

The Celebration of Marriage and Its Effects on the Catholic Church in Ghana

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**THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH IN GHANA.**

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the STL Degree

from the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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Introduction

Marriage is an important aspect of culture which helps to establish the basic root of the society: family. It is the foundation of most societies. The existence of several communities is largely influenced by successful marital processes and celebrations. Like culture, marriage evolves. Similar to many other countries, marriage in Ghana has been going through transitions and challenges. The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage differently from the Customary Marriage is one of the main challenges Ghana is facing. As an outcome, people spend more time, money and other resources to celebrate marriage. In addition, the celebration of these two different marriages leads to apathy in church, lapse of faithful Catholics and few people observing the Sacrament.

This work explores the possibility of celebrating Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage together in a single liturgy. This will do away with many of the problems and pastoral challenges associated with marriage.

The various marriage systems in Ghana will be tackled in Chapter One. The customary, ordinance (Christian) and Islamic marriages as stipulated, practiced and celebrated in the country. Chapter two will focus on the Sacrament of Marriage, a comprehensive explanation of the history and the theology of the Sacrament, as well as some opportunities available for adaptation of the Sacrament, will be explained. Chapter three is a review of the pastoral challenges of marriage and its effect on the Catholic Church in Ghana. Proposals on how to resolve some of these challenges will be assessed in Chapter Four.

Notable among the proposals is a Rite of Marriage, which incorporates the Customary Marriage, the Sacrament of Marriage and the Ordinance Marriage. My conclusion will sum up various discussions and proposals in the work, which led to the drawing of the integrative new rite of marriage for the Catholic Church in Ghana.

Adequate information about cultural principles and values of the people including the civil and religious dimensions of marriage will be unfolded. This work will also confront the influence of modernity on the traditional practice of marriage as well as cohabitation, a recent development in Ghana. With an eye of inculturation, this project will shape the negative aspects of the Customary Marriage e.g. polygamy. Ultimately, I will combine history, theology, pastoral ministry, liturgy, tradition, and religion by coming out with helpful proposals to resolve the differences between Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage.

Chapter One

MARRIAGE SYSTEMS IN GHANA

Basically, three types of marriage are recognized in Ghana. They are:

1. Marriage under Customary Law (Traditional Marriage)
2. Marriage under the Ordinance (Christian Marriage)¹
3. Marriage under Islamic Law

Ghana is a diverse country in terms of marriage.² This diversity is as a result of the many ethnic³ and religious affiliations in the country. Abraham T. Afrim-Narh affirms that “it is necessary to maintain three different systems of marriage so as to satisfy different marital interests in the Ghanaian society.”⁴ These three systems of marriage are also influenced by the number of partners one can marry at the same time. “Marriage under the Ordinance is monogamous while the two others (i.e. Customary Marriage and Islamic Marriage) can be polygamous.”⁵ For the three different types of marriage in Ghana, only one explicitly prohibits polygamy.⁶

¹ Due to the nature and style of Christian marriage, (especially monogamy and indissolubility) most Ghanaian scholars, do not classify it as a different type of marriage. On the face of the civil laws of Ghana, Christian marriage is not considered as a system of marriage. It forms a part of the Ordinance Marriage. The civil law might consider the rites in the church as a religious celebration or a ritual “blessing” during or after the Ordinance Marriage.

² This is the breakdown of the religious statistics in Ghana. Christian 71.2%, Muslim 17.6%, Traditional 5.2%, other 0.8%, none 5.2%” <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/country/GH.htm> (accessed 2/13/2017)

³ According to the recent census in Ghana (2012), there are some 75 ethnic groups in Ghana.

<http://www.ghanaembassy.org/index.php?page=population> (accessed 5/14/2017)

⁴ Afrim-Narh, T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession: Assessing Ghana’s Intestate Succession Law for Non-Discrimination,” (University Of Oslo, 2008), 19. (Accessed pdf online on January 2, 2017) <https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/21778/77331.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

⁵ Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana: An Ethical Challenge to Gatekeepers of Indigenous Knowledge System in the Akan Culture” (pdf online accessed on January 3, 2017 <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/22.3/03%20Okyere-Manu.pdf>), 51.

⁶ *Ibid*, 45

1.1.0 Customary Marriage

1.1.1 Primacy of the Customary Marriage in Ghana

More than 80% of Ghanaians marry under the provisions of customary law.⁷ According to Abraham T. Afrim-Narh, “a universal system of marriage in Ghana is the marriage under the customary law.”⁸ This is because Customary Marriage is the first marriage after which subsequent Ordinance or Church marriage must follow to ensure the civil or religious ratification of the marriage. In Ghana, people combine a form or other of the basic types of marriage as enumerated above.

Regardless of the form one chooses, marriage is only approved after the customary rites have been performed.⁹ Therefore marriages intended to be celebrated under Ordinance (including the Sacrament of Marriage) or Islamic Law are first celebrated under the customary law.¹⁰ The primacy of the Customary Marriage in Ghana is such that no other marriage is recognized by one’s family until after the Customary Marriage has been performed.

Customary Marriage is regulated by the “Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law, 1985 (PNDCL 112)”¹¹ as amended in 1991 by PNDCL 263.¹² To be legally recognized any Customary Marriage must be registered under this law, which requires that already performed traditional

⁷ Bafour K. Takyi, “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes: Selecting a Marital Partner in Modern Ghana,” In *Mate Selection Across Cultures*, Hamon R. Raeann, Bron B. Ingoldsby (Eds.) (London, Sage Publications Inc. 2013), 86.

⁸ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 16.

⁹ Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana,” 51.

¹⁰ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 16.

¹¹ PNDCL means Provisional National Defense Council Law.

¹² Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) <http://www.kma.gov.gh/kma/?marriage-services&page=5354> (Accessed on January 23, 2017)

marriages are registered with the District/Metropolitan Marriage Registrar.¹³ Already performed traditional marriages involve:

Consent by the man and the woman to be married, consent by the family of the man and the family of the woman that the two should be married, the man, or a member of his family, presents the woman's family with gifts and asks for her hand in marriage, the woman's family accepts the prospective bridegroom's gifts and a marriage celebration is held.¹⁴

A significant aspect of the traditional marriage is that it is polygamous in nature. The PNDCL 112 allows a man to register as many wives as he wishes under the Customary Marriage.

