

Franciscan University of Steubenville

The Symbolism of the Mystery of Crowning

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PART I: The Context

Chapter I: A Brief Byzantine Theology of Marriage

“‘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 mean in reference to Christ and the church.”¹ This can easily be seen as the basis of the Byzantine theology of marriage: like all sacraments, marriage is a Mystery. It is a Mystery based in the earliest days of mankind, when God made both man and woman and brought them together for the sake of marriage. While marriage in itself (i.e. non-sacramental or natural marriage) has benefits, it gains infinitely more when it becomes a Mystery between two Christians. When it is a Mystery, “marriage is an image of the presence of Christ.”² Possibly the greatest of Patristic descriptions of Christian marriage is one—too long to be quoted in full—by Tertullian, who later (strangely enough) became a heretic in part for rejecting the holiness of marriage: “How shall we ever be able adequately to describe the happiness of that marriage which the Church arranges, the Sacrifice strengthens, upon which the blessing sets a seal, at which angels are present as witnesses, and to which the Father gives His consent?”³

The basis of marital theology is that marriage is a divine gift: “We know that marriages are not a sin but the work and gift of God; the Lord himself has linked them with the bond of faith, has graced them with the gift of blessing, has multiplied them by the increase of propagation.”⁴ Those that denied the goodness of marriage are heretics, as seen by the canons of the Council of Gangra and Book III of the *Stromateis* of St. Clement of Alexandria, among other

¹ Eph 5:31-32 (RSV).

² Saint John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 77.

³ Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*, in Tertullian, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage*, trans. William P. LeSaint (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1951), §II.8.

⁴ Fulgentius, *Letter 1 “To Optatus,”* in Fulgentius, *Selected Works*, trans. Robert B. Eno (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), §14.

sources. However, marriage is not seen as the *greatest* of all goods, for virginity is higher. “To marry is not something wrong to do, but it is better not to do it.”⁵ This doctrine of the higher place of celibacy was, it seems, more taught and discussed in Patristic writings on marriage than the positive aspects of marriage: a famous example is St. Jerome’s *Against Jovinian*, written to debunk a heretic who merely taught the *equality* of marriage and celibacy. Sometimes this aspect of marital theology took so much precedence as to render marriage a terrible thing, at least in some views. The Church, both East and West, however, has *always* taught the positive aspects of marriage.

In addition to the overemphasis on the doctrine of celibacy’s preeminence, there has also been an overemphasis among the ends of marriage. St. John Chrysostom teaches that “there are two purposes for which marriage was instituted: to make us chaste, and to make us parents”; in another work, he describes marriage as “a fellowship for life.”⁶ These three ends are commonly described as remedy for concupiscence, procreation, and mutual help. In general, at least in the Western Church, the first two ends were focused on to the detriment of the third. “For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion” became one of the most common verses in marital theology, highlighting the “remedy for concupiscence” end.⁷ Marriage was often seen as merely a concession to man’s lust, for “marriage relates to indulgence.”⁸ This concession, though, only related to sexual intercourse specifically for the sake of children: “Marital intercourse for the sake of procreating is not sinful. When it is for the purpose of satisfying sensuality, but still with

⁵ Saint Augustine, *Holy Virginity*, in Saint Augustine, *Marriage and Virginity*, trans. Ray Kearney, ed. David G. Hunter and John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1999), §15,15.

⁶ Chrysostom, 85, 96.

⁷ 1 Cor 7:9b (RSV).

⁸ Saint Martin of Tours, qtd. in Sulpicius Severus, *Second Dialogue*, trans. Bernard M. Peebles, in *Niceta of Remesiana, Sulpicius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), Ch. 10.

one's spouse, because there is marital fidelity is a venial sin."⁹ Discussion of the end of "mutual help" was rare, and even as marital theology progressed over time, these emphases for the most part remained until very recently. Due to the enormous rise of contraception use in the past century, marital theology has begun to emphasize the procreative end over the remedial end, for instance, in Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*: however, in all this theology, all three ends have remained, though sometimes certain ones are very subdued.

The Eastern Church has also had this emphasis on the remedial end, but the mutual help end has become more common more quickly than in the West. St. John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Ephesians* 20 is a classic example of the greater emphasis on the mutual help end in Eastern theology. Speaking to husbands about how to treat their wives, St. John calls them "one's partner for life...the source of one's every joy"; in a Christian marriage, "when the concerns of everyone in the house are the same, harmony reigns in the family," and it becomes "a little Church."¹⁰ Putting words into the mouth of a couple, St. Gregory Nazianzen writes, "*In our living together we are one another's hands, ears, and feet*"; this mutual help aspect is also specifically directed to one another's growth towards God, since "*they urge each other on by the goad of their mutual love.*"¹¹ This theme of "harmony," "concord," or "oneness of mind" (in Greek, ὁμόνοια) is found in both ancient Roman marriages and ancient Byzantine marriages, with an example being a golden Byzantine marriage belt that declares that the marriage has "harmony from God" (ἐκ Θεοῦ ὁμόνοια).¹² As St. John writes in another location, the ὁμονοία

⁹ Saint Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage*, in Augustine, *Marriage and Virginity*, §6,6.

¹⁰ Chrysostom, 47, 58, 57.

¹¹ Saint Gregory Nazianzen, "In Praise of Virginity," in Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 139, qtd. in Stanley Samuel Harakas, "Dynamic Elements of Marriage in the Orthodox Church," in John T. Chirban, ed., *Personhood: Orthodox Christianity and the Connection Between Body, Mind, and Soul* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1996), 134.

¹² Cf. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "On the Golden Marriage Belt and the Marriage Rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. XIV (1960).

of a Christian couple “conducts them to glory on high.”¹³ The higher emphasis on the mutual help end of marriage in the East, as opposed to the higher emphasis on the procreative and remedial ends in the West, can be seen to be codified by the prayers of the Byzantine rite of Crowning.

Using the traditional text of the marriage rite¹⁴ to delve into Byzantine theology is one of the goals of this thesis, and it goes well with a statement made by Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware: “In shaping the ‘Orthodox’ mind, [the prayers of the marriage service] have had an influence incomparably greater than that of any individual author, however eminent”; as others puts it, Byzantine marriage theology “remains implicit in church practice rather than being fully expressed in explicit theology.”¹⁵ Part II of this thesis will, of course, delve deep into the theology contained in this text. Before this exploration, more introductory work must be done. After additional marital theology presented in this chapter, Chapter II of Part I will discuss the history of the Byzantine rite of Crowning, Chapter III will give an overview of this rite, along with a parallel overview of the Latin rite of Matrimony, and Chapter IV will give a brief overview to Byzantine ecclesial and liturgical symbolism.

To continue with the marital theology: there are many elements of contention in modern-day discussions of Byzantine marital theology. Arguments occur whether marriage is eternal, lasting into the afterlife (and if so, what occurs with second or third marriages), whether second or third marriages (Orthodox do not allow for more than three) are sacramental (for instance,

¹³ Saint John Chrysostom, *On Genesis*, XXXVIII.7, qtd. in Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, Cesare Magazzù, and Concetta Aloe Spada, ed., *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, trans. Thomas Halton, Pauline Patristic Series 1 (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1999), 330.

¹⁴ The official text of the Ruthenian Catholic Church has many differences from this traditional text, as discussed in Appendix I. This thesis will be interpreting the traditional text of the rite using Byzantine Catholic theology.

¹⁵ Kallistos Ware, “‘My helper and my enemy’: the body in Greek Christianity,” in Sarah Coakley, ed., *Religion and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 105; Joseph H.L. Leach and Lawrence Cross, *Image, Symbol and Mystery: An Eastern Christian View of the Sacraments* (Fairfax, VA: Eastern Christian Publications, 2009), 103; also cf. John Chrysavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1996), 26.

crownings do not occur at these weddings among the Orthodox), whether ecclesiastical divorce is allowed (common Orthodox teaching and practice allow it), whether the priest is the minister of the Mystery (common Orthodox teaching states so), whether contraception is allowed (the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, along with many bishops, condemn it, but commonly among the Orthodox it is allowed), and whether the rite is necessary for the Mystery (common Orthodox teaching states so). Obviously, many of these discussions are solved when applying Catholic theology to the Eastern tradition: thus subsequent marriages (after the death of a spouse) are sacramental, there is no ecclesiastical divorce, the couple are the minister of the Mystery, contraception is prohibited, and the rite is not necessary for the Mystery. Two of these are not commonly spoken of, but they are implicit in the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (CCEO): while the rite is the typical form of the Mystery, it is not *necessary* for the validity of the Mystery if a priest cannot be obtained, for simply a marital commitment between two baptized Christians is sufficient in certain circumstances, and thus the priest *cannot* be the minister of the sacrament.¹⁶

In short, in the Byzantine Catholic rite, marriage, which is a gift from God, yet a lesser gift than virginity, has three ends: procreation, remedy for concupiscence, and mutual help. The Byzantine tradition in general seems to focus most on the mutual help end, while the Byzantine rite of Crowning itself focuses both on the mutual help end *and* the procreative end. Typically the Mystery involves a priest-led rite, the Service of Marriage, or rite of Crowning, though, since it is not necessary to have the rite for the Mystery to be valid, the couple, not the priest, are truly the ministers.

¹⁶ Cf. CCEO can. 832.

Chapter II: A Brief History of the Mystery of Crowning

From the beginning, there was no specific “rite of marriage” in the Church. Instead, it was the Church’s practice “to regard a couple as married once they received for the first time Communion as ‘one flesh’ rather than as two individuals.”¹⁷ Marriage is a natural event sacramentalized by the Christ through the sacramentalization of the faithful. When a man and a woman are baptized and marry, their marriage is sacramental without an additional rite being necessary. This is the underlying view of both the Western Church and the Eastern Church (as shown by the fact that Christian couples in the Soviet Union could not celebrate a marriage ceremony yet were still considered sacramentally married), though it is not the common practice.¹⁸ The marriage liturgy is thus a way to impart blessings on the couple and proclaim their sacramental union to the community, but it does not directly impart the sacrament.

The lack of necessity of action on the Church’s part in the sacrament of marriage does not mean that the Church was not involved. The Church cares for her children and has authority over them: because of this, even from the earliest days, she played a part in Christian marriage, even without a specific ecclesial ceremony. St. Ignatius of Antioch is one of the earliest witnesses of this, writing, “Those who get married must unite with the knowledge of the bishop, so that marriage may be according to the Lord, and not by human desire.”¹⁹ Though it seems clergy were not involved in the civil weddings themselves in the early Church, they still had a part in watching over the marriage of Christians.²⁰

Despite the early lack of ecclesial involvement in the wedding apart from general supervision, it was not long before blessings for marriage were created. The Church loves to

¹⁷ Chrysavgis, 25.

¹⁸ Cf. John Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*, 2nd. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1975), 26.

¹⁹ Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *To Polycarp* §V:2, qtd. in Meyendorff, 24.

