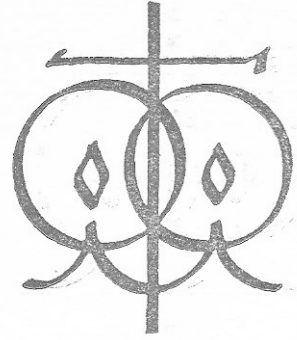


## As Christ to His Church...

As the Church is subject to her Head and Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, even so in the Mystery of Holy Marriage, the husband is the head of the wife. As the Church submits in love to her Lord, so the wife submits in love to her husband (1 Peter 3.1, 6). The husband is to remember that he shares the "grace of life" with his wife (1 Peter 3.7). This means that he is to be considerate of her as the weaker sex, not being harsh with her but loving (Colossians 3.19). Both husband and wife are to remember always that they are one flesh. As the heart and the head need each other for fruitful existence, so the husband and wife are bound as the head and heart of Holy Marriage.

Since Holy Marriage is such a high and holy estate, the New Testament abhors divorce: St. Matthew 5.31; 19.3-9; St. Mark 10.2-12; St. Luke 16.18; 1 Corinthians 7.10ff. Even as the unity of Christ with His redeemed people is never terminated, so husband and wife are bound together in a lasting union (Romans 7.2). Holy Marriage is a work of God, instituted, sanctified, and blessed by Him and must not be destroyed by men (St. Mark 10.9).

Through love and faithfulness, companionship and cooperation, honor and obedience, God-fearing Christian men and women signify to the world through Holy Marriage the unity that Christ has with His Church. Truly, this is a great Mystery.



## Holy Marriage

Holy Marriage is recognized as a universal and noble estate throughout all Christendom and all the world. It was established by God as the first of all institutions. God so highly honored it that He protected it with one of His commandments—the sixth—and exalted it with another—the fourth. Holy Marriage is an estate which God both permits and approves for the Faithful. For most people, it is impossible to remain chaste outside of marriage. God instituted Holy Marriage as an honorable estate which He sanctifies through His Word and Sacraments. “A wife found is a good thing and speaks the favor of the Lord” (Proverbs 18.22).

## **Holy Marriage as a Figure**

In many places, the Old Testament uses marriage as a figure to emphasize God’s relationship with His people: Isaiah 54.5; 62.5; Jeremiah 2.14; Hosea 2.19-20. God has wedded Himself to His Chosen People and is united with them as a husband is to his wife.

This figure is also carried over into the New Testament (St. Matthew 22.2ff; Revelation 19.7). Here the picture is that of the relationship between Christ and the Church. In Holy Marriage, a man and a woman become one flesh (Genesis 2.24). As Christ is the Head of His Body, the Church, so husband and wife become members of the same flesh (Ephesians 5.25ff). Here is a great mystery: the unity of God (in Christ) with men; the unity of man with woman.

## **Is Holy Marriage a Sacrament?**

With reservations, the Lutheran Symbols concede that Holy Marriage may be called a Sacrament, because it has a command of God and certain promises (Apology XIII, 14). However, as a Sacrament, it should be distinguished from the “signs of the New Testament.” God has commanded that man be fruitful and multiply, and He has promised to bless their union, God places the Covenant of Marriage before the world as a witness of the bond which unites Him with those who are His. Marriage in all its honor and sanctity is a “sign” of the union of Christ and His Church.

## **Be Chaste and Fruitful**

Except for those who have a special grace to remain unmarried, Holy Marriage is recommended in most cases. St. Paul recommends it especially for those who cannot contain their inflaming passions and avoid fornication (1 Corinthians 7.2, 9). It is natural for a man and a woman to desire one another, and this natural phenomenon is by divine institution. God instituted Holy Marriage both for a remedy and for the procreation of the race. It remedies the passions of men. It participates with God in His continued replenishing of the world. It assists God in the building of His Church.