

Words of the Liturgy

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“Holy Things are for the Holy”

Just before the Communion of the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, standing in the sanctuary facing the altar table, the priest raises the Holy Lamb, the Bread of the Bloodless Sacrifice, which has become the Body of Christ, and says these words: **“the holy things are for the holy”**. These words have the sound of a mystery which is, indeed, contained therein. But no mystery should be deprived of an inner meaning with which these words, these minor words are also imbued.

Apostle Peter, in his First Epistle General speaks to the still young Christian Church: *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, ... the people of God”*. This is how Apostle Peter describes the members of the early Church and all of us together with them. There is no doubt that the early Christians consisted of sinners as well as saints. There are quite a few sinners in today's Church, starting with ourselves. And yet the apostle calls all of them and all of us the chosen nation, the royal priesthood, the holy people, the people of God. This sets the standard for the attitude of God and the Church towards man, towards the people of the Church. Through the mystery of Baptism, every person receives the absolute guarantee of holiness. From the font, the baptized individual arises holy, washed clean of all sin, all untruth, all defilement. This holiness is sealed with Chrismation. Thus all newly baptized are given the fullest potential of holiness which the Church recognizes in them through their entire life.

The burden of responsibility for the preservation of this gift lies no longer on the Church, but on the conscience of the individual, on his or her treatment of the gift of free will, freedom of choice between good and evil. The holiness is lost, it is dissipated on the roads and crossroads of life, but it is also restored through the mysteries of Confession and Communion. And the Church continues to stand by her original estimation: she continues to believe in us, in *“the chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people of God”*. And the Church invests not only her priests, but all her members with the great gift of officiating. According to the Orthodox teaching, the great mystery of the Eucharist is performed not by the priest alone, but by the entire Church, the entire “royal priesthood”, the entire “people of God”.

Therefore, as he raises the Holy Lamb, the Body of Christ, presenting it to the entire Church, the priest says: **“The holy things are for the holy.”** The 'holy things' are what he holds in his hands at this moment -- the Sacraments. “For the holy” means that the Sacraments are intended for all of us, all members of the Church in whose eyes we are all holy, we are the people of God. And we, in full and humble recognition of our sinfulness and unworthiness, respond: “One is Holy, One is the Lord: Jesus Christ.”