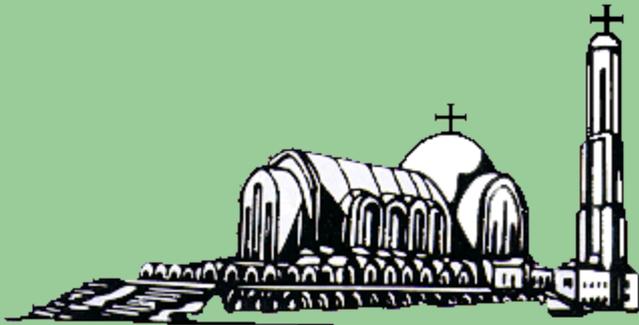




St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 8:

*THE SACRAMENT OF
HOLY MATRIMONY*

**“Be fruitful and increase in
number; fill the earth”**
(Gen. 1:27-28)



Overview of the Holy Sacraments

1. The Sacrament of Baptism
2. The Sacrament of Confirmation
3. The Sacrament of Eucharist
4. The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)
5. The Sacrament of Repentance & Confession
6. The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick
7. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony





The Significance of the Sacrament

- ❖ The family is the basic unit or “cell” of society.
- ❖ The Christian family is also a major building block of the Orthodox Church.
- ❖ The Church places great importance on the family to fulfill its role as a **small church**, as expressed by the Apostle Paul:
 - When St. Paul greeted Priscilla and Aquila, his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" he also greeted **"the church that is in their house"** (Romans 16:3,5).
 - He also greeted **"Nymphas and the church that is in his house"** (Col 4:15).





The Institution of the Sacrament

- ❖ God instituted and blessed marriage from the beginning of time:
 - ***“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth”*** (Gen. 1:27-28). This shows that marriage is part of God's eternal purpose for humanity.
 - ***“Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”*** (Gen. 2:24)
- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ reiterated these words when asked if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife. He continued, ***“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”*** (Matt. 19:4-6).





The Institution of the Sacrament

- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ forever sanctified marriage:
 - He attended the wedding at Cana Galilee and performed His first miracle there (John 2:1-11)
- ❖ St. Paul expressed the sanctity of the Sacrament of Christian Matrimony, saying, ***“This is a great mystery”*** (Ephesians 5:32), and, ***“Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled”*** (Hebrews 13:4).





The goals of Christian Matrimony

❖ There are three main goals of Christian Matrimony:

1. Cooperation between man and woman
2. Procreation
3. Protection against adultery and fornication





The goals of Christian Matrimony

1. Cooperation between man and woman:

- The Lord God said: *“It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him”* (Genesis 2:18), *“Woman was created for the man”* (Corinthians 11:9).
- ‘Comparable to him’ meaning similar to him and equal to him, helping him and supporting him in all things.
- They are both expected to help each other in life and share the responsibilities of the family according to their unique attributes God has given men and women.





The goals of Christian Matrimony

2. Procreation:

- To preserve humankind from extinction.
- Bearing children fills the house with joy and strengthens the marital relationship.
- What if God does not grant a couple to have kids?
- ***“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them”*** (Psalm 127:3-5), and, ***“Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, in the very heart of your house, behold thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord”*** (Psalm 128:3-6).





The goals of Christian Matrimony

3. Protection against adultery and fornication:

- St. Paul mentioned: *“It is good for a man not to touch a woman, not to marry. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality let each man have his own wife, and let each woman has her own husband ... For it is better to marry than to burn with passion”* (1 Corinthians 7).
- Marriage is the remedy for human weakness, for keeping oneself virtuous, and preventing sexual immorality, which God detests.
- The Christian Marriage elevates the bodily union to become a spiritual union, through the work of Holy Spirit.





The characteristics of Christian Matrimony

❖ There are three main characteristics of Christian Matrimony:

1. Unity
2. Continuity
3. Bearing Fruits





The characteristics of Christian Matrimony

1. Unity:

- ❖ The Coptic Church mandates the principle of **monogamy** (one wife) for in the beginning God created male and female; one Adam and one Eve.
- ❖ Through Matrimony the two become one in Christ. Hence, they are no longer two but one body.
- ❖ Monogamy adopts its principle from the Bible, which always alludes to man having only one wife: ***“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her”*** (Mark 10:11), and as our teacher St. Paul says, ***“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”*** (Ephesians 5:31).





The characteristics of Christian Matrimony

2. Continuity:

- ❖ The purpose of Matrimony is continuance, without divorce, except in two distinct cases:
 - One of the partners commits adultery. However, if the person who sinned repented and the partner forgave them, then the Church permits the continuation of the marriage.
 - Spiritual immorality or denial of faith and abandonment of Christianity by one of the partners.
- ❖ The matter of annulment of Matrimony, is a matter authorized by the church, in the case where a partner had deceived or cheated the other.





