

## Office (Akolouthia) used at betrothals

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of the Office</b> (Book of Needs (Euchologion), chapter 16)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Notes</b></p>
<p>After the Divine Liturgy, while the priest <sup>1)</sup> stands in the sanctuary, they that desire to be joined together stand before the Royal Doors, the man on the right hand, the woman on the left <sup>2)</sup>. On the right side of the Holy Table are placed their two rings <sup>3)</sup>, a golden one and a silver one <sup>4)</sup>: the silver one towards the right and the golden one to the left, near one another <sup>5)</sup>. The priest makes the Sign of the Cross thrice <sup>6)</sup> over the heads of the bridal pair, and gives them lit candles <sup>7)</sup>, and leads them into the temple, censes in cross-wise manner <sup>8)</sup>. and the deacon says <sup>9)</sup>:</p> <p><i>Bless Master.</i></p> <p>And the priest exclaims: <i>Blessed is our God...</i></p> <p>Choir: <i>Amen.</i></p> <p>Deacon (<b>The Great Litany</b>): <i>In peace let us pray to the Lord....</i></p> <p>Priest: <i>For unto Thee are due....</i></p> <p>Choir: <i>Amen.</i></p> <p>Then he says <b>the Prayer</b> in a loud voice: <i>O God eternal...</i></p> <p>Choir: <i>Amen.</i></p> <p>Priest: <i>Peace be to all.</i></p> <p>Choir: <i>And to Thy spirit.</i></p> <p>Deacon: <i>Bow your heads to the Lord.</i></p> <p>Choir: <i>To Thee, O Lord.</i></p> <p>Priest: <i>O Lord our God....</i></p> <p>Choir: <i>Amen.</i></p> <p>Then the priest, taking the <b>rings</b><sup>10)</sup>, first gives the gold one to the man, then the silver one to the woman<sup>11)</sup>. And he says to the man:</p> <p><i>The servant of God, Name, is betrothed the handmaid of God, Name, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.</i></p> <p>Then he says to the woman:</p> <p><i>The handmaid of God..."</i> <sup>12)</sup></p> <p>And when he has said thus to each one thrice, he makes the sign of the Cross with the rings upon their heads, and places them on the fingers of their right hand <sup>13)</sup>. Then the sponsor changes the rings of the bridal pair<sup>14)</sup>. The priest says this <b>prayer</b>:</p> <p>Deacon: <i>Let us pray to the Lord.</i> <i>O Lord our God...</i></p> <p>Immediately the deacon says this <b>Litany</b>:</p> <p><i>Have mercy on us, O God....</i></p> <p>Exclamation: <i>For Thou art a merciful God...</i> Then the <b>Dismissal</b> <sup>15)</sup>.</p>	<p><sup>1)</sup> In former times our priest did the mystery of marriage "in the full dignity of his rank"; now in this case the priest merely puts on an epitrachelion (stole) and phelonion (Prof. A. Dmitrievsky, "The Divine Services in the Russian Church in the 16th Century, part 1, pp. 381 - 382).</p> <p><sup>2)</sup> For a betrothal the priest, usually, leaves the sanctuary to the royal doors, carrying a cross and the Gospel, and places them on the analogion in the midst of the temple; before the priest is carried the candle in the candleholder (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 683).</p> <p>To meet the bride with the cross in the church - is unreasonable, for this is done only for Hierarchs and rectors; to meet in the home with a Molioben after returning from church is acceptable (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 42; refer to 1895, 5).</p> <p>In many places, according to the indication in the Book of Needs (Euchologion) ("they stand ... before the Holy Doors"... "and he leads them into the temple"), does the betrothal at the entrance doors of the temple, in the so-called narthex (porch) or table where it is accepted to do the Litiya, and for this purpose they usually prepare two analogions in the church - one is not far from the entrance doors and the other in the middle of church for the same wedding, with the gospel and the cross and so forth; and only after the completion of the betrothal at the first analogion, the priest leads those being married during the singing of the psalm to the other analogion where he completes the crowning, according to custom.</p> <p>In other places, instead of separate betrothals on a special analogion, they lead the newly betrothed to one analogion directly into the church, but at first they stand some distance from this analogion, and then, upon termination of the betrothal, bring the betrothed closer to the analogion, while singing: "Glory to you O God".</p> <p>As this and the other custom, obviously, are not deprived of its meaning, and by the priest, who will complete the mystery, it is necessary to complete one or the other, depending on the established local custom, or by the necessity of the circumstances, in full confidence that also one does not sin and that, who directly places the newly married at same analogion and then and there do both the betrothal and crowning without any movement from one place to another as properly this movement does not concern the essence of the mystery at all (Fr. Hojnatsky, p. 35; see likewise the Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1897, 25).</p> <p><sup>3)</sup> Sometimes the priest places the rings on the altar table before, rather than at the movement to the sacred action (in the middle of a temple; but sometimes, already leaving for the sacred action, he carries the rings also to carry them into the sanctuary and, after returning therefrom, begins the sacred service. It is said in P. Mogila's Book of Needs: "the Priest vested in... the epitrachelion (stole) and phelonion, exits the sanctuary and takes two rings from their hand..., places them on the right side of the Holy Table..." (See in the Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 683).</p> <p>There is no need for placing the wedding rings, at their request, on the altar and to leave it there during the liturgy served for the health of the groom and the bride since their rings are placed on the altar at the betrothal and thus are consecrated (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1886, 27).</p> <p>"Wedding rings by ancient custom are not blessed by the priest with a blessing, but only by their touch to the Holy Table and placing them on it is considered sufficient to their sanctification and consequently the special prayers for the sanctification of rings are not necessary" (Novaia Skrizhalj' [New Stone Tablets]).</p> <p>The custom to sprinkle the wedding rings with holy water before a betrothal is by origin not Orthodox but Latin (Archpriest T. Seredinsky,</p>

