



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

Before entering into the sacrament of holy matrimony it is necessary to understand the meaning of the sacrament, to prepare for the sacrament and know the proper order for the sacrament. There is a procedure in which to approach Holy Matrimony:

1. An application must be completed and signed.
2. Copies of the passports of the future groom and bride must be provided.
3. Enclosed permission of the ruling bishop in cases where there exists divorce.
4. After the ceremony of Holy Matrimony is performed, a certificate must be received from the officiating priest.

For the actual service of Holy Matrimony it is necessary to obtain:

1. wedding rings
2. two icons (Jesus Christ and the Mother of God)
3. wedding candles
4. white rug

All these items can be obtained through the church, except for the rings.

REQUEST FOR THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

From _____
Groom's surname, first name and middle name as it appears on passport

Date of birth _____

Orthodox Christian or other denomination, if other please specify _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

And _____
Bride's surname, first name and middle name as it appears on passport

Date of birth _____

Orthodox or other denomination, if other please specify _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

We the above request the sacrament of Holy Matrimony to be served in _____

Church in _____ city in the Kingdom of Thailand.

We the above inform you of ourselves and our intentions:

Groom _____ Date of birth _____

Baptized in the Orthodox Christian Church _____

Please provide a proper letter from the ruling bishop in case of divorce

If contracted in a past civil marriage please state how many _____

Is the requested marriage with _____ (Bride) civilly registered?

If so, _____ and _____
where date

Do you have children from a previous marriage? How many? _____

If you contracted a past civil marriage, did you have a state divorce? _____

And

Bride _____ Date of birth _____

Baptized in the Orthodox Christian Church _____

Please provide a proper letter from the ruling bishop in case of divorce

If contracted in a past civil marriage please state how many _____

Is the requested marriage with _____ (Bride) civilly registered?

If so, _____ and _____
where date

Do you have children from a previous marriage? How many? _____

If you contracted a past civil marriage, did you have a state divorce?

We live in the Kingdom of Thailand permanently Yes/No

If in Thailand on tourist visa, please explain why it is necessary to hold marriage service in Thailand.

If applicable, what is your employment in Thailand?

Groom _____ Bride _____

What date / time is proposed for the marriage service? _____

Groom's signature _____

Bride's Signature _____ Date _____

In conclusion to the application, there are specific situations which may prevent marriage:
Another civil marriage cannot be registered
Force or fees involved in uniting the couple
Groom and Bride must not be atheistic
Groom and Bride must not be constrained into marriage by family
Groom and Bride must be baptized
Groom and Bride must not cohabit before marriage
Groom and Bride must not share close blood relations to the fourth degree of relations
Groom or Bride must not confess a non-Christian religion (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or pagan
For marriage with a Catholic or Protestant, if the children will be raised Orthodox Christian, permission from the ruling bishop must be obtained
Monastics and those already ordained cannot be married
If Groom and Bride have wide difference in age, permission from the Church authority must be obtained
Civilly under age persons
At present time there is no process to evaluate physical or psychological wellbeing because these are considered by the civil authority. Any secret problem should be made known to the Church in the appropriate manner in order to approach the sacrament of Holy Matrimony and have a clear conscious before God.

We confirm all the above is true.

Groom's signature _____

Bride's signature _____

Date _____

Holy Matrimony

Marriage is a part of human life on this earth as created by God.

*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.
(Genesis 2:24, cf Matthew 19:5-6)*

God created male and female so that man and woman would live their lives together in marriage as one flesh. This union should be broken for no earthly reason.

*What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.
They said to Jesus, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?"*

He said to them, "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife except for sexual impurity and marries another, commits adultery."

The disciples said to him, "if such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry."

But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." (Matthew 19:6-12)

Human marriage exists by the will of God on the earth as the created expression of God's love for man and as man's participation in the creative love of God. The union of man and woman in the community of marriage is used in the Bible as the image of God's faithful love for Israel, and Christ's sacrificial love for the Church. (cf. Isaiah 54, Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16, Hosea)

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the church to Himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

These words of Saint Paul, read at the sacramental celebration of marriage in the Church, contain the whole program for spiritual life in the community of marriage. The husband must love his wife to the point of death, as Christ loves the Church. And the wife must be totally given to her husband in everything as the Church is given to Christ. The union in love must be perfect, total, complete, enduring and lasting forever. Within this union, the sexual act of love is the mystical seal of the total union in love; the act whereby the two are united in mind, heart, soul and body in the Lord.

According to the spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church, marriage, and so the sexual act of love, is made perfect only in Christ and the Church. This does not mean that all those who are "married in church" have an ideal marriage. The sacrament is not mechanical or magical. Its reality and gifts may be rejected and defiled, received unto condemnation and judgment, like Holy Communion and all of the sacramental mysteries of the faith. It does mean, however, that when a couple is married in the Church of Christ, the possibility for the perfection of their marriage is most fully given by God.

