

**'Crown Them, O Lord, with Glory and Honor'
Holy Mystery of Marriage**



“He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

- **Matthew 19:4-6**

Humanity was created as male and female from the beginning, both created in the Image of God.

The creation of the woman from the side of Adam mystically points to the creation of the Church in Christ, the New Adam, from whose side poured forth blood and water at His crucifixion (pointing to Holy Baptism and Holy Communion).

The relationship between the husband and the wife is a mystical icon of the relationship between Christ and the Church - permanent, intimate, loving, and self-sacrificial.





“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He that saw it has borne witness, and his witness is true.”

- John 19:35



“ . . . that thereby, in a sense, **the gate of life might be thrown open**, from whence have **flowed forth the sacraments of the Church**, without which there is no entrance to the life which is the true life. **That blood was shed for the remission of sins**; that **water . . . the laver of baptism . . .** Because of this, the **first woman was formed from the side of the man when asleep**, and was called **Life**, and the **mother of all living . . .** This **second Adam bowed His head and fell asleep on the cross**, that a **spouse might be formed for Him** from that which flowed from the sleeper's side. O death, whereby the dead are raised anew to life! What can be purer than such blood? What more health-giving than such a wound?

- St. Augustine



Sharing common cup of joy and of suffering

“ . . . giving thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, **submit to your own husbands**, as to the Lord. **For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church**; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, **love your wives**, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her**, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. **So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies**; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, **just as the Lord does the church**. For **we are members of His body**, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. **Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”**

- **Epistle Reading of Orthodox Marriage Service** (Ephesians 5:20-33)





“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

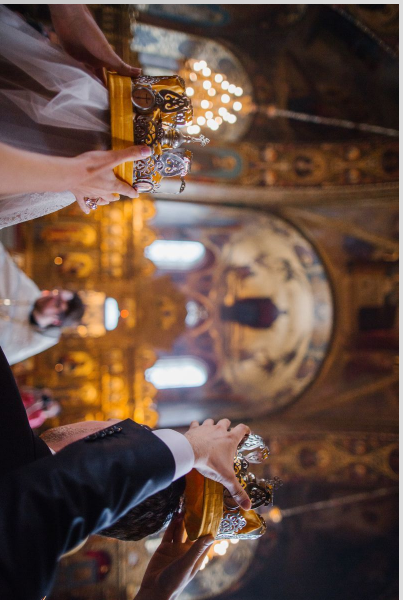
- **Matthew 19:4-6**

In the Holy Mysteries, we become one with Christ who loves us self-sacrificially and gave Himself up for us.

This becomes the model of marriage (or, inversely, marriage is a icon of this greater mystery). The husband is called to love his wife gently and self-sacrificially, and the wife is called to respect and follow her husband. Each one gives of themselves.

Thereby the two follow Christ together, and are joined into a perfect harmony.

In Orthodox marriage (following the formal ecclesiastical betrothal), crowns are placed upon the heads of the couple. These are crowns of martyrdom - dying to themselves and being joined to one another and following Christ.





“Pray together at home and go to church; when you come back home, let each ask the other the meaning of the readings and the prayers... Remind one another that nothing in this life is to be feared, except offending God. If your marriage is like this, your perfection will rival the holiest of monks.”

- **St. John Chrysostom**



The family becomes a unit of the Church, and in some sense a small church. An Orthodox marriage joins two people to each other and to Christ.

An Orthodox marriage should have an openness to children if God so grants.



The first public miracle performed by Christ was at a marriage.



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The Orthodox Faith considers marriage to be one of two blessed paths of life: marriage and monasticism.

Monasticism has the highest honor, since it follows the example of Christ, the Theotokos, and the angels.

Marriage also has immense honor, since it is instituted by God and blessed with dignity by Christ.

Both paths are images of the Kingdom and lead to God if lived with faith.



“A wedding is not a pageant or a theatrical performance. Instead, make your house as beautiful as you can, and then invite your family and your neighbours and friends. Invite people that have good character, and they will be content with what you set before them. Don't hire bands or orchestras; such an expense is excessive and unbecoming . . . Before anything else, invite Christ.”