²⁰ Cf. Victor J. Pospishil, *Eastern Catholic Marriage Law* (Brooklyn, NY: Saint Maron Publications, 1991), 129.

give blessings—from blessing the foundation of a church to a blessing for, literally, any object—thus a blessing for an event as important as marriage is fitting and expected.²¹ That is just what the Church did. Tertullian highlights the involvement of the early Church in weddings when he praises “the happiness of that marriage which the Church arranges, the Sacrifice strengthens, upon which the blessing sets a seal.”²² St. Ambrose also speaks of the “sacerdotal veil and benediction” involved in marriage.²³ Pope St. Siricus, too, mentions the “benediction, which the priest adds to the nuptial veiling.”²⁴

From this stage of ecclesial supervision and sacerdotal blessing came, over the centuries, a specifically Christian marriage liturgy itself. A key point to remember is that, originally, this was not a stand-alone liturgy: “until the ninth century the Church did not know any rite of marriage separate from the eucharistic Liturgy.”²⁵ (Some writers disagree with this view, though.²⁶) Tertullian, as quoted above, mentions this Eucharistic element, and Pope St. Nicholas I’s description of marriage in the 9th century also mentions the Eucharistic Sacrifice as part of the ceremony.²⁷ The *placement* of the marriage ceremony in connection with the Eucharistic Liturgy is the more subtle point: when the two rites were connected, it seems that the Eucharistic Liturgy *preceded* the marriage ceremony, and there was no hybrid liturgy formed.²⁸ Another form of the ceremony involved not the Eucharistic Liturgy itself but the reception of the Eucharist, the Pre-

²¹ Cf. *Euchologion (Trebnik): A Byzantine Ritual*, ed. Demetrius Wysochansky, 2nd. rev. ed. (Etobicoke, Ontario: The Basilian Press, 1986), 182-91, 373-4.

²² Tertullian, §II.8.

²³ St. Ambrose, *Ep. 19, ad Virgil* §7, qtd. in Casimir Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach* (Allendale, NJ: Alleluia Press, 1976), 314.

²⁴ Pope St. Siricus, *Ep. I, ad Himer* §4, qtd. in Kucharek, 309.

²⁵ Meyendorff, 27.

²⁶ Cf. Pospishil, 395: “The original marriage liturgy was not connected with the eucharistic liturgy.”

²⁷ Cf. Kucharek, 313.

²⁸ Cf. Meyendorff, 47; Pospishil, 247.

Sanctified Gifts, as attested to in a famous passage by the 15th-century St. Symeon of Thessalonica.²⁹

Mention must be made of the fact that there were for a time two separate ceremonies that make up the one rite of marriage: the Service of Betrothal and the Service of Crowning. It seems that around the 8th century, at the latest, these two services existed separately.³⁰ The former was originally celebrated many months before the latter, the former being similar to a modern engagement with a ceremony added and the latter being the actual sacramental rite of marriage. Over the centuries, the two ceremonies grew closer temporally until they are now celebrated in one longer ceremony.³¹

To return to the history, the most major event in regards to the Eastern Christian rite of marriage was Emperor Leo VI's *Novella* 89, issued in 893, which read, "We now also order that marriages be confirmed with a sacred blessing, and if the couple will neglect that procedure, their cohabitation will not be considered as marriage at any time, and will not produce the legal effects of marriage."³² With this, the civil and the sacred were wedded in the marriages of the Byzantine Empire. The two largest changes were the removal of the Eucharist from the marriage liturgy and the sacerdotal blessing becoming constitutive of the sacrament. Because *all*, pagans, Jews, and Christians alike, had to participate in the Christian marriage liturgy, if the Eucharist were still involved it would be desecrated through its unworthy reception by those outside the faith: "The only compromise which the Church could not accept, however, was to mitigate the holiness of the Eucharist...Thus, it had to develop a rite of marriage separate from the

²⁹ Cf. Meyendorff, 124-5.

³⁰ Cf. Kenneth Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 97-8.

³¹ Cf. Stevenson, 99-100; Meyendorff, 32.

³² Qtd. in Kucharek, 321.

Eucharist.”³³ The common cup of blessed wine thus became the norm in marriage ceremonies, becoming a sort of *antídōron* (ἀντίδωρον) (blessed, but not consecrated, bread given after the Divine Liturgy, originally to those unworthy to receive the Eucharist, but now to all) to replace the Eucharist.³⁴ The other major change, which occurred more slowly, was a theological one: the sacerdotal blessing now became *needed* for sacramental validity. As mentioned above, when push comes to shove, even the Orthodox admit that just the commitment to married life of two Christians can constitute the sacrament: Orthodox theology, however, generally states that “the priest is the ‘minister’ of marriage.”³⁵ Eastern Catholic theology holds to the fact that the union of two Christians, just as it did in the early Church, still creates a sacramental marriage without a sacerdotal blessing; the blessing is the typical ecclesial form, though, and it is *highly* encouraged.³⁶

Patriarch Photius of Constantinople in the 9th century stated that marriage could be accomplished “by a blessing, or by a crowning, or by an agreement.”³⁷ By a rearrangement, this statement could be seen as a history of the Eastern Christian rite of marriage: first solely by agreement and receiving the Eucharist as “one flesh,” second by the addition of a sacerdotal blessing (which later became mandated), and finally by the full ceremony of crowning. Despite the appearance and growth of the Eastern Christian rite of marriage throughout history, the sacramentality of marriage has never changed, harkening back to the famous statement of St. Augustine: “The Lord confirmed that marriage is something of value...because He attended a wedding.”³⁸

³³ Meyendorff, 30.

³⁴ Cf. Meyendorff, 31.

³⁵ Meyendorff, 25; also cf. William Basil Zion, *Eros and Transformation: Sexuality and Marriage: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1992), 111.

³⁶ CCEO can. 828 and 832.

³⁷ Photius, *Epanagoge* XVI.1, qtd. in Leach and Cross, 102.

³⁸ Augustine, *Excellence*, §3.3.

Chapter III: An Overview of the Mystery of Crowning, Including a Comparison with the Latin Rite of Marriage

The rite of the Mystery of Crowning, more technically referred to as the Service of Marriage (ἀκολουθία γάμου) consists of two conjoined ceremonies, as mentioned in the previous chapter: the Service of Betrothal (ἀκολουθία τοῦ μνήστρους) and the Service of Crowning (ἀκολουθία τοῦ στεφανώματος). After the opening, the Service of Betrothal begins with an *ekténia* (ἐκτένια), or litany, a common prayer form in both Western and Eastern Churches, with the response “Lord, have mercy” (Κύριε, ἐλέησον). After a few short prayers, the priest blesses the couple, blesses the rings, blesses the couple with the rings, and then place the rings on the couple’s hands. The priest then prays a long prayer of betrothal, and the first ceremony ends. The Service of Crowning begins with the procession of the priest and the couple towards the sanctuary while the choir recites Psalm 128. Following the opening comes another *ekténia*, and subsequently two long prayers of blessing. Next the priest joins the couple’s right hands in prayer. The priest then blesses the crowns, blesses the couple with the crowns, and places the crowns while praying, “O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honor” (Κύριε ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, δόξη καὶ τιμῇ στεφάνωσον αὐτούς). Following the crowning itself come the two readings, Ephesians 5:20-33 and John 2:1-11. Another *ekténia* is prayed, followed by the Lord’s Prayer, and then comes the blessing of the common cup, followed by the couple’s drinking therefrom. The next event is the Dance of Isaiah, when the priest leads the couple around the *trápeza* (τράπεζα), the small table in front of the altar, thrice, while the choir sings *tropária* (τροπάρια), or proper liturgical hymns, used for ordinations and for remembrance of martyrs. The ceremony ends with the removal of the couple’s crowns by the priest and then the final blessings and prayers.

The Latin Rite of Marriage can take place either within the Mass or outside the Mass.³⁹ Within the Mass (which includes readings, a preface, and propers specific to the Sacrament of Matrimony), the rite itself begins after the homily. The priest asks for the couple's assent that they are freely choosing to marry, that they will be faithful, and that they will be accepting of children. Following this, the priest asks the couple to declare their consent, and they do so. The priest blesses the rings (or the couple, with the rings being used as a symbol), and the couple places them on each other's hand. The Mass continues until after the Lord's Prayer. The embolism ("Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil") is replaced by nuptial blessing. Following this, the Mass continues (with the couple being permitted to receive communion under both species, even in areas where there is a rare occurrence) until the final blessing, which includes both a blessing specifically of the couple and of the entire congregation. Outside Mass, the rite begins with an entrance rite and a Liturgy of the Word, follows with the consent, blessing of, and exchange of rings. General intercessions and the nuptial blessing occur, and the rite ends with the Lord's Prayer and a blessing.

Points of similarity include, of course, the presence of the couple, the priest, and the congregation, multiple blessings by the priest, the blessing and exchange of rings, and the reading of Scripture. Differences include the inability of the Byzantine rite to be used *within* the Liturgy, the greater length of the Byzantine rite itself as compared to the Latin rite outside the Mass, the higher number and longer length of nuptial blessings in the Byzantine rite, the use of crowns, the common cup, and the Dance of Isaiah in the Byzantine rite, the additional questions in the Latin rite, and the necessity of explicit consent in the Latin rite.⁴⁰

³⁹ Cf. International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), *Rite of Marriage* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1970).

⁴⁰ In the East, consent is seen as the "essential condition" necessary for the Sacrament to occur, but it is not traditionally part of the rite, though in recent times it is sometimes added to the Service of Betrothal. Cf. George

Chapter IV: Byzantine Ecclesial and Liturgical Symbolism

Symbolism has always played a part in Christian theology, since even St. Paul speaks of the stories of Hagar and Sarah as “these things that are allegorized” (ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα) and even St. Peter speaks of how Baptism is an antitype (ἀντίτυπον) of the flood of Noah.⁴¹ Christian theology has developed systems of various constant symbolisms, so that roosters represent the denial of Peter, pelicans represent Christ’s life-giving death, and peacocks represent the Resurrection. Knowing some of these systems will make it easier to interpret the layers of meaning in the texts and actions of the rite of the Mystery of Crowning. Specifically, the traditional symbolism of ecclesial architecture and liturgy in Eastern Christianity are phenomenal helps in this endeavor.

The first step to understand Byzantine ecclesial architecture is to understand the orientation: the church faces East. The East is the traditional prayer direction for Eastern Christians. Origen described this as “a symbolic expression of the soul’s looking for the rising of the true light,” and St. Germanos of Constantinople explains this tradition—which “is handed down by the apostles, like everything else”—by saying that “this is because the comprehensible sun of righteousness, Christ our God, appeared on earth in those regions of the East where the perceptible sun rises.”⁴² Scripture is often connected with this symbolism, such as “for as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man” for the eschatological dimension of Origen’s description and “on that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east” for the incarnational

Gallaro and Dimitri Salachas, “The *Ritus Sacer* of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Byzantine Churches,” *The Jurist* 70 (2010), 223. Also see Appendix I on the text of the rite used by the Ruthenian Catholic Church.

⁴¹ Gal 4:24; 1 Pt 3:21.

⁴² Origen, *On Prayer*, in Origen, *An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, trans. Rowan A. Greer (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), §XXXII; St. Germanos of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, trans. Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 63.

dimension of Germanos'.⁴³ No matter the exact symbolism, the general connection is that the East is the place of God, and therefore the West is the place of Satan, the defeated adversary. "The altar is turned toward the rising of the sun. In contrast, the outside door is at the west end of the church, facing the setting sun, the amorphous space of darkness, the land not yet evangelized, even hell. Thus the profession of faith is made facing east, and the renunciation of Satan is made facing west."⁴⁴ In general, the entirety of the church, and of the Church, is towards God, towards Christ, towards the Incarnation, and towards the eschaton.

