

## Seasons for Concluding Marriages

Relative to the **time** of fulfillment of marriage, one should have in view that it is not allowed to crown marriages:

1) from the week of the Meat-fare Week or Sunday (i. e. Sunday before Cheese-fare) up to Thomas Sunday (i. e. first Sunday after Pascha);

2) for all of St. Peter's Lent (i. e. from the first Sunday after Trinity Day until June 29);

3) for all of Dormition Lent (i. e. from August 1 until August 15);

4) for all of Christmas Lent with the inclusion here the holy days of the feast, i. e. from November 14 until January 6<sup>1</sup>;

5) marriages are also not done on the eve of one-day fasts, i. e. on Wednesdays and Fridays;

6) besides this, according to established practice we have marriages (with reference to articles 23, 25 and 26 of the Ust. o p. i p. prest. [Ust. about the Prevention and Suppression of Crime], publ. 1890) on the eve of Sundays, twelve major feasts, temple and other local parish feasts<sup>2</sup>, but also on the day before Oct. 1 and 22, Aug. 29<sup>3</sup>, Sept. 26 and May 9<sup>4</sup>;

7) finally, included with holidays there are also days of the Crowning and Accession to the throne of the Sovereign Emperor, the day before other Solemn days (including birthdays and Name's days of Their Imperial Majesties and His Imperial Majesty's Sovereign Successors) crowning of marriages are authorized (Visochaishii povelenie [Imperial Orders] 25 January 1839).

**The detailed list** of all the days on which it is impossible to do marriages **is not present** in either church or civil legislation. In the Rudder (see chapter 50) it is forbidden to crown marriages only on the following days: from November 14 until January 6, from Meat-fare Sunday until Thomas Sunday and from the Sunday of All Sacred until June 29 and from August 1 until August 15. "Polyeleion" feasts, on the eve of which it would be impossible to crown, are not mentioned in the Rudder at all. If it is also said there (part 1, chapter 3), that it is necessary to celebrate "the days of the Apostles and the day of St. Stephen the First Martyr", then in the given place there is a speech not only about an obstacle to the fulfillment of marriages on the eve of these days, but about the termination of every day employment on known feasts (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1887, 50; refer to A. Pavlov, The Rudder, chapter 50, p. 226).

In the week without fast days **on Tuesday and Thursday before Cheesefare**, some priests perform marriages, based on the idea that the week without fast days cannot be compared with other weeks in which marriages are not done on the eve of fast days. Others from this side do not make any exception for the week without fasting and do not crown marriages on Tuesday or on Thursday.

The late prof. I. D. Mansvetov posited that the initial permission of the Orthodox fast in meat-fare week was followed in Asia Minor and Palestine as countries with a large Armenian population and entered into the practice of the Jerusalem Typikon, but from here together with the polemics against the Armenians and Monophysites extended to all the East and became church wide. But for the canonical or authoritative definition in this respect, we have no definition (Mansvetov, Typikon, 386-387).

Some of authoritative writers of the Eastern Church as, for example, Nicholas the Scholar, even posited that the fast allowance on Wednesday and Friday of this week merely authorized what was kept before by the archivurievoi heresies, but which came from Orthodox ancestors, for those there are no good reasons to allow a fast on those days.

In our liturgical books meat-fare week is in itself preparatory to lent is why its service is also located at the beginning of the Lenten Triodion. At the same time the Ustav [Typikon] also indicated its relation to the Armenian Lent: "it is necessary to know that during this week the thrice cursed Armenians fast..." and so forth (see the Ustav [Typikon]).

In view of the above-stated data there is no basis to make an exception for the week without fasting in relation to the crowning of a marriage<sup>5</sup> (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1887, 47).

Our confirmed practice of the church also received the power of not crowning marriages on the eve of one-day fasts - Wednesdays and Fridays<sup>6</sup> - with logical necessity leads to that the **eve of Lents lasting many days** (see above pp. 176, 263 and 413) are acknowledge as a time closed for marriages.

As to the **Meat-fare Week** (i. e. last Sunday before meat-fare) the crowning of marriage with special hierarchical permission may be done on this day, only not

in the evening but directly after the Liturgy<sup>7</sup> (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1888, 42; Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 8; Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News] 1898, 13).

For the termination of crowning of marriages **three days prior to the Christmas Lent**, as this is practiced in some places, it is not represented by any canonical basis<sup>8</sup> (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 6).

