08/04/2026

H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden’s homily on the Bridegroom Service St. George Cathedral of Stockholm



Monday, April 6, 2026

Dearly Beloved Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Tonight our Church gathers for one of the most moving services of Holy Week – the Bridegroom Matins. In this service we sing a hymn that begins, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; but unworthy is the servant whom He shall find heedless…”.

The hymn warns us that the coming of Christ is sudden and that spiritual sleepiness can shut us out of His Kingdom.

The Scriptures behind this service are the parable of the Ten Virgins and the parable of the Royal Wedding. The Church Fathers see these stories as lessons in watchfulness, mercy and the life of the Spirit.

St John Chrysostom insists that the parable is about mercy. He warns that nothing is more defiled than virginity without compassion and that the virgins who knocked at the door were refused because they lacked acts of mercy.

In other words, spiritual purity must be accompanied by generosity toward our neighbors.

Patristic commentary also draws our attention to the icon of Christ the Bridegroom. Far from depicting a triumphant king in glory, the icon shows Jesus humiliated by the soldiers – crowned with thorns, wrapped in a scarlet robe and holding a reed as mock sceptre.

What then does this mean for us? The Bridegroom Service is a spiritual wake up call. Tonight’s hymns remind us that Christ will come unexpectedly, and when He comes the truth of our lives will be revealed. Will He find the lamp of our heart burning with the oil of the Holy Spirit? Will we have stored up acts of mercy, forgiveness and kindness? Will we be wearing the wedding garment of repentance and humility?

May the Bridegroom of our souls grant us the grace to keep watch, to repent sincerely and to clothe ourselves in the light of His Resurrection. Amen!

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