



The Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Nectarios  
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## Holy Wednesday

1 May 2024

On Great Wednesday we perform the commemoration of the event of the anointing of the Lord with myrrh by the harlot woman. The Church also reminds us of the gathering of the Sanhedrin of the Jews, their highest court, which decided to condemn the Lord, as well as Judas' betrayal of his Teacher. The hymns of today refer to these themes. After the troparion is chanted that has been chanted over the past two days, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes...", it is followed by three Kathismata and then the Gospel (John 12:17-50) and the 50th Psalm. The Canon of the day consists of three Odes (3, 8 and 9), which begin with the Irmos, "You have established me on the rock of faith...", which has the acrostic "On the Fourth Day I shall chant." It should be noted that the acrostic for the Canon over the course of the three days - Great Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday - are nine in number and not eight: Great Monday - "On the Second Day I shall chant," Great Tuesday - "On the Third Day I shall chant." This is followed by the chanting of the Exaposteilarion which is the same chanted the last two days, "I see Your bridal chamber...." Then the Stichera and the Aposticha. In the end is chanted the troparion of the pious scholarly poetess of Byzantium, Kassiani, whom story-tellers have bad-mouthed viciously, presenting her, falsely and slanderously, as a harlot. Kassiani the poetess was not a harlot, but the heroine of her poem was, namely the woman who anointed the Lord with myrrh. As for the number of women who anointed the Lord with myrrh, the interpreters are not in agreement. Some say it was just one, others two, and yet others three. Here is not the place to analyze this issue. Over the course of these



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three days, namely Great Monday, Great Tuesday, and Great Wednesday, intertwined with Vespers, the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated. This Liturgy is done during the morning hours, because Matins is done in the evenings the previous day, as we have previously explained. Homily for Holy and Great Wednesday by Saint Luke of Simferopol Today we heard the Gospel reading about the events that took place on Great Wednesday. I am disturbed to even speak about the terrible crime, the likes of which has never happened in the history of the world. What more can I add? Nothing. I just want to draw your attention to what you heard, because when it comes to the reading I can talk endlessly, penetrating every word of the Gospel. It is my duty to teach you these things, because the Gospel words are holy, great, words so deep and important that they do not exist in any human books. And so, before our spiritual eyes there appear human souls that do not look like one another at all. There are black souls, frightful, as well as tender souls, full of love. Behold, the wicked scribes and Pharisees go forth under the cover of night, like bats, and "take counsel against the Lord and against His Christ." And what the Prophet David foretold a thousand years before the event is fulfilled: "The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and against his christ" (Ps. 2:2). They go forth in secret, because they fear the people and and He whom they seek to kill. They consider together how they will kill Him, whispering with their wicked, lecherous tongues and fulfilling the prophecy: "All who hate me whisper against me; against me they devise my hurt" (Ps. 41:7). And, behold, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people were gathered together at the door of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and they suggested to the council that they should catch Jesus deceitfully and kill him. But they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people" (Matt. 26:5), because in the depths of their black hearts they felt what kind of crime they had organized, they knew that He whom they wanted to kill the people honored and loved as a Great Miracle Worker and that many considered Him the Messiah. For what reason, cursed ones, do you seek to kill Him? Is it because He taught people what is good and true?



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Maybe because He enlightened the darkness of the people with the light of His divine Spirit, with the divine light of His teachings? Perhaps it is because He did so many miracles? Or because He healed so many who were sick and raised so many who were dead? Maybe it is because He ordered the sea and the wind to be silent and they stopped in obedience to Him? Yes, it is exactly for these reasons, because as the Evangelist John the Theologian says: "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation'" (Jn. 11:47-48). And so, they feared that because of the multitude of miracles, everyone would believe in Him. So it should have been, that is, everyone should have believed in Him because of the unexplained miracles and the words that were never heard again in the world and were true! They were to rejoice that the people believed in the Son of God, in their Savior, in the Messiah! Justifying their malicious intent to save themselves from the Roman invasion, they lied, because the Romans had already conquered all of Palestine, something that had happened earlier. Was it possible for the Romans to destroy all of Palestine on the pretext that the supreme Teacher of Truth and Goodness had appeared?! No, we could not blame the Romans, that was slander against them. But what led to this terrible crime? Why were the hearts of the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests so filled with such wickedness? Why did they hate the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Master of love, the Savior of the world? Precisely because of petty and black envy, because until the coming of Christ they were the rulers of the minds and hearts of the people of Israel, their leaders and teachers. The people considered them holy and righteous and submitted to their every word. But now they have realized that their power, which was based on dishonorable hypocrisy, in which there is no truth, no real spiritual power, is shattered by contact with the true divine power of the Savior. They saw and felt that His words were such that no one had ever spoken and they feared that their prestige would fall and that they would go from being leaders to servants. And wanting to



