

Holy Matrimony

Mathews Barnabas Metropolitan

Christian marriage is not only an unbreakable covenant relationship between bride groom and bride. It is also a sacrament in which God's grace of mutual love is given to the couple. Adam and Eve were created by God in His image and likeness and were united by Him. It was to love, forgive, respect and submit to each other as husband and wife. But few families have real selfless love and the consequent heavenly bliss. Many misuse their free will and become selfish creating a hell of their own.

Marriage service has two parts : 1) betrothal service 2) marriage service

- 1) Betrothal – In the betrothal service rings are blessed and given to the couple as the sign of their agreement. The rings are given by the chief celebrant as the representative of Christ who is the chief celebrant.
- 2) The marriage service is an occasion of invoking divine love. A golden necklace with a cross as pendant is waved with head of the bridegroom and bride and placed around their necks. The chief celebrant says, “A crown is lowered from heaven in glory by the hand of the Lord and is placed on the head of the bridegroom (bride) by the priest.” When the bridegroom identifies himself wholeheartedly with the bride, all the desires and problems of the bride will become that of the bridegroom. Then he will do everything for her without any request from her. In a similar way when the bride identifies herself wholeheartedly with the bridegroom, all the desires and problems of the bridegroom become that of the bride. She will then do everything for the bridegroom without any request from him. This will result in heavenly bliss.

The crowning ceremony reminds us of the crown of thorns borne by our Lord the heavenly Bridegroom for the sake of His bride the Church. If the couple misuse the freedom of will and become selfish, they will make their own hell.

In the betrothal and marriage services the bride stands at the right side of the bridegroom. That is the highest position that the bride can be given. Left side is supposed to be inferior.

After the crowning ceremony, there is the tying of the Thali (Minnu). This is an adoption of an Indian custom. The two ends of a thread are tied with a knot and placed

around the neck of the bride. There is a cross as the pendant. This shows that marriage is irrevocable and the union is through Christ.

Then the bride is veiled by the chief celebrant with Mandrakodi and she is handed over to the bridegroom.

Finally there is the clasping of the right hands. The bridegroom and the bride are entrusted to each other through this clasping of hands.