As to what happens **up to the twenty four hour day**, in which it is necessary to do the marriage, then there certainly should be such time (Rudder chapter 50, part 2; Instruksiia blagochinnim [Instructions for Deans] 19). The Holy Church inspires those being married to prepare for a new way of life with ascetic prayer and fasting. Repentance and reception of the Holy Mysteries is why the marriage is done after the liturgy, according to the Ustav [Typikon] of the Church<sup>9</sup>.

At the present time this canon is weakened by the custom of also allowing the wedding in the evening, but only not at night (sees Fr. Silchenkov, p 76). But since contemporary practice to crown marriages in the evening of the one-day fast (but equally also on other days permitted for marriages) is found in direct contradiction as with the ancient so also with the latest rules about the times of days, appropriate for the crowning of marriages, then the fulfillment of marriages cannot be approved in the late evening<sup>10</sup>, but furthermore this custom does not deserve imitation for rural parishes. According to chapter 50 of the stricter Rudder the priest is forbidden to crown marriages "after the meal, later in the evening", but it is prescribed to crown "early in the morning", "after the Divine Liturgy, or after the Hours"; then the same requirement, in order that marriages were crowned in the afternoon, is expressed in the report of the Holy Synod, Dec. 3, 1742, № 28, and in the Instruksiia blagochinnim [Instructions for Deans], § 19 (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 6; refer to the Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1887, 52).

Under the operating regulations, **marriage** of the Orthodox should be done in the personal presence of those being married. Besides this, it is required, so that the ceremony is done before witnesses<sup>11</sup>, not less than two, who confirm by their signature the fact of marriage in the metrical book<sup>12</sup> (refer to pp. 1139-1140). Each marriage should be done separately. To crown several pairs together is in every respect improper and is positively forbidden by the church authorities<sup>13</sup>. Finally, the wedding should be done according to the rules and ceremonies of the Orthodox Church (Opredelenie sviatago Synoda [Decisions of the Holy Synod], July 3, 1773; Svod Zakonov [Code of Laws], vol. X, part 1, article 31).

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<sup>1</sup> On the same day of January 6, the **crowning of marriages** is not done; but on Thomas Sunday and also Jun. 29 and Aug. 15 (If, of course, these last two days are not on the eve of Wednesday, Friday and Sunday) the crowning may be done (Fr. Hojnatsky, p. 31).

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<sup>2</sup> It is better to reject the crowning of marriage in the parish church **on the eve of temple or altar feast in the parish church of the bride** (i. e. feast, only locally honored in the parish church of the bride). Otherwise the bride, her parents and relatives through participation in the marriage feast will not have the necessary relation to the locally honored feast. It is especially necessary to have this in view when the groom and bride will belong to neighboring parishes or when the marriage feast is allowed in the house of the parents of the bride, in order that there will not be marital revelry with all its consequences in the parish of the bride when all members of this parish meet or at least should Christianly meet the local feast and that thus their conscience will not be disturbed and whatever temptation will not be generated. Obviously, if the temple or patron saint's day in the parish church of the bride is not merely a local feast but belongs to the general great feasts or by especially honored feasts also in the parish church of the groom the marriage ceremony unconditionally cannot be done on the eve of this feast not only in the parish church of the brides but also in the parish church of the groom (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1890, 8).

<sup>3</sup> According to canon 52 of the Council of Laodicea it is forbidden to do marriages on days of the Holy Forty Day Fast, as on days of grief, mortification of the flesh and compunction for sins. With the definitive establishment of other Lents lasting many days, the action of Laodicea canon, forbidding marriages during the Holy Forty Day Fast (Great Lent), has also been extended to other fasts lasting many days established by the Church, but together with the **one-day fasts**, as on Wednesday and Friday and on the feast of the Elevation of the Cross of the Lord and on the day of the Beheading of John the Baptist. So it was in the ancient Christian Church.

And the ancient Russian Church, with the same beginning following the practice of the Greek Church, undoubtedly, should come to be the same, so that, except for Wednesday and Friday, to also recognize other one-day fasts as days closed for marriages. And actually in the "Orthodox Confession" of the Kievan Metr. Peter Mogila the following position is accepted as the general church commandment: "marriages on the days forbidden by Church to crown" (Question and Answer 95), under which days, undoubtedly, are understood as not only fasts lasting many days but also one-day fasts, Wednesdays and Fridays, the day of the Elevation of the Cross of the Lord, Sept. 14 and the day of the Beheading of John the Baptist, Aug. 29, which is observed on the level with the other four Lents lasting many days is also prescribed on the one by the church commandments in the "Orthodox Confession" (question and answer 88; chapter 50 of the Rudder, pp. 90-92).

At the present time we accept the custom not to crown marriages not only the day before, but also **on the feasts** Aug. 29 and Sept. 14, on whatever days of the week these feasts occur (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 682; Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News], 1897, 42; refer to the Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1887, 44).

