

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Faith always receives the truth. John the Baptizer's ascetic ways and his fiery preaching in the desert moved many to be baptized by him, and His Promise of a better baptism, baptism that gives the Holy Spirit, gave hope to the repentant. Those with faith believed that John was sent by God. But the hard-hearted would not hear his preaching.

Then John had to decrease, for Jesus came. He came not to provide an Old Testament washing, not to point forward to another, but to fulfill all righteousness. Faith receives His Word as true. But the hard-hearted would not hear His Word.

The playing of the flute by children imitates a wedding. Those with faith knew the Bridegroom was there. The mourning that children imitate is that of a funeral. John's call to repentance was to put to death the flesh.

But unbelief would hear neither of the Bridegroom nor of the slaying of the flesh, neither the wedding nor the funeral, neither dancing nor mourning. So when John and Jesus preached, faith received the preaching of both, unbelief rejected the preaching of both. And when the unbelievers demanded that the faithful play their game, follow their fleshly lead, the faithful would not. So wisdom is justified by all her children.

So to what then shall we liken the men of our generation? And what are they like? The sinful flesh, your sinful flesh, rejects the call to repentance. The flesh desires to play its' own sinful

games, which always lead to death. And the sinner desires no Bridegroom. For the Bridegroom is the head of the Bride, she submits to Him, He is Lord of Her. And the fallen flesh desires to be its' own lord, to be like God.

So we see that this generation, like the Pharisees and lawyers, indeed like you according to your sinful nature, reject the will of God, and so reject the preaching of both John and Jesus. And more, your fallen flesh desires to call the tune and require that others dance to it. And left to yourself, that dance would form a macabre procession leading straight to hell.

But thanks be to God, that even tax collectors confessed their sin and were baptized by John, converted by his preaching, the Promise of the Coming One who would bring a better baptism. And even tax collectors were converted by the Coming One, the Bridegroom promised of old, who preached that the Kingdom of God is near, and Who alone offers entrance into that eternal Kingdom by His own death and resurrection.

And so it is today – so it is for you. The Law, which only and always puts to accuses and slays, convicts you of your sins. And the Holy Gospel, which alone gives life, makes Christ's death and resurrection yours. Believing, by the Spirit's power, believing, by baptismal faith, all your sins forgiven in Christ, you are made the Bride, the Holy Church, chaste and pure, unblemished, prepared for the Bridegroom. You are made a child of God, heir to His Kingdom, not merely a guest at the wedding feast but by God's grace the Bride of Christ.

As a foretaste of that unending Feast, the Bridegroom Himself gives you to eat of His Body and drink of His Blood this day. You eat and drink Christ, your faith is fed, your sins are forgiven. You are set apart from the heterodox and the children of the fallen world. You are freed from dancing at the sinful world's beck and call. You are freed from the mourning of the world, for you there is but joy and hope.

God has made you His child, by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. You neither play flutes nor sing dirges, rather you receive God's saving gifts, and you worship with the saving words of the Holy Liturgy. And wisdom is justified by all her children.

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