped by the towel of Thy love, we may be able to please Thee all the days of our lives, and find grace in Thy sight.

For Thou art He that blesseth and sanctifieth the whole creation, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine unoriginate Father, and Thine all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

**Choir:** Amen.

*Then standing in the holy doors, facing west, the Priest says the Little Dismissal:*

**Priest:** Glory to Thee, O Christ our God and our Hope, glory to Thee.

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

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Father, bless.

**Priest:** May He who showed us the most excellent way of humility when He washed His disciples' feet and condescended even unto the Cross and Burial because of His exceeding goodness, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; at the supplications of the holy, glorious, all-laudable Apostles; of *N. (patron saint of the church temple)*; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anne; and of all the saints: have mercy on us, and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

**Choir:** Amen.