

# ***Third Sunday of Transfiguration – The Spouse of Christ***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian*

*St. Vartan Cathedral, New York, NY*

*July 17, 2016*

*Gospel Reading: Matthew 19:3-12*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we hear Christ's stance on marriage. Marriage is when a man and a woman are united by God in an inseparable union. When this occurs, their lives change and they share everything. There is no more individualism, but they share a union of faith, work and needs because they are one in body, soul and mind. This fact is best demonstrated in three words and adjectives we use to describe a spouse in Armenian.

The first is կողակից (goghageets), which means "connected at the rib". As with all ancient traditions, the rib which God took out of Adam and built Eve from was a rib located next to the heart. This symbolizes that husband and wife must share the same faith, for it is the heart where faith resides. It is also from the heart that emotions, compassion, love and prayer originate.

The second is լծակից (dzageets), which means "joined by the same yoke". This is a yoke which is placed upon two oxen that plow a field. The husband and wife must work together for the same goals. If they do not work together, they will become like mismatched oxen. If one ox is stronger or faster than the other, or are out of step with each other, the oxen cannot go forward, but walk in circles, never going forward.

The third is կարեկից (garegeets), which means "sharing the same needs". A husband and a wife must feel the same joy and sorrow, laugh together and weep together, and feel the same needs. In a marriage, there must not be any "mine" and "yours", but only "ours".

Yet, these adjectives are not limited to individual marriages. These same words can be applied to the marriage of Christ and the Church. St. Paul reminds us how Christ is the groom and the Church, the faithful, is the bride. This means that all of us are կողակից, լծակից, and կարեկից (goghageets, ldzageets, and garegeets) with Christ.

We must have compassion and love for other like Christ does.

We must work together with Christ for the glory of God and success of the Church.

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We must understand that there is no “mine” and “yours” in our relationship with Christ, but only “ours”. The world is ours, humanity is ours and life is ours – together.

Just as the marriage between a husband and wife is inseparable, so too is the marriage between Christ and the Church. His love for each of us is unconquerable, as St. Paul says, *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-39).

So as we leave today, let us remember that we are united with God. His love for us, His wife, is forever and nothing can ever separate us from that. In a world full of fear; with terror in Nice, France, a coup d’etat in Turkey and hostage situations in Armenia, we need to remember that Christ is with us and the union we have with Him will never be broken.

Amen.