

The Cleanness of the Church and Priest

The two phrases: “How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty” and “I love the house where you live, O Lord” (from the Psalms) refer to the divine beauty which is present in our temples, but they also carry the meaning that dirtiness and untidiness are not desirable things.

Church is a place that God put his name in and that was anointed with Myron when consecrated, a location that became a place where God is manifested and a place that has been filled with prayers for tens and hundreds of years. In particular, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated there, and this pushed the faithful into piety and spiritual ascension. This is one of the places of the kingdom.

We have seen righteous generations renovating this place and protecting it from falling down, cracking or any harm that could come from nature. People have lived feeling that keeping God’s house is a part of being faithful towards him. We have progressed a lot in taking care of Byzantine architecture. However, our temples differ from the aspect of their cleanness, as we have few churches that are not clean until now.

The Sanctuary is the most important place; the essential cleanness there is the cleanness of the altar and holy table. The table is covered with covers and one of them is obvious and nobody touches it even the priest. Nothing is put on it but the Gospel. We should also pay attention to candles so that drops don’t fall off them. And if something dirty appears, the priest must take it off. Everything could be cleaned; every piece of cloth could become completely clean.

In addition to that, there is the floor of the sanctuary on which we shouldn’t see any coal or incense that fell down or any trace of a person that walked on the floor.

All of this is the responsibility of the priest. He can choose any delegate he wants in order to do this work. He can use the help of any person that has gifts that qualify him to supervise this supreme place. One of the preoccupations of the priest should be to make the ecclesiastic utensils that are put on the altar decent in front of God and not repulsive for the faithful and the same applies on the covers of these utensils.

The priest is the only person that is directly responsible for these tools that should be clean as crystal so that this servant of the altar doesn’t make his lay brothers doubt and think that he is careless towards his service. This is a training for the priest to understand that God’s issues should all be done properly, in order and perfection.

In relation to this, we have the clerical clothing that he uses in the Divine Liturgy and services. These shouldn’t be torn and shouldn’t become very old because they are part of the service’s beauty.

The Priest's cassock and the things related to it should always stay clean as all his clothes. This is a part of his love for organization. Of course we are neither seekers of elegance nor seekers of having too much clothing because this is profusion and doesn't go along with austerity. Decent appearance might not be a virtue, but is something that goes along with general decencies which the clergy must have. This might sometimes be an image of his quest to gain decency in everything.

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