The second main point to ecclesial symbolism is the general structure of the church and its divisions. The church is roughly shaped like a boat, and the central part is still called the nave, from the Latin *navis*, ship.⁴⁵ This earthly life is a turbulent sea, and the Church is the ark of salvation, guiding the faithful to the safety of Heaven. Each local church is a microcosm of the full Church, and thus each is (at least traditionally) shaped as a ship. The church is "an image of the entire created but transfigured world," and, though it is "the house of God" and "the heavens on earth," it also represents that men are not yet perfect.⁴⁶ The church (or temple, ναός) is thus divided into three sections, resembling the temple of Solomon and its earlier predecessor, the tabernacle of Moses (which itself resembles its predecessor, the heavenly tabernacle Moses saw on Mount Sinai): the sanctuary (the place of the clergy), the nave (the place of the faithful), and the narthex (the place of the penitents and catechumens).⁴⁷ The sanctuary, with its barrier (the iconostasis/iconostas), would thus represent the Holy of Holies of the Temple with its thick veil, the nave would represent the "holy" of the Temple, and the narthex would represent the

⁴³ Mt 24:27; Zec 14:4a (RSV).

⁴⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: a theology of beauty*, trans. Steven Bigham (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1990), 153.

⁴⁵ Cf. Leonide Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 2 vols (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), I:24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I:28, 26.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, I:29.

courtyard.⁴⁸ Other systems of symbolism apply as well: the sanctuary can be that which is beyond the created world, the nave can be the created world, and the narthex can be the unredeemed world.⁴⁹ St. Maximos the Confessor often leaves out the narthex in his symbolisms, with the sanctuary as the spiritual world and the nave as the sensible, the sanctuary as the soul and the nave as the body, or the sanctuary as the contemplative life and the nave as the active.⁵⁰ In short, the different sections of the church represent different degrees of holiness, with the sanctuary, the farthest East, being separated by a barrier and reserved *solely* for those who serve the altar (the clergy and their assistants), the nave, closer to the West, being the place of the faithful in good standing with the Church, and the narthex, the farthest West, being the place of the penitents and catechumens who are not yet fully in the Church. (Those in the narthex are actually expelled from the church before the Consecration in the Liturgy to hide the Sacred Mysteries from unfaithful eyes.) Thus the sanctuary “is the place which sanctifies the entire church. When the Royal Doors are opened during the liturgy, it is as if the heavens themselves were opened a bit, permitting us to catch a glimpse of their splendor.”⁵¹

Finally, the Liturgy, with its architectural and other accoutrements, is steeped in symbolism, far too much to be given justice here. Instead, a very brief overview will be presented, with more specific symbols being explained, as necessary, throughout the main part of this work. One writer states, “On the level of celebration, of ‘externals,’ the divine liturgy is above all a sacred play, a representation in the usual meaning of the word.”⁵² For some, such as St. Germanos, this “sacred play” could be a representation of the life of Christ; for others, such

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, I:29-31.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, I:30-31.

⁵⁰ Cf. St. Maximos the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, in Julian Stead, *The Church, the Liturgy and the Soul of Man: The Mystagogia of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Still River, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1982), Ch. XXIV.

⁵¹ Ouspensky, I:32-33.

⁵² Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 116.

as St. Maximos, it more represents the spiritual life of a soul or the general life of the Church. Above all, though, the Liturgy is oriented towards Heaven, for eschatological symbolism is the “fundamental *ordo* of Byzantine worship” and “the essential symbolism of the Byzantine liturgy.”⁵³ This is reflected in the famous story of St. Vladimir of Russia’s conversion to Eastern Christianity. St. Vladimir sent envoys to the various major faiths, and, based on their reports, he chose Eastern Christianity for its beauty, for his envoys stated that, during the Divine Liturgy in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, they knew not whether they were in Heaven or on earth. In short, the Liturgy, for all the possibility of its being, in some form, a “sacred play,” is truly about the meeting of Heaven and earth: through man’s work he strives towards Heaven, while God comes down to the earth through the power of His Spirit and in the Holy Mysteries, that is, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, present in the Eucharist, in order that we may consume Him so that He may abide in us and us in Him.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid., 125, 128.

⁵⁴ Cf. Jn 6:56.

ysterPart II: The Service of Marriage (Ἀκολουθία γάμου), or, the Mystery of Crowning⁵⁵

Chapter I: The Service of Betrothal, that is, of Engagement
(Ἀκολουθία ἐπὶ μνήστροις ἤτοι τοῦ ἀρραβώנוς)

The Service of Betrothal, that is, of Engagement (ἀκολουθία ἐπὶ μνήστροις ἤτοι τοῦ ἀρραβώνο) is, in some sense, not truly a part of the marital liturgy but only a blessing on an event that precedes the wedding (hence its original separation by several months from the Service of Crowning).⁵⁶ This is why Patriarch Gregorios III, the current patriarch of the Melkite Church, writes so firmly, “Betrothal is not half the wedding, as is commonly thought. The priest’s blessing of the betrothal is spiritual and carries no legal obligation.”⁵⁷ The fact that the Service of Betrothal is not, strictly speaking, part of the marital liturgy and was only joined to it due to changes in practice over time helps explain why this service takes place *outside* the church proper, i.e. the sanctuary. The Service of Betrothal occurs in the narthex, the Western-most part of the church, the place reserved, during the Divine Liturgy, for penitents and catechumens.⁵⁸ This is the part of the church that “according to the Fathers, symbolizes the unredeemed part of the world, the world lying in sin, and even hell.”⁵⁹ This strange placement does not seem to phase many writers, and it is usually only mentioned in passing. The most learned guess this author can give as to why the betrothal takes place in the narthex of the church is to show its distinctness from the more sacramental service. The betrothal is not actually part of the typical form of the sacrament, but it is technically only a blessing on a life event, and thus, like all others,

⁵⁵ The text, both English and Greek, used for this part come from Christopher Klitou, “THE SERVICE OF BETROTHAL GREEK/ENGLISH,” *The Orthodox Pages*, http://www.christopherklitou.com/the_services_of_betrothal_and_marriages_euchologion_greek_english.htm (accessed November 26, 2012). The full English text can be found in Appendix II. Differences between this traditional text and the text used by the Ruthenian Catholic Church are discussed in Appendix I.

⁵⁶ Cf. Part I, Chapter II.

⁵⁷ Gregorios III (Laham), *Introduction to Liturgical Services and their Symbolism in the Eastern Church*, trans. Elias N. Sahyouni (Fairfax, VA: Eastern Christian Publications, 2009), 151.

⁵⁸ Cf. Part I, Chapter IV.

⁵⁹ Ouspensky, I:31.

theoretically “the place of blessing can be the church, outside (in the open air) or in a home.”⁶⁰

The *difference*, though, is that the Service of Betrothal is a specifically defined service due to the fact that it is a form of liturgical (through not Sacramental) preparation for a Mystery. It is for this reason, that it is a significant step in the preparation for a Mystery, that this author thinks the Service of Betrothal has its own service, but because it is not the actual rite of the Mystery it is celebrated in the narthex instead of the sanctuary. In short, the liturgical (in the wider sense of the word) blessing of the betrothal takes place in the narthex not to show that it is sinful and in need of repentance but in order to show that it is not the rite of the Mystery itself.

Having explained the function and location of the service, commentary on the service itself can commence. The Service of Betrothal begins with the typical opening of a Byzantine lesser liturgical service (i.e. any except the Divine Liturgy, with one exception, to be discussed in Part II, Chapter II), “Blessed is our God at all times, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.”⁶¹ The last phrase is more literally translated “unto the ages of ages” (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων), a well-known prayer ending even in the Latin Church, which has the translated equivalent *in saecula saeculorum*. “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth,” proclaims David, and the Church proclaims and lives this along with him, especially in her liturgical services.⁶²

Following is an *ekténia*, just as in the Divine Liturgy, which begins with a few of the same petitions as the opening *ekténia* of the Divine Liturgy before having petitions specifically for the Mystery of Crowning. The couple is prayed for specifically, with blessings being asked

⁶⁰ Wysochansky, 173.

⁶¹ Cf. Casimir Kucharek, *The Byzantine-Slav Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: Its Origin and Evolution* (Combermere, Ontario: Alleluia Press, 1971), 338, fn. 2.

⁶² Ps 34:1 (RSV).

for their fertility, their “love perfect and peaceful,” their ονομοία⁶³ and firm faith, their “harmony and perfect trust,” their lives’ being “blameless and without spot,” and their marriage’s being honorable and having “a bed undefiled.” A blessing for the procreative end of marriage occurs, but all the other specifically marital petitions in this *ekténia* are directed towards the mutual help end of marriage (though the final petition could also be directed toward the remedy of concupiscence end, since it appears to be, at least in part, a prayer for both marital fidelity and conjugal chastity, i.e. a temperate and chaste sexual life within marriage). The *ekténia* ends normally, with petitions that “we may be delivered from all tribulation, wrath, danger and need” (θλίψεως, ὀργῆς, κινδύνου καὶ ἀνάγκης) and that the Lord may “help us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us” by His grace, along with a remembrance of Mary, the Theotokos (Θεοτόκος), or Mother of God, and a Trinitarian praise.

The first nuptial blessing is the next part of the Service. This blessing describes marriage as a reunion, since God “didst bring together into unity the things which before had been separate,” a reunion marked by “an indissoluble bond of love,” thus reaffirming Christ’s statement, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”⁶⁴ This blessing also marks the first occurrence of the constant theme through the Byzantine marital liturgy of references to salvation history. The couple is compared, at various times, to either holy couples from throughout salvation history (such as Isaac and Rebecca, whom they are compared to here) or to the Church’s relation with Christ, since the Church is described as the bride of Christ. Isaac and Rebecca are mentioned because God declared them “the inheritors of [His] promise,” thus implying that the couple also have a promise from God, maybe referring, at least in part, to Jesus’ promise, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them,”

⁶³ Cf. Part I, Chapter I.

⁶⁴ Mt 19:6 (RSV).

which was connected to marriage by Tertullian.⁶⁵ The actual blessing (complete with a Sign of the Cross, as are all sacerdotal blessings) asks that God guide the couple “into every good work” (ἐν παντί ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ), thus hinting at the partnership of the couple in their walking the path of salvation, with each partner being to the other “the covenant of faith and way of union with God Himself.”⁶⁶

A short exchange of peace, as in the Divine Liturgy, is followed by the command “Bow down your heads to the Lord,” which precedes the Prayer of Inclination in the Divine Liturgy, but in this rite it precedes another short nuptial blessing. This blessing refers to the Church’s creation by God, who drew her “out of the Gentiles” and espoused her “as a pure virgin”; following this, there is another blessing, asking for God’s keeping the couple “in peace and oneness of mind” (ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ὁμονοίᾳ), which ends with another Trinitarian praise.

Next comes the blessing of the rings and their being used to bless the couple. This is the central aspect of the Service of Betrothal since, as in the Latin Church, the rings in the Byzantine Church represent the betrothal itself. One should remember that, originally, the Service of Betrothal was celebrated months before the Service of Crowning, so it was truly the celebration and blessing of the betrothal itself: now its role seems more to be to bless the rings, to give more blessings to the couple, and to retain a traditional service. Many different meanings for rings are mentioned in the nuptial blessing following the ring ceremony, and many different authors give varying interpretations as well. Some say that the rings, particularly their exchange, signify “that in married life the weaknesses of one partner will be compensated for by the strengths of the other, the imperfections of one by the perfections of the other”; these rings signify how marriage *completes* the spouses, imperfect and incomplete on their own, by having them complement one

⁶⁵ Mt 18:20 (RSV); cf. Tertullian, §II.8.

