

House blessing before marriage

In some places there is a custom to invite the priest to say the so-called "matchmaking" (or: "blessing", "arrangement") prayers for this purpose in the house in the presence of the groom and the bride and their relatives¹. Special prayers in the liturgical books in this case are not necessary and are why priests in this case in different places approach this differently.

In one of the places the house blessing before marriage is completed in the following order:

Having put on an epitachelion, the priest blesses the bowed heads of the groom and the bride brought together a little, three times, and gives each of them a lighted candle. After the usual exclamation, *O Heavenly King* is sung, after this is said a short special litanies for the health of the groom and bride and "for the upbringing by their parents". Further the prayer the petition for the successful conclusion of the initial (marital) action is read. With this prayer there may be those that are printed at the beginning the Gospel (the Gospel here carried is appointed for church purposes): *O Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son....*, exclamation for it is connected: *For You are He that blesses and sanctifies all things...* To the short dismissal it is possible to attach the saint of the parish temple. At the secondary blessing, or during the so-called "betrothal", the same prayers may be repeated or the singing of penitential troparions is added to them: *Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us....*, which will be instead of the prayer for the initial action already so close now towards its end (Fr. Popov, part 2, p. 81).

In other places, the blessing is completed this way:

Upon the arrival of the priest in the house of the bride for the blessing, the groom and the bride come together near each other on a carpet. The priest, having put on an epitachelion and standing before them before the icons, begins: *Blessed is our God....*, and he reads (himself or the psalm reader): *O Heavenly King....*, and other the other beginning prayers. After that, after exclamation for *Our Father*, the troparions: *Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us...* After which the priest says this Prayer of Betrothal: **O God eternal, who brings those divided into unity...** (See in Book of Needs, the Office of Betrothal), and, while saying these words: *Also bless these, your servants (Name, name)....*, having turned to the groom and the bride, he blesses them with the general blessing - both simultaneously. Then, after the end of this prayer is read: *It is truly meet....*, and

there is a short dismissal at which the cross is given to the groom and the bride for kissing.

The second order of the prayer, according to the opinion of the priest, Fr. Silchenkov, is presented as more expedient as in the prayer read here; clearly it refers to that action for which the blessing of God is asked. As to the fear that reading of the prayer from the "Office of Betrothal" would be illegal to do in view of the prohibition of doing the betrothal separately from wedding, then the priest, Fr. Silchenkov responds that 1) reading one prayer still does not consist of the entire order of a betrothal, and 2) that its content speaks nothing about a betrothal, but is unique and mainly about blessing as is necessary in this case (Fr. Silchenkov, p. 73). But, according to the opinion «Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors]", in view of the existing prohibition to do a betrothal separately from the wedding, it is not necessary to bless the groom and the bride in-home according to the Office of the Betrothal, even though it is incomplete and consequently, in the case of the so called "matchmaking", it is better not to say the first prayer which is found in the Office of a Betrothal, but the Prayer of Supplication about the successful conclusion of the initial deed, placed in the Gospel for church use: *O Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son...*; only the words in this last prayer: *Help me a sinner, also to accomplish these much wished for things begun for You Yourself* and it is more expedient to also read with some changes namely thus: *help*, such as *to accomplish these much wished for things begun for You Yourself* and so forth (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1889, 11). Fr. Archpriest Hojnatsky (see p. 39) considers the fulfillment of special Offices at a matchmaking unknown in the Ustav [Typikon], contrary to the Ustav [Typikon] and says that if it is necessary to do something at a matchmaking, then do a simple Molieben for the Health, without any superfluous insertions or additions, in order to not tempt the faithful with an infringement of church order.

¹ By the explanation of the "Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger]", the priest should not refuse the invitation to bless the affianced groom and bride, in view that sometimes the action between them also disperses the blessing appears as if the prayer would be a profanation since marriage is accompanied by variety of prayers and is sometimes cancelled, but, meanwhile, it is impossible to say that all these profane prayers will have such an outcome (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1892, 14).