When a man and a woman truly love one another, they naturally desire that their love would be perfect. They want their relationship to be filled with all virtue and every fruit of the Spirit. They want it to be ever more perfectly expressed and fulfilled. They want it to last forever. Those who do not desire such perfection for their love, do not really love.

When a man and woman have such a love, they can find its fulfillment only in Christ. He makes it possible; no one and nothing else can do it. So, for those who love truly, the savior and accomplisher of their love is Christ. He gives every virtue and every fruit of the Spirit. He allows them to grow ever more perfectly one. He allows them to live and to love for eternity in the Kingdom of God. A marriage in Christ does not end in sin; it does not part in death. It is fulfilled and perfected in the Kingdom of heaven. It is for this reason, and this reason only, that those who seek true love and perfection in marriage come to the Church to be married in Christ.

A truly Christian and spiritual marriage is one where true love abides. In the community of marriage true love is expressed in the total union of the couple in all that they are, have and do. It is the love of each one

living completely for the good of the other, the love of erotic union in total oneness of mind, heart and flesh; the love of perfect friendship.

Within such a community of love, the sexual act is the expression of all of this. It was created for this purpose by God. It is the intimate act which finds its total joy when perfected by those who are fully devoted and dedicated to each other in all things, in every way, forever. It is for this sacred and divine reason that the sexual act cannot be done casually or promiscuously for one's own spiritual or bodily pleasure. It is the act of loving self-sacrifice in eternal fidelity. Only when accomplished in this way does it yield divine satisfaction and infinite delight to the lovers who enact it.

Normally the sexual act in marriage bears fruit in the procreation of children. The marriage ceremony in the Church prays for "chastity, a bed undefiled, the pro-creation of children, and for every earthly blessing that they may in turn bestow upon the needy." The sexual act of love, however, is not limited merely to the bearing of children. It exists as well for the union in love and the mutual edification and joy of those who are married. If this were not the case, the Apostle Paul would not have given the following counsel:

...each man should have his own wife, and each wife her own husband. The husband should give the wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except per haps by agreement for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through each of self-control. (I Corinthians 7:2-5)

The apostle does not say that the married couple should be separated and come together only with intentions of bearing a child. He says rather that they should stay together, separating "by agreement, for a time," and that for the purpose of being devoted "to prayer." The words "by agreement" are central in this counsel, for each one must live totally as belonging to the other.

Days when Holy Matrimony cannot be performed:

- 1) Fasting periods
- 2) One week before Great Lent
- 3) Bright Week
- 4) From Holy Nativity to Holy Epiphany
- 5) Great Feasts
- 6) Saturday evenings
- 7) Evenings before fasting days, Tuesdays and Thursdays evenings
- 8) Feast of Beheading of St. John the Baptist, 10-11 September
- 9) Feast of Elevation of the Cross, 26-27 September
- 10) Patronal feast of the Church, proposed as the place of the ceremony
- 11) Any exception to the above must be made by the ruling bishop

Marriage ceremony must be performed in a Church temple. Where there is no Church, a house or apartment will be sufficient.

Before the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, it is necessary for the couple to prepare by:

- Preferably registering the civil marriage beforehand
- Confession and reception of Holy Communion
- Short time of fasting, three days to one month with the counsel of the officiating priest
- Any cohabitation must cease
- If any of the above is impossible, it is necessary to explain to the officiating priest
- At the ceremony the Bride should have a head covering. She should apply minimum cosmetics and wear limited jewelry.
- Groom and Bride should wear a cross

Church Divorce

In the truly unfortunate case that a couple choose to dissolve their marriage, there are specific considerations. The Orthodox Christian Church does not condone divorce because marriage is a union God has made. However in consideration of the weakness of mankind, for those who cannot fulfill their marriage responsibilities, Orthodox Christianity provides for divorce out of pastoral economia. Only the ruling bishop can grant a divorce which is a long and difficult process.

The person who takes the step to end the marriage, considering the sinfulness of this step, he/she cannot marry the other again in the Church.

There are specific reasons for the Church to consider granting a divorce, based on the decisions of the All-Russian Church Council of 1918:

- 1) If another marriage is civilly registered
- 2) If the husband or wife leaves the Orthodox Christian faith
- 3) If there be any unnatural sin (ex. homosexuality)
- 4) If the husband or wife have extra marital sexual relations
- 5) If the husband or wife is gravely ill with leprosy or syphilis
- 6) If the husband or wife is lost in war or catastrophe or absent for a long time
- 7) If the husband or wife commits a felony crime
- 8) If the husband or wife endangers the other or their children
- 9) If the husband or wife organizes an extra marital affair in an open relationship
- 10) If the husband or wife profits in any way from the other's sin
- 11) Extreme spiritual illness
- 12) Especially if there has been a long separation
- 13) HIV
- 14) Alcoholism or drug abuse
- 15) If the wife has abortion secretly