⁶⁶ Chrysavgis, 18.

another.⁶⁷ Others see more of a joining aspect, related to the concept of *syzygia* (συζυγία), or “partnership under a common yoke”: in this view, “the placing on of the rings signifies offering one to the other and thenceforth neither one may act by himself apart from the other.”⁶⁸ An ancient Syriac prayer connects the rings to Christ’s self-sacrifice, since He “has forged for [the Church] a ring with the nails of His crucifixion.”⁶⁹ Yet another writer links it to the divinely-given indissolubility of marriage, since “the encounter of the betrothed is sealed as it were by the ring of the divine promise.”⁷⁰ Still another recognizes how the rings, being circles, symbolize eternity; also, rings signify possession, and the exchanging of rings “expresses mutual belonging and sharing.”⁷¹

Of course, there can be many spiritual interpretations of Christian symbols, as seen in the discussion of liturgical symbolism above or in the countless differing interpretations of the spiritual sense of Scripture.⁷² What is to be focused on here is what the rite itself declares or implies the symbolism to be. First to be investigated is what actually occurs in the rite. After blessing the rings while they lay on the Gospel Book, the priest touches the groom’s forehead with the rings, then touches the bride’s forehead, and then makes the Sign of the Cross over the groom while saying thrice, “The Servant of God *N.* is betrothed to the handmaiden of God *N.* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The priest then repeats the process in reverse, starting with the bride’s forehead, then the groom’s, then the Sign of the Cross

⁶⁷ Anthony M. Coniaris, *Sacred Symbols That Speak: A study of the major symbols of the Orthodox Church*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1987), II:141-2.

⁶⁸ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Marriage, Sexuality, & Celibacy: A Greek Orthodox Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1975), 22; Metrophanes Kritopoulos, qtd. in Athenagoras Kokkinakis, *Parents and Priests as Servants of Redemption: An Interpretation of the Doctrines of the Eastern Orthodox Church on the Sacraments of Matrimony and Priesthood* (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1958), 73.

⁶⁹ Qtd. in Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love: The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel and Victoria Steadman (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 150.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Wysochansky, 392.

⁷² Cf. Part I, Chapter IV.

over the bride, while repeating the same statement except with the bride's and the groom's positions switched. Finally, the priest places the rings on the right hand of each of the couple, and the *paránymphos* (male) or *paránymphē* (female) (παράνυμφος/παράνυμφη) exchanges the rings between the bride's and groom's hands.

During this ceremony itself, the rite says nothing more than that the couple is betrothed: thus the rings are, at the least, a symbol of their betrothal, their commitment to one another. The following nuptial blessing, though, is what truly describes the symbolism of the rings. The blessing, after mentioning Abraham's sending of Eleazar to find a wife for Isaac, prays that the Lord "preserve the word that has been spoken by them"; it prays, "Confirm them in Thy holy unity, for...by Thee is a woman joined to a man for assistance and for the continuation of the human race....preserve their betrothal in faith and harmony, truth and love [ἐν πίστει καὶ ὁνομοίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ]: for Thou, O Lord, hast declared that a pledge should be given and confirmed in all things." The main symbolism of the rings, then, seems to be a confirmation of the pledge made in betrothal. The blessing also mentions how marriage was instituted by God in the beginning of time, and it prays for the true union of spirit of the couple. The blessing continues, as it began, with recounting salvation history, this time with the many occurrences of rings and what they symbolize: Joseph's authority, Daniel's exaltation, Tamar's revelation, and the prodigal son's forgiveness.⁷³ The blessing then expounds on the symbols of the right hand and the word, first the right hand of God, and then the word of God and the right hands of His servants.⁷⁴ The right hand in general symbolizes one's authority or power, and this is no different with God. Thus the Lord's right hand "spread out the heavens," and it is "glorious in

⁷³ Cf. Gen 41:42; Dan 6:17; Gen 38:18,25; Lk 15:22.

⁷⁴ The English text of the service first references the right hand in the reference to the prodigal son, saying that the ring was placed on the son's right hand: however, the Greek—of both the service and of the Gospel passage itself—only speaks of *χεῖρα*, *hand*, not *δεξιός*, *right hand*.

power” for it “shatters the enemy.”⁷⁵ The nuptial blessing connects the Lord’s right hand to Moses’ parting of the Red Sea. It is because of the glory of the right hand that the request of the Sons of Thunder is so presumptuous, the saved are at the right hand of God instead of the left, Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of the Father, and Mary is usually placed in iconography on the right hand of her Son.⁷⁶ After this mention of God’s right hand, the word of the Lord is focused on, the “truthful word” that created all and that blesses the right hands of God’s servants. Along with His word, the arm of the Lord blesses His servant’s right hands, that arm which “brought him victory.”⁷⁷ Finally, the priest asks that God bless this exchange of rings and that He deign His angel to “go before them all the days of their lives,” just as He sent His angel to go before Abraham and the Israelites.⁷⁸

What can be learned about the symbolism of the rings from this nuptial blessing which, with its subsequent Trinitarian praise, ends the Service of Betrothal? It seems obvious that the rings are related to the pledge the couple makes to each other, since the verb used in the blessing (ἀρραβωνίζεται, *is betrothed*) is related to the noun *engagement* (ἀρραβών) used in the title of the service, which is also a word used sometimes to refer to the ring itself.⁷⁹ The same word is found in the Septuagint translation of the story of Tamar, referenced in the nuptial blessing here, where Judah asks, “What pledge should I give you?” (Τίνα τὸν ἀρραβῶνά σοι δώσω), and Tamar replies, “Your signet” (Τὸν δακτύλιόν σου), among other items.⁸⁰ The rings thus chiefly symbolize the unbreakable pledge the couple makes to each other, a pledge they will be held accountable for, just as Judah was held accountable for the pledge he gave Tamar. This pledge is

⁷⁵ Is 48:13; Ex 15:6 (RSV).

⁷⁶ Cf. Mk 10:37; Mt 25:33-34, 41; Nicene Creed.

⁷⁷ Is 59:16 (RSV).

⁷⁸ Cf. Gen 24:7, 40; Ex 23:20; Ex 32:34; Ex 33:2.

⁷⁹ Cf. Gallaro and Salachas, 222.

⁸⁰ Gen 38:18.

upheld by God’s blessing, both of the rings and of the couple, for He made this union indissoluble, and He will be the One the couple is accountable to for their success or failure in upholding their pledge. The other symbolisms of the ring, as seen in the references to salvation history, seem to include authority (ἐξουσία) such as that given to Joseph, exaltation, or glorification,⁸¹ such as that gained by Daniel in the land of Babylon, and compassion as shown by “our heavenly Father” (ὁ Πατήρ ἡμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος) towards the prodigal son. The rings thus seem to also symbolize the mutual authority the couple has over each other (“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”), the glorification they will receive if they live out their married life in a Christian manner, and the compassion they should show to each other for their failings.⁸²

Another layer of symbolism appears because the rings are specifically placed on the right hands (ἐν τοῖς δεξιόις) of the couple. The right hand, both of God and of men, is the location of power and authority. Thus the pledge they make seems to be made with *all* of the couple’s power and authority: they pledge with all of their ability to fulfill the duties entrusted to them by this Mystery. God’s mighty, truthful word is also called upon, along with a call for blessing “by Thine arm on high” (τῷ Βραχίονί σου τῷ ὑψηλῷ), to help preserve this pledge.

The Service of Betrothal ends with the Trinitarian praise following the last nuptial blessing regarding the rings and the right hands. In more ancient practice, this would be followed by many months before the Service of Crowning, but in current practice this latter service immediately follows the former. To summarize this service before moving on, the Service of Betrothal highlights the pledge made by the couple to each other, signified by the

⁸¹ The service says that Daniel ἐδοξάσθη, *is glorified*, the same verb used in verses such as Jn 13:31: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified” (Νῦν ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη ἐν αὐτοῦ).

⁸² 1 Cor 7:4 (RSV).

blessing and exchange of rings. Many of the blessings in this service ask God to preserve this betrothal, this union. These blessings also ask that the couple's life goes well together, being kept in peace, in harmony (ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ), in trust, in faith, in truth, in fertility, and in love. Thus the couple, in their indissoluble union, are called to keep their pledge while God continues “guiding them in every good work” (ὁδηγῶν αὐτοὺς ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ). The couple must work with God's help to keep their lives “blameless and without spot” that they may through this union be glorified and achieve salvation.⁸³

⁸³ Cf. Eph 5:27; 2 Pet 3:14.

Chapter II: The Service of Crowning, that is, of Marriage
(Ἀκολουθία τοῦ στεφανώματος ἤτοι τοῦ γάμου)

The Service of Crowning, that is, of Marriage (Ἀκολουθία τοῦ στεφανώματος ἤτοι τοῦ γάμου) is the longer and more important part of the entire Byzantine marriage rite. Though the Mystery is not accomplished through the rite,⁸⁴ the rite is still the ordinary form of the Mystery, and it still bestows graces through its sacerdotal blessings, in the greatest way through the crowning itself with its accompanying blessing.⁸⁵ The Service of Crowning is *the* actual marital liturgy, to be completely specific, since it is the service also known as “of Marriage.” It is because of this that the service takes place just in front of the sanctuary, the “soul” of the church, “the place which sanctifies the entire church.”⁸⁶ The sanctuary proper, i.e. that which is behind the iconostasis and the Royal Doors (Holy Doors), is only entered into by those serving the altar, i.e. bishops, priests, deacons, minor orders, and altar servers. Since the couple to be married are none of these, the service takes place at the limits of where they may go, i.e. just before the iconostasis and sanctuary proper where a small table called the *trápeza* is set up on a raised section of the floor called the *ámbōn* (ἄμβων), which “manifests the shape of the stone of the Holy Sepulchre [on which the angel sat after he rolled it away from the doors of the tomb,] proclaiming the resurrection of the Lord to the myrrhbearing women.”⁸⁷ Thus the couple stand just before the Holy of Holies, just before the place which represents heaven, when they are joined in marriage, just as all Christians do when they come to receive the Holy Gifts. Besides the fact that only those serving the altar may enter the sanctuary proper, another possible symbolism for marriages not occurring within the sanctuary (which represents heaven) is the

⁸⁴ Cf. Part I, Chapter I.

⁸⁵ In the typical Orthodox view, the crowning is actually the *epiklesis* of the Mystery, i.e. “the effective moment of the sacrament” resulting from the “descent of the Holy Spirit”: in this theology, the crowning is what *makes* the Mystery. Cf. Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 153; Gallaro and Salachas, 228; Coniaris, II:143; Kucharek, *Mysteries*, 321.

⁸⁶ Maximos, Ch. XXIV; Ouspensky, I:32-33.

⁸⁷ Germanos, 63.

Gospel: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”⁸⁸

The Service of Crowning begins with a procession from the narthex (where the Service of Betrothal is held) towards the *trápeza* outside the sanctuary. This procession takes place as the choir sings Psalm 128 (or 127 in Greek numbering), with the refrain “Glory be to You, O our God, glory be to You!” beginning the Psalm and being repeated after each verse. This psalm, with its hopeful messages such as “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; / your children will be like olive shoots around your table” fits well with the ends of marriage as laid out in theology.⁸⁹ This psalm “exalts the joy of family life, the prosperity and peace which it brings to man as the highest forms of God’s blessing.”⁹⁰ Indeed, this psalm declares the blessing of the Lord on those who follow Him, such as the couple is called to do, for they will have fertility, prosperity, and long life. In the end, for the blessed one who “walks in the ways” of the Lord, “blessed are you, and well with you it will be” [μακάριος εἶ, καὶ καλῶς σοι ἔσται].⁹¹ In general, this entire procession from the narthex to the edge where the nave and the sanctuary meet can be seen to “[symbolize] the change the couple is about to make from the celibate to the married state of life,” or it can be described as “an entrance into the Kingdom of Christ: the marriage contract concluded through the betrothal service will now be transformed into an eternal relationship; human love will acquire a totally new dimension by being identified with the love of Christ for His Church.”⁹²

The service, after the entrance psalm, begins somewhat peculiarly: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and

⁸⁸ Mt 22:30 (RSV).