1.1.2 Engagement

The Customary Marriage is famously and erroneously called “engagement.” An engagement is not a marriage, however, the Customary Marriage is marriage in itself. Ordinance Marriage (Christian marriage) is only a later addition to the Customary Marriage which is long practiced and accepted by the people of Ghana. Therefore, for Ghanaians to describe their actual marriage as an engagement is a misplacement of terms. Nowhere in the world is marriage described as an engagement except in Ghana.

Tim Challies whose church in Canada has a significant Ghanaian immigrant population explains that the Ghanaian “view of engagement is very different from the Canadian or the American view.”¹⁵ He indicated a kind of a hybrid marriage for the Ghanaian view of an engagement. Engagement is always seen as a prelude to marriage, and it is usually between the two partners and their families. An engagement is a formal agreement by the partners to marry.¹⁶

¹³ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 16.

¹⁴ KMA.

¹⁵ Tim Challies, <http://www.challies.com/articles/what-is-engagement> (accessed on January 15, 2017)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

For engagement in western cultures, there is the giving of the engagement/promise ring. It is usually placed on the middle finger of the female partner and it is different from the wedding ring. Traditionally, in some Ghanaian tribes (especially among the Akans) during the celebration of the Customary Marriage, a ring is given to the bride as an identification that she has been married. The ring is given after the marriage ritual, not before the ritual. The tendency to describe the Customary Marriage as “engagement” comes from this ritual of the ring. In a developing country with an evolving culture, where most people are trying to identify themselves with the western world, it is no surprise that Ghanaians have used “engagement” as the contemporary description of their Customary Marriage.

As part of the Customary Marriage, there is the “knocking ceremony.”¹⁷ In this ceremony, the family of the boy¹⁸ officially declare their intention and request for the girl’s hand in marriage. This stage of the Customary Marriage ceremony is the one most suitable to be described as the engagement. It is usually a short celebration, often not more than thirty minutes with few people (usually between five and ten) and unaccompanied by the partners to marry. Most of the times, two people, an uncle and a brother or a sister of the boy present a drink (schnapps) and some money and a piece of cloth (not required) to the girl’s parents to officially declare their intention of marrying a girl in their family. The drinks and the money are the “knocking fees”. This serves as a prelude to all the processes of the Customary Marriage.

¹⁷ The naming of this ceremony comes from the practice of knocking on a door to request for entry.

¹⁸ In the traditional Ghanaian society, youths who have not married are considered young and immature. They are called boys and girls no matter their age. Marriage confers a social status of respect and maturity.

There is a disparity and a lack of scholarly consensus on the best name to describe the Customary Marriage in Ghana. A case in point is Beatrice Okyere-Manu who described the Customary Marriage as “*tirinsa* ceremony”¹⁹ and “bride price ceremony”²⁰ in the same article. The dowry is referred to as “*tirinsa*” in the Asante Twi language. However, the entire celebration cannot be reduced to the *tirinsa* (dowry) as Okyere-Manu described it. When Asantes are celebrating Customary Marriage, they describe it as “*ye ko ye neho adee*.” This is literally translated as “we are going to pay her dowry.” I think that the best way to describe it is “*effie awadee*” literally “family/home marriage.” This description will reflect the spirit of the celebration as a union between two families and also the venue for the celebration. Customary Marriage is celebrated in the house of the bride’s father.

1.1.3 Form and Procedure of Customary Marriage in Ghana

Irrespective of the ethnic group, almost all Customary Marriages follow a simple structure. In this work, I will use the Akan traditional marriage as the model structure of the currently existing and practiced Customary Marriage. One may find slight variations in form and procedure from one tribe to another, but basically, what will be described in the Akan Customary Marriage holds good for all Ghanaians.²¹

Unlike the example in the Western world where a marriage is seen as an event, the Customary Marriage follows many stages and procedures. “Often a multitude of processes and ceremonies accompany these marital transitions before the husband-to-be can officially claim the bride as his

¹⁹ Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana,” 50.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 52.

²¹ Kyeremanten A. A. Y, “Traditional Marriage in Ghana.” In *notorizio dell’Associazione fra le imprese italiane in Africa*, Vol 22, 1, (2010), 97.

wife.”²² I will explain the stages to the Akan Customary Marriage by discussing the events before, during and after the marriage.

1.1.4. Before the Customary Marriage

Most parents see it as a duty to support their children in their choice of vocation and partners. “When boys are ready to marry, parents assist them in the choice of partners.”²³ Previously, parents would look for a suitable partner for their wards. But “mate selection practices in Ghana are changing and becoming an individualized affair.”²⁴ This has been an influence of higher education, urbanization, and cohabitation.

The current practice is that after the boy and the girl have dated for a while, they arrange for their partners to visit their families as a way of introduction, with the hope that they will receive the approval and the blessings of their parents. It is not uncommon to find out that some parents are disapproving of a partner. But because of the more flexible nature of dating, it is highly possible that even before the formal introduction, one or both of the parents will already know the boy or girl to be introduced. “Available evidence shows that contemporary Ghanaian marriage is increasingly becoming less traditional regarding the selection process.”²⁵ However, an old tradition which has been existing until now is that the choice of partner is subject to the approval of the family. “One essential aspect of a valid Customary Marriage is that it must have the consent of the families of the individuals involved because marriage unites not only two individuals but also

²² Bafour K. Takyi, “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes,” 82.

²³ Awusabo-Asare Kofi, “Matriliny in the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana”, in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Abingdon, Taylor and Francis Ltd; 1990), 7.

²⁴ Bafour K. Takyi, “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes,” 80.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 90.

entire families.”²⁶ Therefore in terms of mate selection, people blend the two, i.e. self-selection and family approval.²⁷ The approving family is usually the mother, father or uncle. Parents check for the suitability of the prospective partner of their son or daughter.

Among the criteria for suitability is whether the boy or girl comes from a good family i.e. a family with a good name and of an equal social status. “A boy or a girl will not be encouraged to marry from a family with a record of some member or members of it having at some time suffered from certain so-called forbidden diseases, such as leprosy, tuberculosis, barrenness, blindness and insanity.”²⁸ They also look out for witchcraft, incurable or contagious diseases, criminal backgrounds, violent behavior, employment status or standard of living, and religion of the other family.²⁹ In addition, personal qualities like good manners are also assessed. Parents of the boy will look at the culinary abilities of the girl as well as her beauty and motherly instincts. On the other hand, parents of the girl will also check if the boy is hardworking and will be a responsible father in the future.

