

ICON: CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM (ONYMPHIOS)

RESOURCE 3.8

Egg tempera, Greece, 2001

This icon is the image used in the Eastern Orthodox church on the first three days of Holy Week. Jesus is in a regal red cloak, indicating the mockery he is sustaining, but hinting at the red (divinity) with which Jesus is usually dressed underneath the blue (humanity) overlay of most icons in the canon. This is a startlingly beautiful image in that Jesus' eyes seem sad for the situation rather than for himself. His stomach is concave indicating starvation and the crown of thorns draws blood. The thin staff recalls the rods of authority seen held by angels or three-persons of the Rublev Trinity Icon. The icon is called "Christ the Bridegroom" indicating his connection to humanity as the bridegroom of the church — humanity — in the unfolding of the passion in Holy Week on the way to the cross.

This icon is part of the Fearless Church Fundraising collection as a spiritual resource for prayer, meditation, and teaching on acedia and resistance which leaders will often face in financial development in churches. Leaders in financial development and evangelism/membership growth will face both acedia and resistance when teaching and leading. Acedia is a spiritual boredom or ennui which looks a lot like sloth or laziness. The psalms calls acedia the "noon-day-demon" and its spiritual illness inclines the sufferer to heavy inaction. It has also been called spiritual depression. Acedia will inevitably infect a Christian from time to time, much the way a common cold appears occasionally. It will appear in a person or in a group of congregation and, once diagnosed, can be dealt with by naming it and facing it head-on followed by prayer, action, and focus on mission. Acedia is at play when a person or congregation simply does not want to move forward and will be frustrating to a Fearless Church Fundraising leader or teacher. When you face acedia in a congregation while trying to teach financial development or membership growth, return to this image and connect to Jesus' suffering, asking the Holy Spirit to help you pull the group from inaction to action.

Similarly, this image helps leaders to face resistance from a leader, leaders, or an entire congregation. Here too, the leader will be tempted to be frustrated and even angry when a congregation asks for help with funding but refuses to then respond with the necessary action to raise the money. Resistance will be as subtle as inaction and as violent as relational combat during teaching and leadership. As with adolescents, the best plan is to pull back, regroup, and ask if what they have been doing is getting them the results they seek.

Matthew 27: 28-31

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me. Stay with me. Strengthen me. *Amen.*