⁸⁹ Ps 128:3 (RSV).

⁹⁰ Meyendorff, 37.

⁹¹ Ps 129:2 (LXX).

⁹² Wysochansky, 391; Meyendorff, 38.

ever. Amen.” The Service of Betrothal commences, as do all the lesser liturgical services in the Eastern Church, with the praise “Blessed is our God, at all times, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.” The specifically trinitarian praise, however, “is uniquely reserved for the Eucharistic sacrifice.”⁹³ Why, then, does the Service of Crowning, a non-Eucharistic service, begin with it? This is not brought up by theologians commentating on marriage or the marriage rite. This author’s guess is that it is due to the fact that, in earlier history, the Service of Crowning included the distribution of the Presanctified Gifts.⁹⁴ To support this notion, the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, like the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, begins with this peculiar trinitarian praise.⁹⁵ Thus, in this author’s view, this particular opening praise is a remnant from the former inclusion of the Presanctified Gifts in the Service of Crowning, though it no longer remains included.⁹⁶ The mention of the Kingdom of God also reminds one of the fact that a married couple’s home is called by St. John Chrysostom to be a “domestic Church,” a “little Church,” and since the Church is the Kingdom of God, the home is meant to be a sort of “domestic Kingdom of God.”

Just as in the Divine Liturgies and the Service of Betrothal, the service continues after the opening praise with an *ekténia*. Also as in the Service of Betrothal, the opening *ekténia* (*Ekténia* of Peace) includes petitions specifically geared towards the married couple. After a general petition for the couple, the priest or deacon prays “that this marriage may be blessed, as was that of Cana in Galilee,” referencing the Gospel reading of the Service of Crowning, John 2:1-11. The next petition asks for “integrity” to be granted to them, though the Greek word (σωφροσύνη,

⁹³ Kucharek, *Liturgy*, 338.

⁹⁴ Cf. Part I, Chapter III.

⁹⁵ Cf. Archimandrite Kyril Jenner, “Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts,” *Saint Elias Monastery*, http://www.mynachdy-sant-elias.org.uk/Presanctified_Complete.pdf (accessed November 17, 2012).

⁹⁶ Patriarch Gregorios III also comments that “the service of crowning is structured like the Divine Liturgy, as formerly it was celebrated during the Divine Liturgy” (152).

sōphrosúnē) literally means “soundness of mind,” “self-control,” or “sobriety.”⁹⁷ The same petition also continues to ask for “fruit of the womb as may be most expedient to them” (literally, fruit of the womb “to the interest” (πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον)). Because of its being included in the same petition as a prayer for “expedient” fertility, it seems that the *sōphrosúnē* in this case may refer specifically to self-control within the exercise of the marriage rights; the “expediency” of the couple’s fertility being referenced here may imply that the self-control of the couple will let them refrain from having an inexpedient number of children. In short, this petition could be seen as a petition for the ability of the couple to practice prudent periodic continence (the key factor in what is contemporarily called Natural Family Planning (NFP)), though this may be an eisegesis of the text.⁹⁸ The next two petitions continue the theme of fertility, of both genders and abundantly; the second petition ends with a prayer for “a course of life blameless and unashamed” (ἀκατάγνωστον διαγωγήν), continuing a theme throughout both parts of the marriage rite, which is prayer for the couple’s virtue. The typical ending petitions, of prayer for salvation and for deliverance from affliction, wrath, danger, and need, conclude this *ekténia*, along with the Marian remembrance and commendation and the Trinitarian praise.

The long nuptial blessing following the opening *ekténia* is a chain of references to marriages throughout salvation history: the first marriage of Adam and Eve (including references to creation in general and hers specifically), the marriage of Abraham and Sarah and their miraculous son Isaac, the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, the marriage of Jacob (from whom came the twelve patriarchs) and Rachel, the marriage of Joseph and Asenath which bore Ephraim

⁹⁷ Strong’s *Lexicon* in *The Faith Database*.

⁹⁸ The idea of conscious birth spacing is a part of Orthodox thought, though: it is because men and women are seen as cooperators with God in creation that they are seen to have the responsibility to space their births prudently. Asceticism is also a common theme in Orthodox thought, hence their fasting regulations that are so much stricter and more extensive than those of Catholics. Unfortunately, many Orthodox do not connect these two themes and so, using the reasoning on their responsibility as cooperators with God, see contraception as morally acceptable.

and Manasseh, and the marriage of Zechariah and Elizabeth which bore John the Baptist.⁹⁹ Jesus' birth from the Virgin Mary, the birth that came from the root of Jesse, is next remembered, along with Jesus' appearance at the wedding at Cana (the Gospel of the service), where He blessed the wedding in order to "show that a lawful union and the childbearing therefrom is according to [His] will."¹⁰⁰ All of these marriages mention both of the spouses as well as their children (with Adam and Eve the command to "be fruitful and multiply" is mentioned instead), thus at least indirectly referencing the mutual help and procreative ends of marriage; in addition, all of these marriages, save one (Joseph and Asenath), were barren until a miraculous intervention by God, thus in some sense being a prayer for the cure of infertility as well. The priest prays for Jesus' presence at this wedding, as He was at the wedding at Cana, and he asks that God grant to the couple "a peaceful life, length of days, integrity [σωφροσύνην], love for one another in a bond of peace, offspring long-lived, grace by reason of their children, and an unfadeable crown of glory." Again and again, the rite prays for the union of the couple and for their fertility; not only that, but it prays for their temporal prosperity, this time for peace and long life. The first reference to the service's eponymous crowns occurs here as well. The following parts of the blessing continue these themes: long life, virtue (particularly virtue in the marital rights), temporal prosperity, and salvation.

What follows is an even longer nuptial blessing. It begins by praising God for some of His characteristics: He is "celebrant of mystical and undefiled marriage, and the lawmaker governing our bodies," He is "the guardian of incorruption, and the good administrator of the means of life." The first two titles explain much of what is found in the account of the first

⁹⁹ Cf. Gen 1:28, 2:18-24, Mt 19:6; Gen 17:4-5 [Abraham in Hebrew literally means "father of many nations" (father = אב ('āv), many = רב (rāv), nation = אֲמָ (ām)], 21:2; Gen 24:1-67, 25:21; Gen 29:28, 35:22-26; Gen 41:45,50-52; Lk 1:5-24,57-64.

¹⁰⁰ Is 11:1, Lk 1:26-38, 2:1-7; Jn 2:1-11.

marriage, recounted next in the blessing:¹⁰¹ God is the one who created Adam and Eve and led them to each other, thus celebrating their marriage, and He ordered their union into one flesh, thus being lawmaker to their bodies. The second pair of titles relates to common themes throughout the service: God leads the couple in virtue, thus guarding their incorruption, and He blesses them graciously (and, if they cooperate prudently, expediently) with new life, thus administering well their “means of life” [τῶν βιοτικῶν]. The key in these titles, as well as in the history of Adam and Eve related subsequently, is that it is God who does these things and man who cooperates: thus God “appointed [man] as king of creation,” and it is man who must respond to this appointment by his good actions. (This is a foreshadowing of the eponymous crowning to occur later in the service.) The priest’s calling down of grace on the couple continues the emphasis on God’s effort, praying that He will allow the wife to be subject to her husband while the husband may be head of his wife, “that they may live according to [His] will.” (These complementary characteristics are those enjoined by St. Paul in the Epistle for the service, Ephesians 5:20-33.) A list of couples throughout salvation history now occurs, with blessings (the priest’s making the sign of the cross over the couple) connected with all the Scriptural ones: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Joseph and Asenath, Moses and Zipporah, (Joachim and Anna, parents of the Theotokos, are here included, though they are part of the Church’s tradition and are not in Scripture, and a blessing is thus not performed at their mention) and Zechariah and Elizabeth.¹⁰² References to salvation history continue to pour out in this blessing, with prayers that God preserve the couple (Διαφύλαξον αὐτούς) , just as He preserved Noah in the Ark, Jonah in the whale’s belly, and the Three Holy Children (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or,

¹⁰¹ Cf. Gen 2:18-24, Mt 19:6.

¹⁰² Cf. Gen 11:29; Gen 24:67; Gen 41:45; Ex 2:21; Lk 1:5.

Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael) in the furnace of Babylon.¹⁰³ Joy for the couple is prayed for, joy resembling that given to St. Helena, mother of St. Constantine the Emperor, upon finding the Precious and Life-Giving Cross in Jerusalem (an event celebrated in the Eastern Church by a strict fast on September 14th each year). The priest asks that God remember them (Μνημόμευσον αὐτῶν) in a series of petitions. The concept of God's memory is one found frequently in Eastern Christian liturgy, such as the remembrances during the Divine Liturgy after the words of the Institution have been prayed and the frequent antiphon in Eastern memorial services: "Eternal memory, eternal memory; blessed repose and eternal memory." First, God is asked to remember them as He remembered Enoch, Shem, and Elijah.¹⁰⁴ Second, He is asked to remember them as He remembered the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, who, as the blessing relates, received "crowns from heaven," another reference to the key ritual in this service.¹⁰⁵ Third, He is asked to remember them as well as their parents, thus including an implicit reminder to heed the Fourth Commandment.¹⁰⁶ Fourth, He is asked to remember the "wedding company," that is, the Paranympths, as the Greek says (τῶν Παρανύμφων). Finally, once more God is asked to remember the couple by name and bless them. The final section of this nuptial blessing recalls constant themes throughout the rite, praying for "fruit of the womb, fair children, harmony of soul and body," that is, fertility and union. God is asked, referencing many Scriptural precedents, to exalt the couple as the cedars of Lebanon and as the cultured vine are exalted.¹⁰⁷ He is asked to give them temporal prosperity and to lead them in every good work, as was prayed in the Service of Betrothal. Verses from the opening psalm of the service are recalled, and the priest

¹⁰³ Cf. Gen 6-9; Jon 2; Dan 3 (including the Song of the Three Children).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Gen 5:22-24; Gen 9:26-27; 1 Kgs 17-19, 21, 2 Kgs 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 154.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Ex 20:12.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ps 92:12, Sgs 5:15, Sir 24:13, 50:8, 12, Is 35:2, 60:13, et al.; Ps 128:3, et al. The cedars of Lebanon are also mentioned Scripturally due to their being used in the construction of the temple and their being a symbol for haughty pride of those who defy God.

asks “that being pleasing in [His] sight, they may shine as stars in heaven.”¹⁰⁸ Finally, like almost all prayers in the Eastern tradition, this nuptial blessing ends with a Trinitarian praise.

One more nuptial blessing occurs before the crowning. Once again, the origin of marriage at the beginning of time by God’s will is recalled.¹⁰⁹ The priest asks the Lord to stretch out His hand and unite the couple, since all marriages are created by God. He prays that God unite them in “oneness of mind” (ὁμοφροσύνη), that He “crown them together into one flesh” (στεφάνωσον αὐτοὺς εἰς σάρκα μίαν), that He give them children, in order that they enjoy the blessing of children (εὐτεκνίας ἀπόλαυσιν), though the English says “pleasure of well-behaved children.” Another Trinitarian praise ends this nuptial blessing of union and fertility.