After the initial introduction, arrangements are made for the knocking ceremony.³⁰ In this ceremony, a token of drinks and money (knocking fee) are presented to the bride’s father to declare the intent to marry his daughter. After accepting the knocking fee, the girl’s family presents the uncle or brother of the boy with a list of items that their family requires as “*tirinsa*.” According to A. A. Y. Kyerematen, “*tirinsa*” literally means “rum for the head.” But it actually means “rum

²⁶ Awusabo-Asare Kofi, “Matriliny in the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana,” 5.

²⁷ Bafour K. Takyi, “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes,” 92.

²⁸ Kyeremanten A. A. Y., “Traditional Marriage in Ghana,” 96.

²⁹ Bafour K. Takyi, “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes,” 84.

³⁰ Refer to page 8 for a detailed description of the knocking rites.

with which to wish prosperity for the wedlock.”³¹ It is the bride price³² which is the seal of the Customary Marriage. It also gives a public recognition to the marriage.³³

Each extended family has a list of items for the “*tirinsa*.” The “*tirinsa*” is supposed to be a token to represent the legitimacy of the marriage. However, recent celebrations show that the items and amount for the “*tirinsa*” have been exorbitantly increased. From her experience, Beatrice Okyere-Manu underscores that “a visit to a bride price ceremony recently, revealed that indeed this transaction has been commercialized, the groom-to-be had to present a physical cash of about 4,000 Ghana Cedis (approximately 958 US dollars), 3 suitcases full of clothes, sewing machine, ornaments, expensive wines and cool drinks as well as the cost of the party.”³⁴ Many other items listed in Appendix 1 are required for the “*tirinsa*.”

After the knocking ceremony, the boy can visit the girl in her father’s house and she can also visit him. Some time is given to the prospective couple to purchase the items for the “*tirinsa*” and to prepare themselves for the marriage ceremony. Usually, the boy is supposed to provide the money for the girl to purchase these items. Some people do the “knocking” and they never continue to perform the actual marriage rites. In this case, the father of the girl has every right to accept a different family if they show interest in the girl. When the boy and the girl have finished preparing for the program, a day is set for the Customary Marriage to be celebrated.

³¹ Kyeremanten A. A. Y, “Traditional Marriage in Ghana,” 96.

³² Various scholars have given different translations to describe the “*tirinsa*.” According to Bafour K. Takyi “*tirinsa*” is referred to as the “bride wealth.” (Bafour K. Takyi, “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes,” 82.) A. A. Y. Kyerematen, also describes it as “engagement fee” (Kyeremanten A. A. Y, “Traditional Marriage in Ghana,” 96.) The “*tirinsa*” is the dowry. In the absence of a uniform English word for “*tirinsa*,” I will be using the Twi word “*tirinsa*” in this work.

³³ Bafour K. Takyi “Tradition and Change in Family and Marital Processes,” 85.

³⁴ Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana,” 52.

1.1.5. During the Customary Marriage³⁵

The Customary Marriage is usually celebrated at the house of the girl's father. Sometimes when too many people are expected to attend, the venue may be compromised for a bigger venue. Usually, the house of somebody related to the father-in-law will be chosen. Never is the Customary Marriage celebrated in the house of the groom-to-be.³⁶

During the celebration, the groom-to-be's family is ushered into the home of the bride-to-be in a grand style. At the initial stages of the celebration, both the groom-to-be and the bride-to-be will not be present at the gathering. After the exchange of pleasantries, the groom-to-be's family will present the items that were listed for the "*tirinsa*" (notable among them are the bottles of schnapps, a ring, a Bible (Quran) and money). A request is made for the girl's hand in marriage. The celebration is anchored by a spokesperson from each of the two families.

After the presentation of the items, the bride-to-be's family will request to see the groom-to-be. The groom-to-be is ushered into the assembly accompanied by his friends. They may sing, chant or hold hands depending on how they wish to present themselves, just to make the occasion interesting. After the groom-to-be has been presented to the assembly, his family will name the bride among the other women in the house. In a ceremonial style, for the bride-to-be to appear in the assembly, the family of her suitor will give a token of money slated for her traveling expenses from the room in the house where she is hidden to the presence of the assembly. Sometimes different girls in the house are presented for the groom-to-be to reject them prior to the presentation of the bride-to-be. When finally, the bride-to-be is presented, she will also be accompanied by her

³⁵ In this section I am presenting my personal experience of Customary Marriage as practiced in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

³⁶ Notice a change of language from "boy" to "groom-to-be" and from "girl" to "bride-to-be." This is because at this stage of the process they have become eligible married partners.

friends who may also dance, sing, chant or hold hands in solidarity. Usually, the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be will wear the same traditional cloth.

The next stage is the exchange of consent. This is the highest point of the celebration and it is led by the father of the bride,³⁷ who is normally the major celebrant of the Customary Marriage. The father will ask his daughter three times if he should accept the “*tirinsa*” that have been presented in her name as her bride price. If the bride responds affirmatively on all three occasions the marriage is sealed.³⁸ The public affirmation of the acceptance of the “*tirinsa*” is the most important aspect of the program. It represents the legitimacy of the marriage.

After the acceptance of the “*tirinsa*,” a pastor/elder of a church (religious minister)³⁹ leads the assembly to pray for the bride and the groom. He also prays over the ring and the Bible. Afterward, he leads the groom to present the Bible and the ring to the bride. Then, the entourage of the groom expresses their appreciation to the bride’s family in a ceremonial shaking of hands. A female and a male representative from each family are chosen as the official witnesses to the marriage. This section leads into the voluntary offering of pieces of advice to the newly married couple. It usually starts with the religious ministers present, then the parents of the couple, then anybody in the assembly who wishes to advise the couple. This part of the celebration usually comes to an end with a prayer.

1.1.6 After the Customary Marriage

³⁷ At this stage they become the bride and the groom because their families have accepted the “*tirinsa*.”

³⁸ I have never witnessed a rejection of the “*tirinsa*” before. Due to the preliminary investigations that go on, the process will be curtailed after the knocking rites if the girl or the families are not interested in the marriage.

³⁹ I have performed this rite many times.

