

Becoming One



Marriage is one of the sacraments of the Church. In the Armenian Church, a sacrament is referred to as a *mystery* — *khorhoort*. At the core of each of these *mysteries* is the acknowledgement and proclamation of the lordship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the mystery of marriage, this lordship is explicit in the following: “*As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*” (Ephesians 5:24-25) And, “*What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.*” (Matthew 19:6).

We also see this element in the words of the priest during the Prayer for the Crowning: “*You, Lord, did bless the wedding in Cana of Galilee and showed Your divine glory to Your disciples by changing the water into wine, and did not despise marriage but did bless it as a high-priest and did establish it with Your word that cannot lie, saying: ‘Them who God has joined together, let no man put asunder.’*”

Of course, it is possible to find additional references.

In the case of marriage, the *mystery* is that two separate individuals are becoming one - “*So they are no longer two but one flesh.*” (Matthew 19:6). This is indeed a reason for the entire Church, both in heaven and on earth to rejoice. Listen to the words of the opening hymns of the service — “*Today the celestials rejoice with those of earth...*” and “*Rejoice, O Church...*”

As a result of this becoming one, a new Christian family or kingdom is established. This is why the crowning takes place. It is, in fact, the crowning of a new king and queen. For this reason, the word *busag* -crowning is used for a wedding.

It should be borne in mind that the mystery or sacrament of marriage is not concluded with the ending of the wedding service itself. Rather, that only marks the beginning.

In truth, all of marriage, that is the married life, is to be the sacrament of God’s love being made manifest in this world. That is, the purpose of the married life is to give a concrete expression and living example of God’s limitless love for mankind. In marriage, this initial example and expression is that which exists between the bride and the groom. Ultimately, it is to be extended to all the future members of this new Christian kingdom.

All who are present are witnesses. Hear the comment of the priest to the couple as the marital vows are concluded: “*Also the Holy Cross, the Holy Gospel, the priest(s), and THIS CONGREGATION here present, shall these also be witness to your words?*”

As witnesses, then, it is our duty and privilege to offer our most sincere prayer that the new bride and groom, the king and queen of a new Christian kingdom and home, will always live in accord with God’s will, walking hand in hand with our Lord Jesus Christ, thereby making their marriage truly a living, continuing sacrament of love.

THE WEDDING SERVICE

Procession to the front of the Chancel

In Front of the Chancel

Blessing of Ring(s)
Joining of Right Hands
Exchange of Vows

Procession into the Chancel

In the Chancel

Reading of Scriptures — Isaiah 61:9-11
Ephesians 5:22-31
Matthew 19:3-9

Recitation of the Creed
Crowning of the Bride and Groom
Removal of Crowns
Blessing and Tasting of the Wine
Prayer of Blessing
Homily
OUR FATHER (Hayr Mer)
Final Blessing

Recessional

WEDDING PRAYER

Behold my beloved children, by divine ordinance, and in accordance with the canons of the holy patriarchs, you have come to this holy church to be crowned and wedded lawfully in holy matrimony.

And we pray God to keep you in mutual love and in one accord, to make you attain a ripe old age, and to make you worthy of the unfading heavenly crown.

Yet, You should realize that there are in this world all kind and manner of tribulations. There is sickness; there is poverty; and there are other afflictions and trials.

We pray God to keep you away from all such tribulations.

Nevertheless, it is God’s commandment that you two are in bounden duty to help and succor one another until death.

SYMBOLS

In the Wedding Service of the Armenian Church, there are a great many actions which are viewed as symbols. We here present a brief explanation of the major ones.

Exchange of Rings – a visible sign of the pledge or vow to become one

Holding Right Hands – becoming one in a physical sense

Crowning – acknowledgement of the new king and queen of a new Christian kingdom/home.

Touching Foreheads – becoming one in mind

Holding the Cross Over the Heads of the Bride and Groom – the spiritual aspect of the union; becoming one in Christ

Tasting of the Wine – a common sharing in all of life's experiences as husband and wife

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