Now comes the central part of this service: the crowning itself. Different nuptial blessings earlier in the service had allusions to crowns: “unfadeable crowns of glory,” “crowns from heaven,” “crown them together into one flesh.” In addition, references to kingship appeared as well, particularly the kingship of man over creation. Just as with the rings in the Service of Betrothal, there are many meanings given to the crowns by different theologians. The late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann gave three meanings: the couple as kings of creation (as well as of their home), the couple as martyrs, and the couple as pilgrims towards the Heavenly Kingdom.¹¹⁰ The themes of the couple as king and queen of their own home, the domestic Church, a microcosm, in a sense, of the Heavenly Kingdom and of the couples as martyrs are mentioned by many commentators.¹¹¹ Some even connect the crowns to Christ’s crown of thorns, that is, the “crown of irrevocable love and of the sacrifice of Christ for the Church”; as

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Ps 128:3.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Gen 2.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Alexander Schmemmann, *Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 110-112.

¹¹¹ Cf. Coniaris, II:142-3; Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 56; Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 155.

Bishop Kallistos Ware wrote, “Perfect love is always crucified love.”¹¹² Another idea is that “*The man is the crown of the woman, and the woman is the crown of the man,*” or, as St. Clement of Alexandria put it, “the woman’s crown is her husband, and the husband’s crown is marriage itself.”¹¹³ Still another is that the crown represents their “spiritual maturity,” or the fact that they have overcome concupiscence, earning the victor’s crown in the “Pauline image of life as a race”: “The garland that is put on the heads of the bride and groom is a token of their victory: in that they have not succumbed to the lure of pleasure, they come undefeated to the haven of marriage.”¹¹⁴ The service itself does not have any prayers or nuptial blessings preparing for this ritual, and there are only the scattered references to crowns throughout the service. The crowning itself is almost identical to the blessing of rings in the Service of Betrothal: the only difference is that crowns are used instead of rings and that the priest’s words say “is crowned” (Στέφεται) instead of “is betrothed.”¹¹⁵ Following the crowning come two verses relating to it: “O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honor” (Κύριε ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ στεφάνωσον αὐτούς), which is said by the priest and then repeated twice by the choir, and “Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious [literally, honorable] stones,” (Εἰθικας ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν στεφάνους ἐκ λίθων τιμίων) which is said by the reader.

The readings of the service come directly after the crowning. As there are innumerable depths hidden in the prayers of the service, so are there infinitely more in Scripture, so only a few points will be made about each reading. The reader reads the verse “They asked life from Thee and Thou didst give them length of days” before he reads the Epistle, Ephesians 5:20-33.

¹¹² Gallaro and Salachas, 227; Kallistos Ware, “The Monastic Life as a Sacrament of Love,” in *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 2 (1981), 699, qtd. in Chrysavgis, 89.

¹¹³ Gregorios, 152; Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogos*, §II.8, qtd. in Kucharek, *Mysteries*, 314.

¹¹⁴ Gregorios, 152; Hector Y. Doueih, “Introduction” in *The Mystery of Crowning According to the Maronite Antiochene Church* (Brooklyn, NY: Diocese of Saint Maron – U.S.A., 1991), vi; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily 9 in 1 Timothy*, §2, qtd. in Kucharek, *Mysteries*, 315; also cf. Kokkinakis, 74.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Part II, Chapter I.

There are three main elements in this text: the union of Adam and Eve, the union of Christ and the Church, and the union of Christian spouses.¹¹⁶ The part that many couples will focus on, though, is the element of headship and submission. St. John Chrysostom has one of the most famous commentaries on this passage (*Homily 20 on Ephesians*), and one of the most directly helpful for a marriage, including many explicitly practical directions, and he writes much on this topic. Here is just a selection:

It is the head that upholds the well-being of the body...Suffer anything for her sake...There are no longer two bodies, but one: he is the head, she the body...The wife is a second authority. She should not demand equality, for she is subject to the head; neither should the husband belittle her subjection, for she is the body. If the head despises the body, it will itself die. Rather, let the husband counterbalance her obedience with his love....Let the head provide for the body...If you think the wife is the loser because she is told to fear her husband, remember that the principal duty of love is assigned to the husband, and you will see that it is her gain....The wife is a secondary authority, but nevertheless she possesses real authority and equality of dignity while the husband retains the role of headship...If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church. Therefore, it is possible for us to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives.¹¹⁷

After the Epistle and the verse “Thou, O Lord, shall keep us and preserve us,” the priest reads the Gospel, John 2:1-11. The dictum of St. Augustine, “The Lord confirmed that marriage is something of value...because He attended a wedding,” is, of course, an important message of this reading.¹¹⁸ Yet this reading also shows “the union of baptism, marriage and eucharist”: the water represents Baptism, a marriage occurs, and the wine and the aspect of transformation represent the Eucharist.¹¹⁹ The couple are thus taught by this reading not only to remember Christ’s presence throughout their marriage but to strengthen their marriage through their common reception of the Eucharist.

Following the readings comes a very short *ekténia* asking for “mercy, life, peace, health, and salvation” for the couple and for all who are present. A subsequent short nuptial blessing mentions how Christ’s presence at the wedding at Cana shows the honor of marriage; it asks that

¹¹⁶ Cf. ICEL, 148.

¹¹⁷ Chrysostom, 45, 47, 52, 53, 54, 56-7.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Excellence*, §3,3.

¹¹⁹ ICEL, 156.

God preserve the couple “in peace and harmony,” since it is through His pleasure that they are joined in marriage. The English next asks that God “declare their marriage honourable,” but the Greek literally asks, “Lift up their marriage and show it honorable.” Petitions for their virtue, marital and otherwise, follow, along with a petition that they live to an old age while keeping the Lord’s commandments faithfully and purely. A Trinitarian praise concludes the blessing.

An *ekténia* taken from the Divine Liturgy follows, an *ekténia* prayed after the Great Entrance and the Prayer of Preparation of the Anaphora, just before the Profession of Faith: it is the second part of the Litany of Supplication. The Lord’s Prayer follows immediately after this *ekténia*. Both of these elements are part of the second half of the Divine Liturgy, leading up to the reception of the Eucharist. In the Service of Crowning, they lead up to the reception of the common cup, which, as was mentioned above, used to be the reception of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts.¹²⁰

The ritual of the common cup continues the service, beginning with a blessing on the cup. The blessing remembers God’s creative power, including how He “[adorns] the crown of all things created by [Him].” The blessing itself merely asks for God to bless with His “spiritual blessing” (εὐλογία πνευματικῇ) this cup to be given to those joined “in [literally, for] the community of marriage” (πρὸς γάμου κοινωνίαν). While the couple receives from the common cup thrice (continuing the theme of threefold actions, such as the rings and the crowns), the choir sings a Psalm verse: “I will drink of the cup of salvation, and I will call upon the Name of the Lord.”¹²¹ This common cup, like many other symbols and rituals of this service, is given many different symbolisms: it represents their “common life,” it “[denotes] the mutual sharing of joy and sorrow, the token of a life of harmony,” it reminds the couple of the wine at the wedding at

¹²⁰ Cf. Part I, Chapter II.

¹²¹ Ps 116:13.

Cana, it symbolically reveals “the hidden link between the miracle of Cana, the cross, and the chalice,” and, above all, it calls to mind the Eucharist.¹²²

The next ritual is one of the most-discussed of the rituals in this service: the Dance of Isaiah. The Dance involves the priest leading the couple around the *trápeza* thrice while *tropária* are chanted. The first *tropáron* (τροπάριον), “O Isaiah rejoice,” from which the ritual gets its name (the word “rejoice” is χόρευε in Greek, which literally means “dance a round”), is from the Service of the Nativity.¹²³ The second *tropáron*, “O Holy Martyrs,” is actually a *tropáron* used in the Byzantine Rite of Ordination.¹²⁴ The circular procession has been given many symbolisms by different authors: Fr. Schmemmann writes that it “signifies the eternal journey which has begun; marriage will be a procession hand in hand, a continuation of that which has started here, not always joyful, but always capable of being referred to and filled with joy,” while Anthony Coniaris discusses the priest’s role symbolizing the Church’s leading of the couple and the centrality of the Gospel and the Cross (literal centrality: the Gospel Book and the Cross are set on the *trápeza*).¹²⁵ The circular dance represents “the eternity of love” shared by the couple (since the circle is a symbol of eternity) as well as “their progression through life together.”¹²⁶ Other writers focus on the *tropáron* to the martyrs, recalling also the martyrdom aspect of the crowns, and its relation to the constant sacrificial love demanded of the spouses: the procession of the couple resembles the procession of sacrifices around the temple, showing their dedication to God.¹²⁷ The directive of St. Paulinus of Nola applies too: “Your yoke must be the revered cross.”¹²⁸ As Evdokimov so poignantly writes, “Throughout their entire life, the spouses will

¹²² Schmemmann, *Sacraments*, 112; Coniaris, II:143; Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 157

¹²³ Cf. Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 158.

¹²⁴ Cf. Wysochansky, 137.

¹²⁵ Schmemmann, *Sacraments*, 113; cf. Coniaris, II:144.

¹²⁶ Stevenson, 101; Leach and Cross, 111.

¹²⁷ Cf. Coniaris, II:144; Gregorios, 153.

¹²⁸ Saint Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen XXV*, qtd. in Gasparro, Magazzù, and Spada, 293-4.

hear echoes, strong or dim, of the *Tropáron* of the Holy Martyrs.”¹²⁹ As the dance ends, a praise to Christ, “prideful boast of the Apostles” and “joy of the Martyrs,” as well as the Trinity, is proclaimed.

Following the dance comes the removal of the crowns (though in earlier times, the couple kept the crowns for seven days after the wedding, with a separate ceremony of removal later).¹³⁰ There is a separate removal prayer for the groom and for the bride. The first three patriarchal couples (Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel) are referenced, divided by gender between the two prayers. The priest prays that the groom be magnified (Μεγαλύνθητι), blest, and multiplied, that he go in peace and that he righteously perform God’s commands. In a similar way, he prays that the bride be magnified, rejoiced, and multiplied, that she be “glad in [her] own husband” while keeping the Lord’s laws in order that God be “well pleased.”

The nuptial blessing after the removal of the crowns, after referencing the Gospel reading and that it is by God’s providence that the couple are joined in marriage, prays for blessings on the couple at all times, “when they come in and when they go out.” The priest prays for the couple’s temporal prosperity while immediately afterwards praying for their purity directed towards the Kingdom. The allusion to the crowns here seems to portray them as a glimpse at the glory of heaven or as symbolizing the couple’s souls: “Receive their crowns in Thy kingdom, preserving them spotless, undefiled and without reproach, unto the ages of ages.”

One nuptial blessing remains before the final prayers of the service. This blessing is from the outset Trinitarian, praying that the Triune God bless the couple with all those things prayed for throughout the service: “long life; well-favoured children; progress in life and in faith;...all

¹²⁹ Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 155.

¹³⁰ Cf. Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 156.

the good things of the earth.” The last petition in the prayer is that God “account [the couple] worthy to know the joy of the promised blessings.” The “promised blessings” may be specifically marital blessings, such as prosperity, fertility, and union, or they may be the blessings promised to all those who keep the Lord’s way faithfully (e.g. the blessings promised in the Beatitudes). The prayers of the Theotokos, Mary, Mother of God, and of all the saints are asked for as well.

