

Marriage

The service of Marriage in current usage represents a fusion of two once separate elements, the Betrothal and the Crowning, the latter properly speaking being the marriage service. It would be unusual today for these parts to be separated although it might be possible with the blessing of the Bishop for a specific reason, in which case a Little Litany and the Dismissal would conclude the Betrothal. The Marriage should take place after the Divine Liturgy, normally on a Sunday. In practice, however, the service can take place on other days with or without a Liturgy, but never in a fasting period, never on the eve before the 12 Great Feasts, never on fasting Wednesdays and Fridays and never after Saturday Great Vespers.

In the UK a couple either need to get married in a Registry Office first and then immediately or as soon as practically possible go to the Church for the Marriage or they may be married wholly at church (including the Registration) once the church has acquired the necessary permissions. In the latter case the contractual words must be inserted in between the Betrothal and the Crowning so as to make the marriage recognised in English law.

Although this Conference is primarily about liturgical matters there are many pastoral concerns that directly impinge on the marriage service. Certain persons may never marry, namely: -

Parents with their own children and grandchildren;

Brothers-in-law with sisters-in-law;

First or second cousins;

Aunts and uncles with nieces and nephews;

Godparent with godchild; (This is why a same sex godparent at a baptism is always preferred)

Godfather with mother of godchild;

Godmother with father of godchild;

Foster parents with foster child;

Certain other rules apply: -

Both bride and groom should be Orthodox Christians in good standing, meaning that each participates in the Sacraments and is an active member of a canonical Orthodox parish. If one of the partners is not Orthodox, but is baptised in due form, they may still be permitted to marry, but only with the Bishop's blessing.

Both bride and groom must have valid birth certificates. Baptismal certificates for non-Orthodox must show that they were baptised "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" by a recognized Christian communion. If one of the partners is not baptised, the marriage cannot take place in an Orthodox Church.

Neither the bride nor the groom can be currently married.

If either has received a civil divorce, they must first receive a blessing from their bishop recognizing the divorce and allowing remarriage.

If either is widowed, they must produce a legal death certificate for the deceased spouse.

Neither a man nor a woman may enter into a fourth marriage in the Orthodox Church.

All requisite documentation must be presented to the bishop beforehand.

The best man and chief bridesmaid must be Orthodox Christians in good standing. The other members of the bridal party need not be Orthodox.

A second or third marriage may take place but not without full disclosure to the bishop and his blessing. A different form of service is used, (available on request).

Our bishop prefers only Orthodox to marry Orthodox but if by economy he has blessed the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Orthodox Christian (with a baptism in due form), all the marriage rites must take place in the Orthodox parish, the parish priest celebrating the marriage without the ecumenical involvement of any other Christian clergy or the prayers of any other Christian body. Furthermore, the non-Orthodox party must agree to any children of the marriage being raised as Orthodox Christians.