"O Bog. Zap. Tserk. [About the Theology of the Western Church].

<sup>4)</sup> In ancient Russia quite often gold rings were used at the betrothal indifferent for the groom and the bride (Prof. A. Dmitrievsky, ""Bogosl. v Rus. Tserk. [Theology in the Russian Church], in the 16th century", part 1, p. 385).

One may not use rings with forbidden seals for a betrothal (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 20).

<sup>5)</sup> Since the silver ring after the change gets to the groom, and gold to the bride (see note 11), then the first, as belonging to the husband, also is placed on the right side from the gold (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1894, 46).

<sup>6)</sup> Relative to the initial blessing of the "heads of the newly betrothed" a variety is allowed: one they bless from the beginning the groom and the bride with the usual priest's blessing, but after that give them lighted candles; the other they bless with the candles. Some think, that is closer to the Ustav (Typikon) - the first, although he committed no crime and the second, combining the two acts into one. The symbolical meaning of the rites in both cases is identical. In "Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church" (p. 684) it is said that the priest first blesses the groom, and then the bride, with lit candles and then hands them over to each person.

<sup>7)</sup> These candles, usually, are already extinguished before the dismissal (after the removal of the crowns); hence, until that time all during the betrothal and the crowning the lit candles should remain with the groom and the bride (Permskii Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Perm Diocesan News] 1888, 1).

According to the superstitious view of the people the person whose candle will burn down more will more likely die than the one whose candle will burn down less (Smolenskiia Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Smolensk Diocesan News] 1890, 3). The priest should eradicate similar kinds of superstition in his flock.

<sup>8)</sup> This censuring is made in imitation of Tobit who burned a liver and heart of a fish, the smoke and prayers drove away the demon enemy of fair marriages (Novaia Skrizhalj' [New Stone Tablets] - Refer to (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1889, 29).

<sup>9)</sup> Under the indication "Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger]", it is necessary for the deacon to also stand in the mystery of marriage at the right side of the priest; The Typikon (see chapter 2) generally is not at all against the standing of the deacon at the right side (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 46).

<sup>10)</sup> Rings are brought from the sanctuary by the priest; if the deacon also participates at a marriage, then he usually brings the rings from the altar table to the priest (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 684).

<sup>11)</sup> The groom is given the gold ring and the bride the silver ring for the signing advantage of the man before the woman and the debt of obedience of the woman to the man (Novaia Skrizhalj' [New Stone Tablets]; refer to Khristianskoe Chetenie [Christian Reading], 1856, p. 353; see Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 684).

<sup>12)</sup> During the betrothal the priest says to the bride three times: "The handmaid of God, *name*, is betrothed to the servant of God, *name*, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

<sup>13)</sup> Having said the indicated words three time over each of the betrothed and with the rings having made the sign of the cross on his head three times, the priest places the ring on a finger of the right hand; the ring is usually placed on the 4th finger (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 684), but concerning this there is no present certain decisions.

During the betrothal of those being married it is rather easy to drop one of their rings, but this is why the priest should in this case take great care not to give an occasion for ridiculous rumors concerning this since, according to people's superstition, in the case of a ring falling, the person to whom the dropped ring belongs will die soon after marriage (Smolenskiia Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Smolensk Diocesan News] 1890, 5).

By explanation of the "Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger]", there is no basis, during a betrothal, to remove other rings on the hands of the groom and the bride and rings, except for wedding rings as these rings in this case are merely simple adornments (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 20).

<sup>14)</sup> Other than the godfather, either a friend of the groom, or the guarantor, generally someone of the relatives, in the certificate of this that they became engaged through mutual consent and that their parents or relatives also consented (see the Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 685; refer to Prof. A. Dmitrievsky, "Bogosl. v Rus. Tserk. [Theology in the Russian Church], chapter 16, part 1, pp. 392-394).

Relative to changing the rings during a betrothal the existing practice of the greatest majority is to change them three times; it is also better to continue this practice (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 17).

During the threefold exchange of the ring of the bride remains as a pledge with the groom, but the groom's with the brides; this is done so that female weakness to transmit a courageous spirit, and to let to her know that she is included in the agreement with her husband in his all affairs (Novaia Skrizhalj' [New Stone Tablets]).

<sup>15)</sup> This dismissal is not done now since the betrothal (see p. 1150) is immediately followed by the crowning (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 685).

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1152-1153.*

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