The dialogue before the last prayer (“Glory be to You, O Lord,” “Glory be to the Father,” “Lord, have mercy” thrice, and “Give the blessing”) are common at the end of any Eastern liturgical or paraliturgical services, such as the Hours. The final prayer, like the prayers in these other services, petitions different saints and groups of saints for their prayers: after yet another reference to Christ’s declaring marriage honorable by His presence at the wedding at Cana, the prayers of the Theotokos, the Apostles, Sts. Constantine (Κωνσταντῖνος) and Helena (Ἑλένη), “holy God-crowned Kings and equal to the Apostles,” Greatmartyr St. Procopius (Προκόπιος), and all the saints, are asked for. St. Helena was mentioned in one of the long nuptial blessings earlier in this service, and prayers to her are often joined, as in this case, with prayers to her son, St. Constantine, thus explaining his appearance in this prayer. The importance of these two saints (besides St. Constantine’s making Christianity legal in the Roman Empire and their being “disseminators of the Christian Catholic Faith”) is primarily in their finding of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, the Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified, in Jerusalem, as mentioned above: thus their appearance in this prayer seems to be in connection with the martyrdom theme of the service, since all martyrdom and asceticism is a partaking in the sufferings of Christ on the Cross.¹³¹ St. Procopius, an early Christian martyr, is also connected with this theme, since he

¹³¹ Wysochansky, 395. Evdokimov says that these saints used to be more prevalent in this rite, with their troparia being included in ancient forms of it. Cf. Evdokimov, *Sacrament*, 159, fn. 64.

“encouraged twelve women to go their death of martyrdom as to a marriage feast,” as well as being a married saint himself.¹³² The importance of the martyrdom that the spouses are called on to is witnessed to by the fact that the last prayer of the service makes multiple references to martyrdom. The Service of Crowning finally ends, as do all Eastern services, with the prayer, “Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.”

In summary, the Service of Crowning calls the blessing of God down on the couple who have decided to be joined in marriage. Many themes are common throughout the many blessings in the service: union of spirit, fertility, temporal prosperity, virtue (especially marital virtue), faithfulness to the Lord’s commandments, martyrdom and self-sacrifice. All three ends of marriage are present, with more emphasis given to the procreative and mutual help ends. It is interesting to note that “there is, in fact, no point during the service where the Church joins the couple in marriage, but only constant reference to the ratification of this marriage by the Church.”¹³³ As mentioned above, the ministers of the Sacrament, even in Byzantine Catholic theology, are the couple themselves, though God, of course, gives the grace for the Sacrament, and the service bears this out.¹³⁴ For couples, the point of the service is to give them blessings to live their sacramental marriage to the holiest extent possible while reminding them of their duties: to live virtuously, to be (expediently) fertile, to be united in body and spirit, to follow the commandments of the Lord, to sacrifice for God and one another, and to lead each other to the Kingdom of Heaven through their own “domestic Kingdom.” Through their crowning, the couple are called to live as godly rulers of their own “domestic Kingdom” in order to, at the end

¹³² Wysochansky, 395; cf. Chrysavgis, 19.

¹³³ Chrysavgis, 25.

¹³⁴ For more on the role of God in the joining of the couple, see the discussion of *Christus pronubus* in Kantorowicz, 7-9.

of their lives, reach the Heavenly Kingdom, “where there is no pain, no grief, no sighing, but everlasting life.”

Appendix I: Current Ruthenian Catholic Usage

What was described and commentated on above is a traditional form of the rite based on the usage of the Greek Orthodox and based on a traditional form of the Greek *Euchologion*. Just as in many ways usage of rites differs among different Churches in the Byzantine rite (particularly solely between Greek and Slavic Churches in general), so too there are differences in the usage of the marriage rite between the traditional Greek form depicted in the service books by the Greek Orthodox and the current form depicted in the service books of the Ruthenian Catholic Church under the Metropolitan of Pittsburgh.¹³⁵ The two most recent books containing the Rite of Marriage from this Church which this author could locate contain a number of differences from the traditional form.¹³⁶ In the Service of Betrothal, the opening *ekténia* has been removed, the rubrics for the ring ceremony are changed (the Sign of the Cross is not made thrice and there is no swapping of the rings between the spouses), and the long nuptial blessing following this ceremony is replaced with a typical ending of a liturgical service in the Eastern Church. This last change thus makes the Service of Betrothal more similar to its original form as a separate ceremony occurring months before the Service of Crowning. There are more changes in the Service of Crowning. After the procession, the Ruthenian Church adds the declaration of consent, as in the Latin Rite, before the opening Trinitarian praise and *ekténia*. The second of the three nuptial blessings that follow (“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Thou that art the Celebrant of marriage...”) is removed. Before the crowning itself, a new ceremony of blessing and bestowal of the wedding rings (bands) is added, as well as a declaration of marriage vows similar to the Latin Rite. The triple actions in the crowning are reduced to singular actions. The

¹³⁵ *Nota Bene*: This is the form as described in the most recent official liturgical books this author could find: it is possible that actual current *usage* may be somewhat different.

¹³⁶ These two books are Wysochansky, 20-36, and *Ritual of Marriage* (Pittsburgh, PA: Byzantine Seminary Press, 1979).

ekténia after the Gospel reading becomes a fervent *ekténia*, with the “Lord, have mercy” response being said thrice for each petition rather than once. The *ekténia* (“For an angel of peace...”) following the next nuptial blessing is removed. The elements following the Lord’s Prayer are the largest changes. The Dance of Isaiah (which the rubrics do not mention as including the procession) immediately follows the Lord’s Prayer instead of following the common cup, and the removal of the crowns immediately follows the Dance, just as in the traditional service, but now in an earlier position. The common cup itself is removed from the service and added as an optional ceremony to perform at the wedding reception. Instead, the reception, solely by the couple, of the Presanctified Gifts, as was the custom in the early Church, is restored to the rite, with the “Holy Things to the Holy” and its following response and communion prayer from the Divine Liturgy introduced. The ending of the service remains the same, although the references to Sts. Constantine, Helena, and Procopius are removed (they, along with the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, are not mentioned anywhere in the Ruthenian service).

In summary, current Ruthenian usage of the rite of marriage, according to its most recent liturgical books, works to the restore some elements of the rite lost throughout the centuries, such as the Service of Betrothal as a separate rite and the reception of the Presanctified Gifts instead of the common cup in the Service of Crowning, but it also removes numerous prayers, changes a few rubrics, and rearranges the final elements of the Service of Crowning.

Appendix II: Traditional Text of the Mystery of Crowning¹³⁷

The Service of Betrothal, that is, of Engagement

DEACON: Master, give the blessing.

PRIEST

Blessed is our God always, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: In peace let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison *or* Lord have mercy. *And after each petition.*

DEACON

For the peace from on high, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray unto the Lord.

For the peace and union of the whole world, and for the good estate of the holy churches of God, let us pray unto the Lord.

For this holy temple and for them that enter therein with faith, reverence and fear of God, let us pray unto the Lord.

For our Archbishop (.....), for the honourable order of priesthood; and for the diaconate, which is in Christ; for all the clergy and the people, let us pray unto the Lord.

For the servant of God (.....) and the handmaiden of God (.....), who now plight their troth to one another, and for their salvation, let us pray unto the Lord.

That there may be promised unto them children for the continuation of their race, and granting unto them all their prayers unto salvation, let us pray unto the Lord.

That there may be sent down upon them love perfect and peaceful, and assistance, let us pray unto the Lord.

That they may be preserved in oneness of mind, and in a sure and steadfast faith, let us pray unto the Lord.

That they may be blest in harmony and perfect trust, let us pray unto the Lord.

That the course and manner of their lives may be preserved blameless and without spot, let us pray unto the Lord.

¹³⁷ Taken from Klitou.

That the Lord our God may grant unto them an honourable marriage and a bed undefiled, let us pray unto the Lord.

That we may be delivered from all tribulation, wrath danger and necessity, let us pray unto the Lord.

Succour, save, have mercy and preserve us, O God, by Thy grace.

Mindful of our most holy and undefiled, most blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary; and of all the saints; let us commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

PRIEST

For unto Thee belong all glory, honour and worship, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit; now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

O God eternal, Thou who didst bring together into unity the things which before had been separate, and in so doing didst impose on them an indissoluble bond of love, who didst bless Isaac and Rebecca, declaring them to be the inheritors of Thy promise: do Thou (+) bless these Thy servants guiding them into every good work.

For Thou art a merciful God, and a lover of mankind, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

PRIEST: Peace unto all.

CHOIR: And unto thy spirit.

DEACON: Bow down your heads before the Lord.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

PRIEST

O Lord our God, who didst from out of the Gentiles espouse the Church as a pure virgin, bless this Betrothal (+) uniting these Thy servants, keeping them in peace and oneness of mind.

For unto Thee belong all glory, honour and worship, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Priest shall now bless the rings over the Gospel Book and then with the rings shall touch the man's forehead, then the woman's, then make the sign of the Cross over the man all the while saying the following:

The Servant of God (.....) is betrothed to the handmaiden of God (.....) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (3)

CHOIR: Amen. (3)

And having done this thrice he shall do the same starting first with the woman's forehead and making the sign of the Cross over the woman.

The handmaiden of God (.....) is betrothed to the servant of God (.....) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (3)

CHOIR: Amen. (3)

And having done this he shall place the rings on their third finger of the right hand. The Best Man and Maid of honour shall now change the rings on the Bride and Grooms hands.

PRIEST: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

O Lord our God, who didst accompany the servant of the Patriarch Abraham to Mesopotamia, when he was sent to espouse a wife for his Lord Isaac, and didst reveal unto him a sign by the drawing of water to betroth Rebecca; do Thou bless the betrothal of these Thy servants (.....) and (.....) and preserve the word that has been spoken by them. Confirm them in Thy holy unity, for Thou didst from the beginning create male and female and by Thee is a woman joined to a man for assistance and for the continuation of the human race. Therefore, O Lord our God, who didst send forth Thy truth to Thine inheritance and Thy covenant to Thy servants, our fathers, whom from each generation to generation were Thine elected; look down upon Thy servant (.....) and Thy handmaiden (.....) and preserve their betrothal in faith and harmony, truth and love: for Thou, O Lord, hast declared that a pledge should be given and confirmed in all things. For by a

ring Joseph was given authority in Egypt; by a ring Daniel was exalted in Babylon: by a ring the truth of Tamar was made manifest: by a ring our heavenly Father showed compassion upon His prodigal son, for He said, "Put a ring upon his right hand, kill the fatted calf, and let us eat and be merry". Thine own right hand, O Lord, armed Moses in the Red Sea. Yea, by Thy truthful word were the heavens established and the earth set upon her sure foundation; and the right hands of Thy servants shall be blest by Thy mighty word, and by Thine arm on high. Wherefore, O Lord and Master, bless this putting on of rings with Thy heavenly blessing; and may Thine angel go before them all the days of their lives.

For Thou art that blesses and sanctifies all things, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Service of Crowning, that is, of Marriage

PRIEST

Blessed is everyone that fears the Lord.

After each verse the choir shall sing:

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

That walks in his ways.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

Blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

Thy wife shall be a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

Thy children like young olive plants around thy table.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

Behold! the man shall be blest that fears the Lord.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

Yea! thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace be upon Israel.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

DEACON: Master, give the blessing.

PRIEST

Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON

In peace let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison *or* Lord have mercy. *And after each petition*

For the peace from on high, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray unto the Lord.

For the peace and union of the whole world, and for the good estate of the holy churches of God, let us pray unto the Lord.

For this holy temple and for them that enter therein with faith, reverence and fear of God, let us pray unto the Lord.