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keep their petty authority, they sought to end the life of Christ. Christ Himself confirmed that their dishonorable and insignificant jealousy and malice guided them, sternly and publicly stigmatizing them and saying face to face what no one would ever dare to think of them: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to" (Matt. 23:13). Was there anything pure, sincere in their hearts? Absolutely nothing. They were completely dark, they had a completely impenetrable darkness of sin, hatred and evil. But here is another, even more terrible figure, the Apostle of Christ, Judas, whose Lord washed His feet, who communicated of the Body and Blood of Christ, and who is going to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. Oh horror! Oh unspeakable futility of which there is no comparison! He betrayed his Master, from Whom he saw so much good! What was going on in the soul of this unhappy man? He was entirely under the rule of the devil of avarice, he lived with avarice, he was a thief and, as the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian says, he kept the box in which they threw the donations for the Savior and His disciples and stole money for himself. Avarice led him to the point where his name became hated all over the world. The name of Judas became synonymous with every betrayal, every dishonor, every futility. The Holy Apostle Paul tells us that avarice, the love of money, "is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). And don't we see proof of this in the unfortunate Judas? Could there be more obvious evidence? No, there is not, because every evil is nothing compared to this terrible evil, to which his avarice led him. And he was an apostle! But the Gospel does not present only darkness to us. It presents us also with pure and blessed light. Behold, before us is the figure of the repentant sinful woman, the one despised in all things. How much this figure shone! Here the comparison is made with the other sinful woman who washed the Savior's feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and received the forgiveness of all her sins from the Lord (Lk. 7:38-48). Driven by the same feelings of love and repentance, a woman with an alabaster of myrrh of great value came to Him, and she poured it over His head as He reclined. And when his disciples saw it,



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they were astonished, saying, "What is this loss?" (Matt. 26:7-8) And the people heard the astonishing words of the Savior: "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good thing for me" (Matt. 26:10). O holy, pure love, which was so much appreciated by the Lord Jesus Christ, which we have so little of and which we must imitate! Amazing contrast between those earthly kings (Ps. 2:2) combined with the apostle-traitor with the black, unclean, dishonorable soul and the despised sinful woman with a heart purified by love and repentance. Let us imitate her and her love for the Lord. Aren't we all sinners? Do we have fewer sins than hers? Do we have more love? Is our heart filled with such love, which would shed rivers of tears or crush the precious vessel in a reverent outburst for the Lord? Therefore, such are the people who passed before of our spiritual eyes, while reading today's Gospel. Such are the people who pass before our eyes every day, that is, the people around us. We are justifiably angry with the scribes and Pharisees, but Holy Scripture presents the figures of people who are full of lies, vices, and sins, not in vain, but as an example to be avoided. We must not only be indignant and angry with them, but we must also rebuke ourselves with deep sincerity, that is, whether we have the lecherousness of these scribes, Pharisees and chief priests. The Lord Jesus Christ called them hypocrites, because hypocrisy and pretense were the fundamental features of their character. And we have to think about whether we have the trait of hypocrisy. We have to admit that these traits are within us. If the Lord told the Pharisees that they were only engaged in the external cleansing of the cup and the synagogue, while inwardly they were full of deceit and injustice, then we should not think that we do not pretend to be good, pure, pious people as they pretended. Unfortunately, many of us are strict observers of the law, Pharisees, hypocrites, who in the Gospel are called "snakes, the brood of vipers" (Luke 3:7), and yet they enjoy great respect and esteem among the people. There are also among us people like Judas but there are also people like the repentant sinful woman, with a heart full of love for Christ. Let us observe our hearts, let us judge what comes out of us and through our mouths and not what enters. Let us live in obedience to holy love, for the



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whole law of Christ is contained in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27). Let us remember this and then God will bless us and forgive all our sins. Amen.