A church wedding is usually performed after the Customary Marriage. The religious ceremony could either be celebrated on the same day or on a different date depending on the religious affiliation of the couple. The traditional ceremony comes to an end with a social gathering. The marriage reception takes place later in the day at a different and a bigger location. Town and church halls are sometimes rented for this purpose. A renowned Master of Ceremonies (MC) is contracted as the main anchor for the reception. Much of the program is dependent on the dexterity and the expertise of the MC.⁴⁰ Food and drinks are shared, loud music is played and there is feasting and merry making.⁴¹

The reception usually starts with the couple being ushered into the assembly with a special entrance dance which has been well rehearsed by the couple and their friends (bridesmaids and gentlemen of the groom). The entrance of the couple has taken the center stage of the celebration these days.⁴² A significant aspect of the reception is the commercialization of the party. Items like handkerchiefs, toffees, champagne, balloons, pens, T-shirts, etc. are sold at the party in different fundraising styles. The MC sometimes presents the sale of the items in a competitive form depending on his discretion. Gifts are also given to the couple. In addition, there are some added western styles such as the popping of the champagne and the cutting of the wedding cake.

⁴⁰ Being an MC at marriage ceremonies, funerals and other social gatherings is gradually becoming one of the fastest growing weekend contracts in Ghana. Usually people who are able to create jokes and help to make the celebration an interesting one are sought after.

⁴¹ Kyeremanten A. A. Y, "Traditional Marriage in Ghana," 97.

⁴² These videos show some of the well-rehearsed wedding entrance dances in Ghana. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_FRFR7S_wg, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scN6ufUcvsY>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Q-b47XBu1Y>) Such grand marriage party entrances are also recorded in other parts of Africa as well especially in Nigeria).

After everything, the couple must register their Customary Marriage with the District or Metropolitan Marriage Registrar under the Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law, 1985 (PNDCL 112).⁴³ Not many Customary Marriages are registered under this law because the law permits polygamy and does not give couples exclusive right to each other. Majority of Ghanaians prefer to register their marriages under the Ordinance instead.

1.2. Marriage under the Ordinance.

The law which regulates this marriage is the “Marriage Ordinance of 1951” otherwise called CAP 127. There are 3 kinds of marriages under this ordinance. They are:

(a) Marriage by a Registrar of Marriages (b) Marriage by a Marriage Officer/Minister (c) Marriage by Special License. A Marriage Registrar is an officer at the Registrar General's Office, Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assembly (MMDA), with the responsibility to perform marriages. A Marriage Officer is a minister of a religious body (Christian or Muslim) who has been duly licensed and gazetted to perform marriages. This means the person has been recognized and given a certificate by the Government to perform Ordinance Marriages. Marriage by Special License is where at the Registrar General's Office, MMDA waives certain conditions for an Ordinance such as the length of time for notices or permits a venue (other than the Registrar General's Office, MMDA or church) to be used for the performance of the marriage.⁴⁴

It is obvious that Christian marriage most especially marriage in the Catholic Church falls under the second kind of Ordinance Marriage as described above. Public notice is required for this marriage to take place and anyone with a reason to object to the marriage has a right to enter a caveat to be addressed in court. After the public notice, the marriage has to be celebrated within three months and certificates are issued to legalize such marriages.

Even though on the face of the Ordinance, Customary Marriage is not a requirement for celebrating Ordinance Marriage, most Ghanaians have to celebrate the Customary Marriage before they

⁴³ KMA.

⁴⁴ KMA

proceed to register their marriage under the Ordinance. This is because the families of the bride and groom will never acknowledge a marriage if the “*tirinsa*” is not given. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ghana also demands that the Customary Marriage should be performed before the Sacrament of Marriage.⁴⁵ The most practiced form of marriage in Ghana is that after going through the Customary Marriage, couples will proceed to a church for a wedding. If the church is not licensed⁴⁶ and gazetted to perform legal marriages, then they have to go to the District Marriage Registrar’s office to register the blessed marriage under the Marriage Ordinance of 1951.

Under the Ordinance, marriage is entirely monogamous. Section 44 of the Ordinance places a limitation on a married man/woman to marry again even under native law or traditions.⁴⁷ It is important to also note that CAP 127 forbids concubinage or another marriage during the subsistence of Ordinance Marriage. Many people register their marriages under the Marriage Ordinance because it is monogamous in nature and couples have exclusive rights to each other under the law.⁴⁸ Couples wishing to practice polygamy register their marriages either under the Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law, 1985 (PNDCL 112) or the Marriage of the Mohammedans Ordinance, 1951 (CAP 129).

1.3 Islamic Marriage

⁴⁵ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 115.

⁴⁶ The springing up of new churches is the order of the day in Ghana. Many of these new churches are unregistered let alone being gazetted. In an article published by DeutscheWelle on March, 25th 2016, Isaac Kaledzi, claimed that there were more than 10,000 churches in Ghana in 2014. (<http://www.dw.com/en/too-many-churches-in-ghana/a-19140778> accessed on January 31, 2017) With my experience, it is very difficult to count the number of churches in Ghana and Nigeria. They are everywhere and day in and day out new ones are formed in classrooms, under trees, sheds etc. However, mainline churches like Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, Baptists etc. may be gazetted.

⁴⁷ Afrim-Narh, T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 15.

⁴⁸ Example: The Tema Municipal Assembly in Ghana, registered 2,825 marriages in 2005. Out of the figure 2,297 of the marriages were registered under the Ordinance and 528 under the customary law. (In a news article by the Ghana News Agency on Jan. 6, 2006. (<https://www.modernghana.com/news/92950/tema-municipal-assembly-registered-2825-marriages-.html>) accessed online on January 17, 2016.

Islamic marriage in Ghana is regulated by Marriage of the Mohammedans Ordinance of 1951 (CAP 129). “The unique feature of this law is that the celebration of marriage is consistent with Muslim religious beliefs and practices.”⁴⁹ According to the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, the following conditions lead to a valid Islamic Marriage.

(a) there is a mutual agreement to marry; (b) a wali (an Arabic term meaning 'friend' or 'patron') is present to legally represent the bride; (c) a dower/dowry is paid in cash or property by the husband's family; (d) two witnesses are present during the ceremony; (e) the marriage is registered at the District Office; and (f) the marriage is performed by a licensed Islamic priest (Sic). The Registrar of Mohammedan marriages and divorces must be notified within one week of the marriage, or else the marriage will be declared null and void. In order to properly register the marriage, the register must be signed by the bridegroom, the bride's wali, the priest, and the two witnesses. At that point, a marriage certificate will be issued.⁵⁰

Islamic religion permits polygamy and the law allows a man to marry up to four wives. The major difference between Islamic and Christian marriage in Ghana is the accepted polygamy in the Islamic marriage. Christian marriage does not accept polygamy.