- **St. John Chrysostom**

St. John Chrysostom says to invite Christ to be present at wedding celebrations by inviting the poor and the clergy.





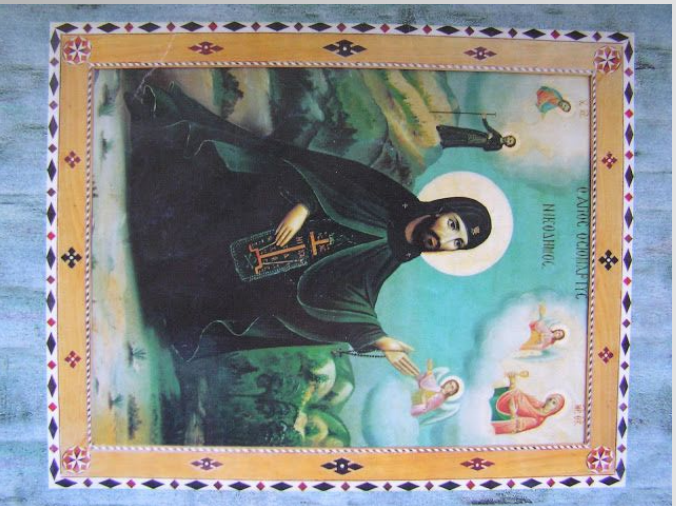
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Orthodox marriage is permanent, and there are no words ‘until death do us part’ in the service itself.

While marriage will not exist in eternity in its current form (childbearing, etc.), nevertheless some aspect of the love and relationship of marriage is brought into the eternal Kingdom of God through the sacramental nature of marriage.

The Orthodox Church considers divorce to be the sinful result of human failings. However, out of pastoral concern for the salvation of people’s souls, the Church may grant second (or even third) marriages in some cases. Second marriages assume a more penitential character (special prayers added and dance of Isaiah traditionally omitted). Absolute limit of three marriages applies even if one’s spouse passes away - ref. life of St. Nicodemus the New Martyr).





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According to the strict interpretation of the Holy Canons (*akriveia*), a couple must both be Orthodox to be married in the Church. By pastoral concession (*economia*), such as in many areas in the world outside of traditionally-Orthodox countries, a couple can be married if one is Orthodox and the other is at least baptized (Trinitarian - i.e. Roman catholic, Lutheran, etc.). The *koumbaros* (best man) should also be Orthodox in good standing.

The couple must not also be related in prohibited degrees of kinship, whether familial (by blood relations, adoption, or marriage) or spiritual (baptismal sponsors). Both also must not have a legally/ecclesiastically undissolved marriage, or monastic vows.

Hierarchy has final decision for all cases.





“Forgiveness is essential for a happy marriage. When couples ask me, ‘Do you think our marriage can survive?’ my answer is always, ‘Yes, providing you are willing to forgive each other.’ And this forgiveness should not be just after a major crisis in a family. It should be every single day. In a successful marriage, a husband and wife are constantly asking forgiveness of each other. When we don’t do this, wounds don’t get healed. We grow apart from each other. We grow cold towards one another, and we don’t obtain the blessings that God sends down on husbands and wives that mutually forgive one another.”

- Fr. Alexey Young



“Humility . . . will be the shortest distance between you and another person.”

- Unidentified priest (*Humans of New York*)



“Always begin by telling her how much you love her... Tell her that you love her more than your own life, because this present life is nothing, and that your only hope is that the two of you pass through this life in such a way that in the world to come you will be united in perfect love. Say to her, ‘Our time here is brief and fleeting, but if we are pleasing to God, we can exchange this life for the Kingdom to come. Then we will be perfectly one both with Christ and each other, and our pleasure will know no bounds. I value your love above all things, and nothing would be so bitter or painful to me as our being at odds with each other. Even if I lose everything, any affliction is tolerable if you will be true to me.’”

- **St. John Chrysostom**



Questions / Discussion