For our Archbishop (Name), for the honourable order of priesthood; and for the diaconate which is in Christ; for all the clergy and the people, let us pray unto the Lord.

For the servants of God (Name) and (Name), who are now being joined to one another in the community of marriage, and for their salvation, let us pray unto the Lord.

That this marriage may be blessed, as was that of Cana of Galilee, let us pray unto the Lord.

That there may be granted unto them integrity, and fruit of the womb as may be most expedient for them, let us pray unto the Lord.

That they may rejoice in the beholding of sons and daughters, let us pray unto the Lord.

That there may be granted unto them the joy of abundant fertility, and a course of life blameless and unashamed, let us pray unto the Lord.

That there may be granted unto them and unto us, all supplications that are unto salvation, let us pray unto the Lord.

That both they and we may be delivered from all tribulation, wrath, danger and necessity, let us pray unto the Lord.

Succour, save, have mercy and preserve us O God, by Thy grace.

Mindful of our Most Holy and undefiled, Most Blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary; and of all the saints; let us commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

PRIEST

For unto Thee belong all glory, honour and worship, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit; now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

O God most pure, and author of all creation, who for the love of mankind didst transform a rib of our forefather Adam into a woman, and blessing them Thou didst say, "Be fruitful and multiply, and subdue the earth;" and by this joining together didst declare them both to be one member, for because of this shall a man forsake his father and his mother, and the two shall be one flesh, and whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder: who didst also bless Thy servant Abraham and opened Sara's womb, and made him the father of many nations: who bestowed Isaac upon Rebecca, and blessed her offspring: who joined Jacob and Rachel, and from him didst make manifest the twelve patriarchs: who didst yoke Joseph and Asenath together, and as the fruit of their procreation, didst bestow upon them Ephrem and Manasse: who accepted Zacharias and Elizabeth, and didst make manifest their offspring John the Baptist: who from the root of Jesse didst bring forth according to the flesh, the Ever-Virgin Mary, and from her wast Thou incarnate and born for the salvation of the human race: who through Thine unspeakable grace and manifold goodness wast present in Cana of Galilee, and didst bless the marriage there, that Thou might show that a lawful union and the childbearing therefrom is according to Thy will. Do Thou Most Holy Lord and Master accept the supplications from us who now beseech Thee, and

as Thou wast present there, be present also here with Thine invisible protection. Bless (+) this marriage and grant unto these Thy servants (Name) and (Name) a peaceful life, length of days, integrity, love for one another in a bond of peace, offspring long-lived, grace by reason of their children, and an unfadeable crown of glory. Account them worthy to see their children's children. Preserve their bed from every hostile scheme; give them of the dew from heaven above, and the fatness of the earth. Fill their houses with wheat, wine and oil and with every good thing that they may give to them that are in need. Bestow also on them that are here assembled with us, all their prayers that are unto salvation.

For Thou art the God of mercies, of compassions, and of loving-kindness, and to Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine eternal Father, and Thine all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Thou that art the Celebrant of mystical and undefiled marriage, and the lawmaker governing our bodies: Thou that art the guardian of incorruption, and the good administrator of the means of life: Thou, O Lord and Master, who from the beginning didst create man and appointed him as the king of creation, and didst say; "It is not good for man to be alone upon the earth; let Us make a help meet for him", thus, taking one of his ribs Thou didst make woman, whom when Adam saw didst say; "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of her Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh": and "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder".

Do Thou now, O Lord and Master, our God, send down Thy heavenly grace upon these Thy servants (Name) and (Name) and grant unto this Thy handmaiden to be in all things subject unto her husband, and unto this thy servant, to be at the head of his wife, that they may live according to thy will. Bless (+) them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Abraham and Sara. Bless (+) them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Isaac and Rebecca. Bless (+) them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Joseph and Asenath. Bless (+) them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Moses and Zipporah. Bless them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Joachim and Anna. Bless (+) them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst bless Zacharias and Elizabeth. Preserve them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst preserve Noah in the Ark. Preserve them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst preserve Jonah in the whale's belly. Preserve them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst preserve the Three Holy Children from the furnace by sending down upon them dew from heaven. And may that joy come upon them which the blessed Helen had when she found the Precious Cross. Remember them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst remember Enoch, Shem and Elias. Remember them, O Lord our God, as Thou didst remember the holy Forty Martyrs, sending down upon them crowns from heaven. Remember them, O Lord our God, and the parents who have reared

them, for the prayers of parents make firm the foundations of houses. Remember, O Lord our God, the wedding company that hath gathered here to be present at this rejoicing. Remember, O Lord our God, Thy servant (Name) and Thy handmaiden (Name), and BLESS THEM (+).

Give to them fruit of the womb, fair children, harmony of soul and body. Exalt them as the cedars of Lebanon, as well cultured vine. Bestow upon them a rich store of sustenance, so that having a sufficiency of all things for themselves, they may abound in every good work that is pleasing unto Thee. Let them behold their children's children as newly planted olive trees around their table; that being pleasing in Thy sight, they may shine as stars in heaven, in Thee our Lord: unto whom belongs all glory, power, honour and worship, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

O Holy God, Thou who didst form man from the dust, and from his side didst fashion woman, and joining her to him as a helpmate for him, for thus was it seemly unto Thy Majesty that man should not be alone upon the earth. Do Thou also now, O Lord and Master, stretch forth Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling place, and join (*the Priest joins their right hands*) together this Thy servant (Name) and this Thy handmaiden (Name), for by Thee is a wife joined to her husband. Unite them together in oneness of mind; crown them together as one flesh, grant unto them the fruit of the womb and the pleasure of well-favoured children.

For Thine is the might, and Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

The Priest shall now bless the crowns over the Gospel Book and then with the crowns shall touch the man's forehead, then the woman's, then make the sign of the Cross between them all the while saying the following:

The servant of God (Name) is crowned to the handmaiden of God (Name), in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (3)

CHOIR: Amen. (3)

And having done this thrice he shall do the same starting first with the woman's forehead.

The handmaiden of God (Name) is crowned to the servant of God (Name), in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (3)

CHOIR: Amen (3).

And placing the crowns upon their heads the Priest shall chant

O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honour.

The choir also shall repeat the verse twice.

READER: Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stones.

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: They asked life from Thee and Thou didst give them length of days.

DEACON: Wisdom.

READER: The reading is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (5: 20-33)

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER

Brethren, give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

PRIEST: Peace unto thee (that readest).

CHOIR: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Thou, O Lord, shall keep us and preserve us.

DEACON: Wisdom. Stand steadfast. Let us hear the Holy Gospel. PRIEST: Peace unto all.

CHOIR: And unto thy spirit.

PRIEST: The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (2: 1-11)

DEACON: Let us give heed

CHOIR: Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory be to Thee.

PRIEST

At that time there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, they have no wine. Jesus saith unto her: Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them: draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him: every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.

CHOIR: Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory be to Thee.

DEACON: Let us all say with all our soul, and with all our mind, let us say.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison *or* Lord have mercy. *And after each petition*

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy.

We beseech Thee also for mercy, life, peace, health and salvation for Thy servants (Name) and (Name) and for all the people here present who await Thy bountiful mercy.

For Thou art a merciful God, and a lover of mankind, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

O Lord our God, who by Thy saving dispensation didst vouchsafe to show, by Thy presence in Cana of Galilee, marriage to be honourable: do Thou also now preserve in peace and harmony these Thy servants (Name) and (Name) with whom Thou art well pleased should be joined to one another. Declare their marriage honourable: preserve their bed undefiled: grant that their life together be without spot of sin: and vouchsafe that they may attain unto a ripe old age, keeping Thy commandments with a pure heart.

For Thou art our God, the God of mercy and salvation, and to Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine eternal Father, and Thine all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON

Succour, save, have mercy and preserve us, O God, by Thy grace.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

DEACON

That this whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and without sin, let us entreat the Lord.

CHOIR: Grant us, O Lord. *And after each petition*

DEACON

For an angel of peace, faithful guide and guardian of our souls and bodies, let us entreat the Lord.

For pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us entreat the Lord.

For things good and profitable to our souls, and peace for the world, let us entreat the Lord.

That we may pass the remainder of our lives in peace and repentance, let us entreat the Lord.

For a Christian ending to our life, painless, without shame and peaceful, and a good defence before the dread judgement seat of Christ, let us entreat the Lord.

Having besought the unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

PRIEST

And vouchsafe, O Lord, that boldly and without condemnation we may dare to lift our voices unto Thee, O heavenly God and Father, and say:

CHOIR

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

PRIEST

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

PRIEST: Peace unto all.

CHOIR: And unto thy spirit.

DEACON: Let us bow our heads before the Lord.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

The Priest shall bless the cup whilst saying the following prayer:

O God, who by Thy might didst create all things, making firm the universe and adorning the crown of all things created by Thee: Do Thou also bless (+) with Thy spiritual blessing this common cup given to them that are joined in the community of marriage.

For blessed is Thy Name, and glorified is Thy kingdom, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Priest shall now give them to drink of the cup three times, first to the man, and then to the woman.

CHOIR

I will drink of the cup of salvation, and I will call upon the Name of the Lord.

The Priest shall then take the bridal pair and lead them around the table three times chanting the following verses:

TONE 5

O Isaiah rejoice, the virgin was indeed with child, and brought forth a Son, Emmanuel, who is both God and man; Dayspring is His Name: And by magnifying Him we hail the Virgin as blest.

TONE 7

O Holy Martyrs, who fought the good fight and thus received crowns of victory, intercede unto our Lord, that He may have mercy upon our souls

Glory to Thee, O Christ our God, the prideful boast of the Apostles; the joy of the Martyrs, who preached unto all; the consubstantial Trinity.

The Priest shall then take up the crowns: And taking that of the bridegroom he shall say:

Be magnified, O Bridegroom, as was Abraham, and be blest, as was Isaac, and be multiplied, as was Jacob: Go thy way in peace, performing in righteousness the commandments of God.

And taking that of the bride he shall say:

And thou, O Bride, be magnified as was Sarah, and be rejoiced as was Rebecca, and be multiplied as was Rachael, being glad in thine own husband, keeping the ways of the law; for thus is God well pleased.

DEACON: Let us pray unto the Lord.

CHOIR: Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST

O God, our God, who was present in Cana of Galilee, and blessed the marriage there: Do Thou also bless (+) these Thy servants, who by Thy providence are joined in the community of marriage. Bless them when they come in and when they go out. Replenish their life with all good things. Receive their crowns in Thy kingdom, preserving them spotless, undefiled and without reproach, unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

PRIEST: Peace unto all.

CHOIR: And unto Thy spirit.

DEACON: Let us bow down our heads before the Lord.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

PRIEST

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the all Holy and Consubstantial and Life-giving Trinity; One Godhead and kingdom; Bless (+) you and grant unto you long life; well favoured children; progress in life and in faith; replenish you with all the good things of the earth; and account you worthy to know the joy of the promised blessings; through the prayers of the holy Mother of God and of all the saints.

CHOIR: Amen.

PRIEST: Glory be unto Thee, O Christ our God and our hope, glory be unto Thee.

DEACON

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever: world without end. Amen. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy. Holy Father give the blessing.

PRIEST

May He, who by His presence in Cana of Galilee, did declare marriage to be honourable, Christ our true God, by the prayers of His Most Holy Mother; of the holy and all glorious Apostles; of the holy God-crowned Kings and equal to the Apostles Constantine and Helen; of the holy Greatmartyr Procopius and all the saints: have mercy upon us and save us; for He is good and loving-kind and a merciful God.

By the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.

CHOIR: Amen.

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