1.4 Cohabitation

Even though cohabitation is not a marriage system, it is important to consider it in an objective description of marriage. The practice has become common among African societies lately. It is gradually taking over the marriage systems I have described above and it poses a test to the African cultural outlook of marriage.⁵¹ Many people live together as partners without performing any marital rites. This has become the other of the day. Statistically,

it must be noted that there has been a substantial increase in this type of union since 1988 among Ghanaians. People co-habiting in 2003 according to the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey were about 8.1%, this figure increased to 13.1% in 2008. The number rose to 14.1% in 2014, suggesting that informal cohabitation has become a common trend.⁵²

⁴⁹ Afrim-Narh, T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 15.

⁵⁰ KMA

⁵¹ Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana,” 45.

⁵² *Ibid*, 53.

With the increased rate of the population and cultural explosion in Ghana, there are some projections that there may be over 30% cohabitation by 2030. The institution of marriage in most communities is slowly losing its essence. The rich and cherished values surrounding the process and the rites of marriage are being compromised. They are being supplanted with free, consensual, and casual unions.⁵³

1.4.1. Definition and Scope

“Section 3(1) of the Property Rites of Spouses Bill and Intestate Succession Bill⁵⁴ states that cohabitation refers to a situation in which a man and a woman hold themselves out to the public to be man and wife.”⁵⁵ Abraham T. Afrim-Narh also defines “cohabitation as heterosexual relationships in which a man and a woman have in practice consented to establish a family but have not satisfied the legal requirements of marriage.”⁵⁶ Cohabitation which is used interchangeably with concubinage is a marriage-like union in either polygamous or monogamous relation.⁵⁷ I will describe cohabitation in Ghana as a system where two unmarried partners partially or fully stay together. This may be as short as six months or a lifelong commitment. Such unions are sometimes sanctioned by the families of the partners.

What separates marriage from cohabitation is the rituals⁵⁸ that are performed to legitimize the union. In a country where the most dominant marriage system fosters polygamy, cohabitation is somehow encouraged. The “customary system of marriage is very tolerant of cohabitation as a part

⁵³ *Ibid*, 52.

⁵⁴ A new bill yet to be passed into a law.

⁵⁵ In a news article published online by myjoyonline on August 2, 2012 (accessed on January, 20th 2017) <http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201202/80923.php>

⁵⁶ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” footnote on page 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

⁵⁸ Hamon R. Raeann, and Bron B. Ingoldsby (Eds.), *Mate Selection Across Cultures*. (London, Sage Publications Inc. 2013) Introduction, page vii.

of the marriage process.”⁵⁹ A complex relationship between marriage and cohabitation exists within the Ghanaian context.⁶⁰ A man married under customary law may cohabit with other women with the intention of getting to know them prior to marriage. This fosters extra-marital cohabitation.⁶¹ From the perspective of the customary law of marriage (CAP 127), Afrim-Narh observes that:

The scope of cohabitation is big. Cohabitation before marriage usually happens in marriage under the customary law due to the demands of elaborate customs and traditions. These legal requirements contribute to prolonged cohabitation in the process of marriage. Thus by the customary law, all persons in marital relations preparing to get married are cohabitants. All persons within marital unions that cannot be legalized are cohabitants. All persons in marital relations that fall short of the legal requirements are also cohabitants. And all persons who simply decide not to legalize their relations are also cohabitants. Within this context, marriage and cohabitation are not discretely separable...family formation begins with cohabitation.⁶²

Cohabitation has been considered the first stage of the marital process through which partners get to know each other very well. “It is mostly seen as a prelude to marriage.”⁶³

I have identified two types of cohabitation in Ghana. They are partial and full cohabitation. Partners practicing full cohabitation live together in the same apartment like married couples. The other type which is partial cohabitation is often practiced by partners who may consider themselves to be in a “courtship” or “dating.” Such partners may visit and stay with each other for a while (usually over a weekend or a holiday). Mostly Ghanaian students practice such a form of cohabitation. They visit their boyfriends/girlfriends for a while but they return to their

⁵⁹ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 21.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 23.

⁶² *Ibid*, 23.

⁶³ Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana,” 54.

hostels/dormitories or their families. Partial cohabitation is also practiced by partners who come from strict Christian homes, with parents who disapprove of concubinage.

With my experience, cohabitation may start as early as 14-16 years for girls and 18-20 years for boys. According to the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, “50.0 percent of persons 15 years and older are in formal or informal cohabiting unions...the proportion of persons aged 12-17 years who are married or in consensual unions is 1.7 percent, compared to a national average of 6.4 percent.”⁶⁴

Girls start cohabiting when they are in Junior/Senior High Schools. Others also start cohabiting when they are learning a trade. In general, girls cohabit earlier than boys. Mostly boys who ply trades right after High School may cohabit earlier than their colleagues who further their studies in tertiary institutions. Most boys cohabit when they become financially independent. However, some girls cohabit even when they are still dependent on their parents.

Most boys and girls in Ghana cohabit because it is the order of the day. Some consider it fashionable to move into the same apartments with their boyfriends and girlfriends. Also, some people who are doubtful about their personal or partner’s commitment “opt to hang loose so that they can ‘walk in’ and ‘out’ at any given time”⁶⁵

1.4.2 The Church and Cohabitation

Most churches speak against cohabitation because it encourages fornication which is against Christian ethics. The mainline Protestant churches in Ghana, demote their members who openly engage in cohabitation, especially when a pregnancy results from the cohabiting union. At such

⁶⁴ From the official website of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, (accessed on January 25, 2017)
<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/about-ghana/regions/greater-accra>

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

times, they are stopped from all leadership positions in the church and are forbidden from sitting in the front seats. An official announcement is made in the church concerning the new status of the partners and they are required to undertake counseling programs. Such partners are considered public sinners and their status is only restored in the church after they have performed Customary Marriage.⁶⁶ The Catholic response to cohabitation is similar to that of the Protestant churches. However, in the Catholic Church, there is no demotion and public pronouncement of the cohabiting partners as sinners in need of God's grace. Most Catholic preachers use the pulpit as the greatest means of discouraging cohabitation.

There is a clear distortion of "courtship" in the views of most cohabiting partners. Partners who move into the same apartment will often say "we are studying each other" or "we are getting to know each other." And to the best of their knowledge moving into the same apartment is the best way they can study themselves as prospective couples. It takes a good Christian home to direct their children as to what to do when it comes to "courtship."