<sup>4</sup> Each Orthodox Christian is especially morally obligated to honor the day of (his, her) angel. Therefore it is necessary to postpone the **wedding on the eve of the name day** of someone being married as the entry into marriage is ordinarily accompanied by feasts and entertainment, which will inevitably prevent the Christian to meet his name's day and celebrate the special day of his angel. If, after such suggestions and advice, those being married or their parents will insist on wedding, the priest has no right to postpone the wedding to another time since we have no canon, forbidding to crown on the day before for an angel of whichever of the bridal pair (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1887, 37).

<sup>5</sup> By separate decision of the Holy Synod on the 7 Mar. 1889, № 463 on the crowning **on the eve of Wednesday and Friday in the week without fasting**, direct prohibitions in canons are not present, but this is not the received church custom and is why it is punishable (Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News] 1898, 13).

<sup>6</sup> In the Old Russian Church the canon about not crowning marriages on one-day fasts was understood unequally.

In XVI century, for example this canon was understood this way, that it is impossible to crown marriages on most one-day fasts, but not on their eves, i. e. up to Vespers, after which according to the church divine service Typikon the next day already begins.

As is known that on 3 Feb. 1500 the marriage of Theodosia, daughter of Grand Prince Ivan Vasilevich, was married to Prince Vasily Holmsky by Metr. Simeon on Thursday. On this same day were married by Metr. Macarius 3 Feb. 1547 Tsar Ivan Vasilievich and the next year on 3 Nov. was the marriage of Prince George.

But, undoubtedly, even the present church practice, not allowing the crowning of marriages on the eves of one-day fasts, Wednesdays and Fridays, (but not on these very days), knows its beginning also from of old, otherwise it could, without having for itself a direct legal or canonical basis, not become the ruling (A. Pavlov, "The Rudder", ch. 50, pp. 92-93). Anyway at the present time **marriages on the eves of Wednesday and Friday** are unconditionally undecided (Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News], 1896, 12-13).

<sup>7</sup> The Podolsk diocesan authorities in 1872 issued an order to the diocese, prohibiting the crowning of marriages generally in all the preparations, including **Meat-fare Week or Sunday** (but also November 14). This decision of the Podolsk diocese is in full agreement with the decision of the Kazan and Orenburg diocesan authorities, prohibiting the crowning of marriages in Meat-fare

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Week or on the Sunday. The basis for prohibition of weddings during Meat-fare Week these diocesan authorities quoted the note of chapter 50 of the Rudder about this, that it is forbidden to do marriages from the week of the Meat-fare up to Thomas Sunday, - and the reason is that in the weeks following Meat-fare the days of Cheese-fare, the Holy Church by the content of the established services already prepares her children for Lent and prohibits the use of animal foods according to the strict abstention demanded by the Great Lent Ustav (Typikon).

But the Kharkov Spiritual Consistory (during the reign of Bishop Philaret, subsequently the Archbishop of Chernigov) has absolutely differently solved the question on the crowning of marriages during Meat-fare Week or Sunday, having laid out the following decision: "it is not at all sinful to crown marriages during the days of preparation for lent and cheese-fare week, since the permission for this in the 50th chapter of the Rudder, in the 2nd part about the mystery of matrimony, it is evident from the days of breaking the fast which is the same as also for the days preparation for the fast, do not enter into the number of the days forbidden for marriages. But only to strictly observe, that during the days of preparation for fasting, the crowing of marriages has been done in the morning, directly after the liturgy, or after the Hours, but not at all in the evening". Obviously, expressions by the Rudder: "from November 14th", "from Meat-fare week of Great Lent", "from the week of All Saints" "the crowning and blessing of marriage from the Church is forbidden and withheld", - the Podolsk, Kazan and Orenburg diocesan authorities understood in the sense that these expressions indicated days are included first in the number of the days forbidden for fulfillment of marriages (which understanding, one should notice, recognizes more agreement with the original meaning of the above derived expressions by the Rudder), - but in the decision of the Kharkov Spiritual Consistory bringing the expressions by the Rudder have been understood in the opposite sense, i. e. the indicated days have been excluded from number forbidden and remain with the last in the number of allowed days permitted for the fulfillment of marriage.

The Ever-memorable Hierarch of Moscow Philaret (see the *Sobranie Mnenie* (Collection of Opinions and excerpts), vol. IV, pp. 52-53) leading up to the above expression by the Rudder understood in the sense of the prohibition to crown marriages on the indicated days though occasionally also allowed marriage fulfillment during Meat-fare Week or Sunday for those in military service (who soon would go to a campaign or other place of service, and could not come back for marriage fulfillment after Pascha), considering that such withdrawal from the canon strongly enough protected itself with the necessity and, without stretching it further to a single church and parish, was not connected to the great fear of temptation (see *Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei* [Manual for Village Pastors] 1894, 8).

