

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLLY SPIRIT ONE GOD AMEN!**

### **SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY**

The Sacrament of Matrimony is the holy service through which a man and a woman are united and given the divine grace which sanctifies their union, makes it perfect and spiritual like the unity of Christ and Church, and gives them strength to abide by the contract which mutually binds. Matrimony was instituted by the Almighty who at creation told Adam and Eve to be faithful, multiply and replenish the earth Christ taught that a man should cleave to his wife (Matt. 19:4-6).

During the rite the bride and bridegroom are anointed with oil and clothed in wedding garments including a crown. This church marriage is called Communion Marriage because the couple are married by Communion, Qurban; they take Holy Communion during the wedding Mass. The priest takes the man's hand and places it in the hand of the woman, blessing them with the sign of the cross. The bride is reminded that wives are subject to their husbands. The ceremony is completed with a Nuptial Mass in which both parties receive the sacrament.

The law of the Gospel and the Christian ordinances are one man for one woman and one woman for one man. The taking of another is forbidden (1 Tim. ini. 2; Tit. I. 6). If either of them dies, the other can marry. Separation is only allowed for adultery. Before marriage both should be Christians, Orthodox. They should not be related by a carnal or spiritual affinity, they should give their formal consent, the desire of parents is not sufficient. The Civil Law recognizes customary and civil marriages, the Church recognizes but one marriage, religious marriage, which is solemnized with a nuptial Mass or wedding Eucharist. This tie is binding and should it be broken by divorce excommunication follows automatically, communion is no longer given to the parties either guilty or not, because they are held to be impure. Church marriage is known as the "Eighty Bond" with a woman (Semanya Gebba).

### **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Marriage is pure and undefiled, and not unclean, for God created Adam and Eve that they might multiply people. Hence flesh is not impure, for He did not repudiate the body (Ethiopic Didascalia, Translations of Christian Literature, J.M.Harden, p. 147). We have a sacrament which blesses the state of married people. Marriage which is consecrated and honorable we honor and bless with 'the crown' (i.e. with the marriage service) and with the Eucharist. There is a mass for wedding. Those who pervert nature like the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and those who practice bestiality shall not escape punishment, for they transgress the law and defile pure marriage. Women must be obedient to their husbands in love and fear, even as the blessed Sarah was obedient to her husband Abraham. And in like manner men must love their wives. It is said, "Love the wife of thy youth, as the hearth loveth the fountains of waters, for she is thine and is with thee at all times, and is a member of thine". (Cf. Prov. 5:18f). Those that marry a third time shall not be reckoned with the flock of the Lord Christ, and those that marry a fourth time, their wantonness are still more abundantly manifested, and they shall find shame and dishonor (The Ethiopic Didascalia, op. cit.) Cases are not rare where after the death of a spouse the other party enters a monastery or a nunnery. Premarital sex relationships are frowned upon.

**Under Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Debre Mewih Saint Gabriel Church, The Netherlands**

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**DIVORCE**

The law of the Gospel and the Christian ordinances are one man for one woman and one woman for one man. The taking of another is forbidden, 1 Tim. 3:2. "What God hath joined together let no man separate", Mt. 9:6. "He who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery with her, and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she becomes an adulterous", Mk. 10, 11 and 12. "Everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual misconduct, makes her an adulterous, and he who marries her who is divorced commits adultery", Mt. 5. 31. 32. St. Paul also said: "But to the married I give commandment Yet not I but the Lord Let not a woman divorce her husband; and if she divorce him, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband and let not a man leave his wife". (Cor. 7. 10, 11). Adultery is the only cause for divorce. If the bond is broken, the offenders are automatically barred from receiving Holy Communion. The case of impotence may be considered. Although the Civil Law recognized the Levirate marriage (Deut. 25. 5) it has never been tolerated by the Church. The church recognizes but one wife, and any other female retainer is regarded as a concubine. The Emperor canonically is bound by the same marital laws as those of the priests.

**By  
D/n Wubalem Desta  
The Netherlands  
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**Glory to God!**