1.4.3. Pregnant Brides

Common among the youth in Ghana is that, when the church demotes them as a result of a pregnancy out of wedlock, the families of the two partners will meet and negotiate marriage arrangements. Sometimes, some families claim that they do not allow pregnant daughters of their household to undergo marriage rites. In this case, the partners will have to wait until after the delivery of the baby, before the marriage rites are performed. If the family allows pregnant members to undergo the marriage ritual, a hasty preparation is made and the rites are performed as soon as possible before the pregnancy is visible. In most cases, they try to do everything in the

⁶⁶ In the Catholic Church in Ghana, partners who live together after performing their Customary Marriage are still considered cohabiting unless they perform the "Sacrament of Marriage."

first trimester of the pregnancy. Some partners hide the pregnancy from the family and rush to perform the marriage rites in order to prevent themselves from public shame and having to wait until after the delivery.

It is not uncommon to see pregnant brides in Ghana. Some women plan and conceive prior to their Customary Marriage or wedding. This idea of planning to conceive before the marriage rites started as a result of a superstition that the newly married find it difficult to get pregnant after a wedding but gradually it has become a fashion.

1.4.4. Recognition of Cohabitation

“To the indigenous African, particularly the Akans, a long-term union without the prescribed cultural rites and rituals is seen as a taboo”⁶⁷ They refer to cohabitation as “*mpenawadie*” meaning “concubine marriage.”⁶⁸ “*Mpenawadie*” is not respected in the culture. In the article “The Great Disruption,” Francis Fukuyama considers the rise in cohabitation as a breakdown of the family.⁶⁹ Morgan also sees it as an “evidence of a rise in moral decline, selfish individualism and loss of commitment.”⁷⁰ Traditionally, there is no dignity in cohabitation because it is an individualist union which does not unite families, clans, villages and towns. A distinction is always made between unmarried cohabitants and married spouses. Typically, people in concubinage, are not given the same rights and privileges ensured in marriage.⁷¹

Another important consequence of cohabitation is that there is neither protection nor security under cohabitation. For instance, on the death of a partner the other cannot claim inheritance; in fact, he

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ Francis Fukuyama, “The Great Disruption,” (Atlantic Monthly, May 1999)
<http://mudrac.ffzg.hr/~dpolsek/fukuyama%20disruption%20am.pdf> (accessed online 5/19/17)

⁷⁰ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, “Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession,” 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, III.

or she is treated as an outsider until the bride wealth has been paid. Children born in such union are considered illegitimate.⁷²

However, cohabitation which started as a source of shame and stigma is now gaining social and cultural recognition. There is a token amount of money usually paid to the father of the girl for cohabitating with her without prior observance of the “*tirinsa*.” This amount intended for the cultural damages is locally referred to as: “*kwasiabuo nsa*” (literally means “drink for duping or cheating”)⁷³ otherwise affectionately called “penalty.” Gradually “penalty” is being overlooked. This is an indication of the gradual social recognition for cohabitation. Of late, people look at fathers who insist on “penalty” as old fashioned or stubborn.

Some researchers are of the view that a cohabitation is a form of marital status. Due to the widespread nature of cohabitation, the current argument on marital reforms is towards the legalization of cohabiting unions. In 2012, two new bills were brought before the Parliament of Ghana. They are the Property Rites of Spouses Bill and the Intestate Succession Bill. A key provision of the Property Rites of Spouses Bill, which deals with cohabitation, states that “a man and a woman who live together for five continuous years are regarded as married in the eyes of the law, and are enjoined by the provisions of married persons.”⁷⁴ Even though this bill was not passed into a law, it sets a precedent in the history of Ghana. An excerpt of such a precedent is seen in the (Article 23 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which gives some form of legal status to cohabitation. This law considers that other valid systems

⁷² Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Cohabitation in Akan Culture of Ghana,” 55.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 46.

⁷⁴ Section 3(2) - Persons who have cohabited for a period of five years or more shall be deemed to be spouses and have the rights of spouses for the purposes of this Act. (accessed online on January, 18 2017)
<http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201202/80923.php>

of family establishments exist such as heterosexual cohabitation and these must also be recognized for family protection.⁷⁵

With cohabitation gradually gaining a legal status in the world, the future and the sanctity of marriage in Ghana, Africa and the world as a whole is threatened. I do not foresee a total extinction of marriage rites in the lives of Ghanaians, however, I can predict a huge reduction in the number of marriages in years to come. Perhaps people say only engage in marriage rituals not because it is a requirement but because of the religious sanctions, the commercialization or for aesthetic purposes just to celebrate the beauty of it.

1.5 Conclusion

The practice of marriage is changing in Ghana. Evidence from oral tradition and written resources show that marriage is gradually deviating from the old traditional styles within the Ghanaian ethnic groups and tribes. The current trends are in favor of commercialization, cohabitation and western styles. The next Chapter will focus on the Sacrament of Marriage. I will discuss the history and the theology of the Sacrament.

⁷⁵ Afrim-Narh T Abraham, "Marriage, Cohabitation and Intestate Succession," 1.

Chapter Two

CATHOLIC TRADITION - BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

2.1. Theology of the Sacrament of Marriage

The introduction to *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* presents a rich theology of the Sacrament of Marriage. “The first part of the introduction offers a beautiful summary of the teachings of the Catholic Church about marriage.”⁷⁶ Theological themes are also found in the Nuptial Prayer, the Collects, the prayers over the rings, the Offerings, and the Prefaces. In this part of the chapter, I will give a brief reflection on some of the theological themes of the Sacrament of Marriage.

2.1.1 Marriage and Creation

According to Kasper, “marriage belongs to the order of creation and to the order of redemption.”⁷⁷ The Church teaches that God is the author of marriage⁷⁸ and its foundation is in creation. The covenant of marriage obtains its significance from the ordering of creation.⁷⁹ Many theological scholars argue on the basis of Genesis 2:22-24 that marriage was established by God at the creation.

Marriage was a reality in the life of humanity even before the coming of Christ. Yet it was God, not human beings who established this “intimate communion of life and love”⁸⁰ between a man and a woman. Consequently, marriage is a way of participating in the affection and work of God,

⁷⁶ Paul Turner, *One Love: A Pastoral Guide to The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, (Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2016), 5.

⁷⁷ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together: Rite of Marriage*, (New York, Pueblo Publishing Company, 1987), 4.

⁷⁸ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

the maker.⁸¹ Procreation which is intrinsically linked with marriage, also helps the spouses to be co-creators with God.