The characteristics of Christian Matrimony

3. Bearing Fruit:

- ❖ Through the Holy Spirit, the Christian family bears many fruits:
 - Christian virtues in the life of its members
 - Children, for when the Lord grants blessed children, the family must bring them up in the fear of God and in the Church.
 - Service and good deeds that glorify our Father in heaven. They should deal with all people in true Christian love, living a life of service and self sacrificing.
- ❖ Hence, the many fruits that a Christian family bears are not only children, but love, virtues, and service.





The Matrimonial Rite

- ❖ The Matrimonial Rite is divided into three parts:
 1. Betrothal (Engagement)
 2. Ceremony of Marriage
 3. Holy Matrimony





The Matrimonial Rite

1. Betrothal (Engagement)

- It precedes the Sacrament of Matrimony, but is **not one of the Church's Sacraments**.
- Betrothal is a voluntary agreement resulting from a pure and holy love between a man and a woman, who accept to marry each other willingly and by their own choice.

Aims of the Betrothal

- a. For the partners to be better acquainted with each other in terms of their thoughts, motivations, personality and character, style of life, and even level of spirituality.





The Matrimonial Rite

1. Betrothal (Engagement)

- b. For the partners to grow in holy, spiritual unity, away from lusts and physical intimacy, for they are only betrothed and not married.
- c. For the families of the partners to become better acquainted with love, understanding and cooperation.
- d. For all concerned, partners and their families, to co-operate in aspects relating to the matrimonial celebration, and helping prepare a house for the couple to live in a Christian spirit, away from extravagance, pretence, misery or failure to commit matters agreed about.





The Matrimonial Rite

1. Betrothal (Engagement)

Timelines of Betrothal:

- The duration of the betrothal is not fixed. The minimum period is a fortnight, and although there is no maximum period, one year is the recommended time frame.
- The minimum age for marriage is 18 years for the male and 16 years for the female.

Renouncing the Betrothal:

- If problems arise during the betrothal that makes it impossible to accomplish the wedding, both must renounce the betrothal correctly. As they were united in love, they should likewise part peacefully.





The Matrimonial Rite

2. Marriage Ceremony

- In the past, it used to be separate from the Holy Matrimony having its own readings and prayers but as of today, it is performed before the beginning of the Holy Matrimony and we pray some parts of it not the whole prayers. It became an introduction to the Holy Matrimony.
- The deacons proceed the bride and groom into the Church while chanting the hymn 'O King of Peace'.
- The bride, holding the groom's hand, is on his right side. They proceed down the aisle, and stand in front of the two adjacent seats placed before the altar, facing the south.





The Matrimonial Rite

2. Marriage Ceremony

- The bride sits on the right of the groom according to the Psalm, ***“At your right hand stands the queen”*** (Psalm 45:9),
- Standing close by the couple, the priest begins prayer by making the sign of the cross on the rings and the couple **three times**.
- The priest prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, with the deacons and congregation saying the appropriate responses in joyful tunes.
- The priest prays the prayer of “Matrimonial pledge” while making the sign of the Cross upon their foreheads.





The Matrimonial Rite

3. Holy Matrimony

- It used to be separate from the Marriage ceremony, but now it is done as a continuation of it.
- It starts with the end of the Marriage ceremony beginning with the readings from the scriptures; Pauline Epistle (Eph.5:22-6:3) and then the hymn of the Holy Spirit (Pi Epnevma) and the Trisagion and the Gospel reading (Psalm 18:5-6, Psalm 128:3-4 & Mathew 19:1-6).
- The most important part of the whole rite is when the priest prays for the crowning, blessing and sanctification of the two to become one (the action of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament).





The Matrimonial Rite

3. Holy Matrimony

- The rest of the rites goes as follow:
 - The twelve supplications
 - The three minor Litanies & the Creed
 - Three Matrimonial prayers.
 - Prayer for submission.
 - Prayer before anointing the Couple with Oil.
 - Prayer before Crowning.
 - Commandments (for both of them).
 - The final blessing and conclusion of the prayer before the Holy Altar.





The Matrimonial Rite

3. Holy Matrimony

- Anointing the couple with oil while praying and asking God to give both of them the joy and happiness- as anointing with oil is always a symbol of joy of heart (Your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions” (Psalm 45:7)). - and also reminding them of the prophets and priests who were to be anointed for the call of God in their lives to live in Holiness and purity.
- Putting the Crowns above their heads to remind them of the first state of Adam and Eve when they were crowned by God.
- Also, Crowns signify royalty and king/queen ship.





Important fundamentals about the Sacrament

- ❖ The Sacrament of Matrimony should take place in Church, for it is the house of God.
- ❖ It is also not permitted that the sacrament of Matrimony take place during or just before seasons of fasting.
- ❖ It is preferable for the couple to have one confession father, after marriage, who will care for them and help them in their problems, with a fatherly spirit.
- ❖ The church also remembers their new home, during the prayers of the holy Mass, in particular when the priest prays asking the Lord to grant, *“Purity for those in virginity and good life for those in wedlock.”* And in the Litany of Congregations, the priest prays, *“Houses of purity houses of blessing. Grant us O Lord and to all Your servants.”*

