

## Marriage Offices

Properly church blessings of marriage consist of two actions: a) betrothal and b) crowning. Since the **betrothal** is the preparation of marriage, the Orthodox Church does the crowning of those being married directly after the betrothal<sup>1</sup> (Svod Zakonov [Code of Laws], vol. X, part 1, article 31).

In our Church there are **two orders** of fulfillment of the mystery of marriage: 1) "Office of Crowning" and 2) "Office of the Second Marriage". "The Office of Crowning" is done when both **or** one of those persons being married enters into matrimony for the first time<sup>2</sup>. An Office for the Second Marriage is done only in that case when widowers get married with widows (it doesn't matter whether it is after the 1st or 2nd marriage).

The betrothal and wedding entering the second and third marriage is completed the same as the first marriage. But **the Office for the Second Marriage** is much shorter than the Office for the First Marriage. The prayers, in which good wishes and church petitions are expressed, are less extensive than the prayers for the first marriage. Finally, the entire Office for the Second Marriage is less solemn and joyful because at the same time it has the spirit of repentance.

Though in the canonical decisions and offices of the church nothing is said **concerning the conciliar fulfillment of the mystery of marriage**, accordingly if it is not said, there is also no basis to assert that it is allowed. On the contrary, in the offices (for example, in the Office of Holy Oil), in the Book of Needs (Euchologion) and the Typikon, there, where the conciliar fulfillment of the Divine Services is mentioned, with precision it is defined both as a circle and an order for the acting clergy participating in conciliar fulfillment of the clergy. In the offices such as marriage it is everywhere said about one priest and one deacon. If zealous parishioners for the temple of God began to address petitions to the clergy to offer conciliar prayer of the clergy for the happiness and well-being of those being married, then after the completion of the crowning (indispensably with one priest and one deacon) priests may send to the Lord God a conciliar thanksgiving prayer according to the pattern of conciliar solemn thanksgiving prayers done during religious processions or in local cathedral temple on highly solemn days, avoiding, however, this solemnity during second and third marriage crownings<sup>3</sup> (resolution

of the Orlov Bishop in the official report of one of the deans concerning the crowning in one of the parishes in his deanery of a conciliar marriage; for more details, see the Orlovskiiia Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Orlov Diocesan News] 1888, 19).

The blessing, or **confirmation of marriage** "according to the church rites", demanded in specified legal cases above (see pp. 1085 and 1126), consists in that in the church the priest publicly asks questions placed in the wedding ceremony to both spouses, concerning their free intention to enter marriage and, having received affirmative answers, says the final prayer placed at the end of the Office (Akolouthia) of Marriage: "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"... The full wedding in these cases will not happen (Prakticheskoe Rukovodstvo dlia Sviashchenno Sluzhitelei [Practical Manual for Church Servers], pp. 245-246; refer to note 3 for p. 1120).

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<sup>1</sup> In former times the **betrothal** was completed separately from the crowning. But at the present time this is only allowed for Persons of the Imperial Family, at their entry into marriage with persons of other states and religions, during the corresponding betrothal (Uk. Sv. Syn. [Decrees of the Holy Synod], Sept. 9, 1796. See the Polnoie Sobranie Zakonov [Full Collection of Laws] № 17624).

It is impossible to do the order of betrothal for a number of pairs at the same time as the betrothal is completed now in direct connection with the wedding, It is completed in direct connection with the crowning; to crown several marriages at once is forbidden by the decrees (ukases) of the Holy Synod, July 3, 1733 (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1897, 22).

In any case the priest should not omit a betrothal as a necessary part of religious rite and, in the absence of wedding rings for the groom and the bride should not dare to bless those being married with a special hand blessing. If those come to get married without rings, then it is necessary to postpone the wedding until the rings will be obtained, and in order to avoid similar cases it is necessary to have a quantity of inexpensive rings at the church (see Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1894, 46; Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1894, 47).

<sup>2</sup> Thus it is clear that, at the entry into marriage of a widower with a maiden or widows with a single man, the **Office (akolouthia) of Crowning of the First Marriage is done** (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1886, 42). The same order is also done in that case when, (for example) it is positively known that those entering into marriage were found to be in illegal ties between themselves or with other persons (Fr. Hojnatsky, p. 33).

<sup>3</sup> According to the opinion of the "Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors]" if during the Divine Liturgy there are concelebrating priests, then, by analogy, it is possible to also allow them **to do the crowning** permissibly: only at this wedding, just as this happens at weddings of individuals of the Imperial family (see Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1894, 46) to do the mystery of marriage with one priest presiding (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1893, 33). But, in any case, in those dioceses where the local diocesan authorities forbid conciliar weddings, then that should not be allowed there. It is not necessary to do conciliar weddings and there where for the flock such weddings would be a strange innovation (as for example in the Northern provinces). And there, where such wedding custom is accepted and is not forbidden

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by special instructions of the local diocesan authorities, it would be more expedient to follow the instructions of the above-stated resolution of the Orlov Bishop.

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1150-1151.  
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