2.1.2 Marriage as a Vocation

In the Catholic Church, marriage is not just a social institution.⁸² It is a vocation because it entails a supernatural calling to a life-long commitment and partnership. Emmanuel Okonkwo affirms that “marriage from its very nature of the union of persons which God intended it to be, is a divine vocation. It is their love for one another which is the essential element of the divine call.”⁸³

Like any other vocation, the call to marry also comes with a responsibility. Couples are called to the care and the education of their children. They are also called to ensure a continuous survival of the conjugal bond. Through partnership, love, mutual self-giving and procreation, couples embrace a good Christian living by responding to the call of marriage. According to Can 226 no.1 “marriage is a call by God to a particular Christian way of life in which there is a build-up of the family and the people of God.” Even though couples marry on their own volition, they need the invitation and the grace of God to marry well.

2.1.3 Marriage as a Sacrament

Greater emphasis is given in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* to the fact that a valid marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman has been “raised to a higher dignity of a Sacrament.”⁸⁴ The reason why marriage is a Sacrament is that it is an act of two persons who

⁸¹ David William Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, (Collegeville Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 2002), 8.

⁸² *Amoris Laetitia*, 72

⁸³ Okonkwo Emmanuel, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context: Towards an Inculturation*, (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2003), 126.

⁸⁴ Can. 1055 no.1

through baptism have already entered a paschal and a covenantal relationship with Christ.⁸⁵

Baptism is a Sacrament of faith and marriage is a living out of the baptismal call. “It is the Sacrament of God’s covenant with the Church.”⁸⁶

The Church teaches about the holiness of marriage. It was the will of Christ for marriage to be reinstated to its initial holiness.⁸⁷ He modeled it on his own marital covenant with the Church. Marriage is a prophetic symbol in which the couples say to each other I love you as Christ loves his Church relentlessly and with loyalty.⁸⁸ It is both a sign and an instrument, of the unequivocal and charitable presence of Christ. In the views of David William Antonio, “the presence of Christ at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:1-11) is understood as a confirmation of the goodness of marriage and a proclamation that from there on marriage is an efficacious sign of Christ’s presence.”⁸⁹ The presence of Christ sanctifies the valid marriage of the baptized and raises it to the level of a Sacrament.

As part of ensuring that marriage is as fruitful as possible, “couples are to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation, Penance and the Most Holy Eucharist.”⁹⁰ This ensures that they are in the best disposition of holiness for the marriage. Also by embracing conjugal love and educating their children, couples assist each other to become holy. As a Sacrament, “marriage is ordered towards the increase and sanctification of the people of God.”⁹¹ In the reflections of St. Paul in 1Cor 7:6-9

⁸⁵ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 7-8

⁸⁶ Paul Turner, *One Love*, 5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage*, (Collegeville Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1993), 14.

⁸⁹ David William Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 9.

⁹⁰ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 18.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

marriage helps a man to avoid sin. Therefore, the Sacrament is a call to holiness and salvation.⁹²

2.1.3 Marriage as a Conjugal Covenant

The Second Vatican Council explains marriage as a covenant⁹³ of love between a man and a woman. The council prefers the use of *covenant* over *contract*.⁹⁴ This is because “covenant” highlights the personal bond of love between the couples, while “contract” highlights the juridical aspect of marriage.⁹⁵ The covenant between Christ and the Church is often used as a perfect epitome of the matrimonial covenant. “This is the fundamental Christological dimension of the Sacrament of Marriage”⁹⁶ because the bond between Christ and the Church is discerned and acknowledged in the Sacrament of Marriage. According to David William Antonio, the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:1-11) is a sign of this covenant.⁹⁷

“Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her. Christian spouses also strive to nurture and foster their union in equal dignity, mutual self-giving, and the undivided love that flows from this divine font of charity.”⁹⁸ This covenant relationship between Christ and the Church was prefigured by the covenant between God and Israel in the Old Testament. “As God once entered into a covenant of love and fidelity with the people of Israel, so Christ the bridegroom has brought the Church as his bride into a new and eternal covenant, through his paschal mystery.”⁹⁹ To this end, *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* considers the covenant between the spouses as a 'new

⁹² *Amoris Laetitia*, 72.

⁹³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

⁹⁴ Brian Johnson, “Roman Catholic” In *Marriage in Australian Churches*, (ed.) William Tabbernee (Glen Iris, Victorian Council of Churches, College of the Bible Publications, 1982), 43.

⁹⁵ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament*, 19.

⁹⁶ David William Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 9

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6

covenant'¹⁰⁰ which is a reflection of the eternal covenant between Christ and the Church.

2.1.4 Consent In Marriage

The exchange of consent is the most important aspect of the marriage celebration. Consent is the freedom of the man and the woman who agree to live together as a husband and a wife. “To make a valid consent, it must be personal, deliberate, absolute and free.”¹⁰¹ The Second Vatican Council teaches that marriage is a choice of the partners to embrace a mutual self-giving, for their own good, the good of their children and the good of the society.¹⁰²

By defining marriage as “an act of will”¹⁰³ the Church affirms that there is no coercion¹⁰⁴ in a valid marriage. “A marriage is brought into being by the legitimately manifested consent of persons who are legally capable.”¹⁰⁵ No human authority can influence this consent. There is no marriage if there is no consent and the spouses alone can express it.¹⁰⁶ The Church is very particular about external influence in marriage. A validly celebrated marriage must be devoid of any external influence.

2.1.5 Marriage and The Church

The theme of the ecclesial aspect of marriage resurfaces in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. In the Old Testament, love was centered on the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In the New Testament, there is a change of the *dramatis personae* to the love between Christ and the

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 1

¹⁰¹ Okonkwo Emmanuel, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 131.

¹⁰² *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

¹⁰³ Can. 1057 no.2

¹⁰⁴ Can. 1103

¹⁰⁵ Can. 1057 no.1

¹⁰⁶ Emmanuel Okonkwo, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 130.

Church.¹⁰⁷ The mystery of the covenantal relationship between Christ and the Church¹⁰⁸ is the focal point of the relationship between marriage and the Church. Couples are to take after the model of Christ who loved the Church and gave himself for her.¹⁰⁹

There is an intimate bond between marriage and the Church. The family which results from marriage is described by the Second Vatican Council as a “domestic church.”¹¹⁰ The family as a domestic church is to announce, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life.¹¹¹ Parents serve as heralds of the Church by impacting the faith to their children by their words and deeds. “The dignity and the responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic church can be achieved only with God’s unceasing aid.”¹¹² When a marriage is celebrated, a domestic church is formed and the grace of God avails in that church.