Equally and by the general rule of contemporary church practice of crowning marriages during Meat-fare Week or Sunday is forbidden for us and if allowed (after the Liturgy, instead of in the evening), then only necessarily, as a "withdrawal" from the common rules, and an assumption of such "withdrawal" is to depend on the discretion of the local bishop.

<sup>8</sup> The primary canonical prohibitions to do **marriages on the days of the previous universal commemoration Saturdays** are not present (*Tserkovnyi Viestnik* [Church Messenger] 1895, 5, 34).

<sup>9</sup> Besides the way of life of those being married at confession and holy communion within that year in which they marry, the implanting of the ancient Christian custom **of those being married to fulfill the Christian debt of confession and holy communion**, with preparation ought, of course, with the reception of these holy mysteries, is also very desirable before marrying. The annual confession and communion of the holy mysteries is an obligatory debt of every Orthodox Christian (see above, pp. 965-973), and with the mere fulfillment of this debt would not necessarily be limited to those entering marriage. According to the Rudder (see chapter 50), "before the crowning and blessing of marriage let the priest order and command the groom and the bride to confess all committed sins, and if possible to prepare themselves with fasting and prayers also for holy communion". This requirement points out to the future spouses the holiness of the marriage ceremony and that, being in marriage as parents, they should be an example for their children in the performance of Christian duties (for more details, see A. Almazov, *The Mystery of Confession*, vol. 2, pp. 415-418). And every priest should inspire those wishing to marry that "legal marriage is a holy thing, therefore this holy thing is worthy to achieve" (Rudder, chapter 50). The moral necessity for entering into marriage, to be worthy of the grace of the mystery of marriage, should serve as quite a sufficient incentive for each of them to prepare themselves for the recognition of the grace of this mystery with the deliberate performance of the Christian duty of confession and holy communion before this sacrament.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Vladikavkaz diocese, in view of the irrelevance **of the custom of too late, according to the time of day, of crowning marriages** in the cities, the diocesan bishop ordered prohibiting weddings from September to Thomas Sunday after 7 o'clock in the evening, but during the rest of the year, after 8 o'clock in the evening, and for the knowledge of the Orthodox inhabitants of Vladikavkaz, it has been declared that the clergy will not wait in the church for those being married, not appearing at the designated time (*Ter. Ved.* (Terek News) 1894, 4).

**The infringement of the rules about the time** of days and barren days, on which the crowning must be done, does not lessen the validity of the marriage, but attracts to it exhortations on the completed marriage.

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<sup>11</sup> Probably, for the elimination of any suspicion of violence by parents of those being married and there was a strange custom, according to which **parents are not present in the temple** during the wedding of their children, forgetting that the prayers of parents make firm the homes of children (Prakticheskoe Rukovodstvo dlia Sviashchenno Sluzhitelei [Practical Manual for Church Servers], p. 235; Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1893, 47; Saratovskiiia Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Saratov Diocesan News] 1897, 21).

<sup>12</sup> The Samara diocesan authorities declared to the clergy of the diocese that marriages should be done **with the assistance of the deacon and the psalm reader** (Samarskiiia Eparkhial'nyia Vedomosti [Samara Diocesan News] 1898, 1).

The deacon cannot be removed from the fulfillment of marriage ceremonies and the income due them on those bases that such a matter long since was conducted by the local clergy and that getting married does not invite the service of the deacon. According to article 97 of the Ust. Dukh. Kons. [Ustav of the Spiritual Consistory] all the needs of parishioners should be met in cash to their clergy, and according to article 101 of the same Typikon that the extract from the metrical books about the marriage event should be signed by all the members of the clergy in person. The reference of the clergy that do not invite the deacon to the marriage is without foundation: the participation of the members of the clergy in the Divine Services cannot depend on the will of the parishioners (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1892, 43).

<sup>13</sup> The Samara diocesan authorities published to the diocese the special order so that priests did not at all allow the **weddings of several pairs at one time**, but would crown only one couple at a time as this is required by the Office of Crowning (Samarskiiia Eparkhial'nyia Vedomosti [Samara Diocesan News] 1897, 7).

See note 1 on p. 1146.

Weddings of several pairs together does not by itself make the recognition of the marriage void, but subjects the priest responsible for this disorder to discipline (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1897, 45).

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1146b-1150.  
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