

Having the Guest Room Ready

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On February 22 we read about the preparations for the Passover meal that Jesus instructs His disciples to make in Mark 14:10-42.

There's a good bit of mystery in the opening verses of this passage. Jesus sends two of the disciples into the city, and tells them in amazingly specific detail what will happen there. He says that a man carrying a jar of water will meet them—they don't even have to look for him, or be told what he looks like so that they will recognize him! Then they are to follow him "wherever he goes" and speak to the owner of the house he enters. This owner or householder will show them an upper room that is "furnished and ready" for them. This is the room in which they should prepare for the meal that Jesus and His beloved disciples will share.

The disciples follow the Lord's instructions—they go to the city and find everything "as He had told them," and they make their preparations. But the mysterious quality of it all must have occurred to them. Who is this householder? How and when were these plans made? Most important, who but the Lord could have done this? We will soon enter the period of Great Lent, and many more

things will be found to be "as He had told us"—His fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, His Passion and Crucifixion, and ultimately His Resurrection.

When the disciples meet the householder, they pose the question that Jesus, the Teacher, has directed them to ask: "Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with My disciples?" (14:14). There isn't a moment of hesitation; the guest room is ready and waiting, as Jesus knew it would be.

Yet the householder is never identified. He has an important place in the story of the Last Supper, and he seems to be perfectly willing to fulfill his role without having his actions praised, or his name known. Perhaps he didn't even comprehend the significance of what he was being asked to do for the Lord, but he did it faithfully and obediently.

"Where is my guest room?" is a question, many Bible commentators suggest, that the Lord also asks us. Great Lent will offer us a chance to consider whether we have a place in our hearts "furnished and ready" for Him, or whether we'll need to scramble around to clean up the place, and push other things out of the way to make room for Him to enter. Another question follows, too. Will we look for praise and attention because we have prepared a place, or can we be satisfied to be like the householder, simply making ready for Him out of love and obedience with no expectation of reward?

Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, "I stand at the door and knock." If the room is ready, we can invite Him in, and begin to live in the Kingdom with Him today.