2.1.6 The Holy Spirit in Marriage

One of the phenomenal features of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* is the recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in marriage. In marriage, the Holy Spirit helps to unite “the divine and the human realities,”¹¹³ thereby sanctifying and fortifying the union. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in the making of a successful marriage.¹¹⁴

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony makes it clear that the realization of the demands love,

¹⁰⁷ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ Eph. 5:25

¹⁰⁹ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 9.

¹¹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

¹¹¹ Emmanuel Okonkwo, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 142.

¹¹² *Familiaris Consortio*, 59.

¹¹³ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 9.

¹¹⁴ David William Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 10.

mutual self-giving, unity etc. is the work of the Holy Spirit, mediated by the grace of the Sacrament, rather than the result of human effort alone. “It is the Holy Spirit who keeps their love and unity in Christ. It is the same Holy Spirit who makes it possible that the total love of Christ for the Church is made manifest or even approximated in the real life of married Christians.”¹¹⁵ Spouses need the help of the Holy Spirit to make a good marriage.

2.1.7 Indissolubility

The Sacrament of Marriage is a life-long commitment. After the successful celebration of a valid marriage, the bond can never be broken. By agreeing to marry, couples enter into an “irrevocable consent by freely giving themselves to each other and accepting each other.”¹¹⁶

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony states that “spouses remain complete strangers to any adultery and divorce,”¹¹⁷ for God, who called them to marriage, continues to call them to marriage.¹¹⁸ Also the prayer over the *lazzo*, which is an optional United States cultural adaptation in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* considers the *lazzo* to be “a symbol of the indissoluble union.”¹¹⁹ The theology behind the indissolubility of marriage is often inferred from Matthew 19:6, that “what God has joined together let no man separate.” The Sacrament of Marriage is a long-lasting commitment which can only be broken by death.

2.1.8 Marriage as a Partnership of Life between Husband and Wife

Fidelity and partnership of the spouses are essential in the Catholic Church. When people marry,

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

¹¹⁷ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 71B.

they agree to come together to make a living by sharing life in all dimensions. The Church reminds Christians “to strive to nurture and foster their marriage in an equal dignity, with mutual self-giving and undivided love that flow from the divine font of charity.”¹²⁰ The singular union of marriage is the mystery of unity and fruitful love in Christ. This is what the couples strive to achieve in conjugal life. Kasper affirms the importance of marriage in expressing love and partnership when he writes:

There is no area of human life on which most people today are so dependent for personal happiness and fulfillment as that of love between man and woman, a love that is made lasting in marriage and family life. There is also no other sphere in which faith and life are so intimately in contact with each other as in marriage.¹²¹

In marriage, the man and the woman choose to partner each other in life. This means a mutual acceptance in all openness, sincerity, and liberty. Couples live their irrevocable consent by establishing a truly human act of conjugal life. “This natural or anthropological union between the husband and the wife is for the purposes of companionship.”¹²² The Sacrament implies a relationship and a life of togetherness in which spouses complement each other.

2.1.9 Procreation

According to *Gaudium et Spes*, “the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children and couples find in them their ultimate crown.”¹²³ The Order of Celebrating Matrimony also explains that “children are truly the supreme gift of Marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves.”¹²⁴ Procreation is a primary end of marriage which comes with cooperation and responsibility. Parenting ensures the good of

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

¹²¹ Walter Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 1.

¹²² David William Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 9.

¹²³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

¹²⁴ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 3.

the family especially the children through love and formation. It is the duty of the couple to ensure a better education of their children. Christian education of children is a “grave obligation.”¹²⁵

2.2. Historical Antecedents of Adaptations in the Sacrament of Marriage.

Adaptation unites the teachings and the practices of the Church with the cultural traditions and practices of a particular group of people. “History offers a convincing argument in favor of liturgical adaptation. It assures the Church that adaptation is a constant feature of the Christian liturgy. Indeed, it is a part and a parcel of her tradition.”¹²⁶ Liturgical adaptation is as old as the Church. It helps the Church to live in particular times, cultures, and seasons. Over the years the gospel has been meaningful to different people at different times because of liturgical adaptation.

2.2.1 The Use of Local Customs

The early church continued to live and use the cultural practices of the time for three centuries. During these times the priests were not called upon and no special prayers were used for marriages.¹²⁷ They “dwelt much on the use of improvisation and spontaneity. Missals and Sacramentaries were not developed so there was no way except to improvise the prayers.”¹²⁸

Most of the local customs were used in the service of God in the church. “The origins of the ritual history of Christian marriage in both the East and the West are not to be sought mainly or exclusively in Scripture, but in the social customs and practices of the time and place in which Christians live.”¹²⁹ It was normal and habitual for the Christians of Palestine and the Jews in the

¹²⁵ Can. 226.

¹²⁶ Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*, (New York, Paulist Press. 1982), 3

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 280.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 17.

¹²⁹ Stefano Parenti “The Christian Rite of Marriage in the East,” In *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: Sacraments and Sacramentals*, Vol 4. (ed.) Anscar J. Chupungco, (Collegeville Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 2000), 275.

Diaspora to retain the use Jewish customs.¹³⁰ The Roman imperial law also allowed local religions to keep their customs and the Christians, later on, adapted these customs.¹³¹

The first three centuries mark an era of diverse practices and a development of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist, but in terms of marriage, the early Christians just followed the local customs of their time. Even though some were modified, particular customs were not abandoned, as the early church celebrations moved from homes to churches and to other formalized places of worship.

The French liturgical books, especially in Normandy, do not abandon the previous rites; these are placed before and after the marriage. The *benedictio arrhae* with the *benedictio anuli* takes place at the door of the church before the marriage. The final proclamation of the marriage follows... After the Mass and the blessing, there are local rites such as the blessing of bread and wine and, in the husband's house, the *benedictio thalami*. And so, although the new law is observed, the particular local customs for the celebration of the marriage can still have their place.¹³²

When the first Missals and Sacramentaries were developed, there were no specific marriage rites. At least no traces of such early Christian ritual have come down to us. Attempts to form marriage rites saw the insertion of local rites into Christian celebrations. This is true in the "Byzantine tradition, in which individual euchological, folkloric, and ritual details are inserted in different ways and with various degrees of success into the standard rite of Constantinople."¹³³ Also, the insistence upon the use of some local customs is evidenced in earlier attempts to form a marriage ritual in the Hadrianum, the Gelasian, and the Verona Sacramentaries.

¹³⁰ Adrien Nocent, "The Christian Rite of Marriage in the West," In *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: Sacraments and Sacramentals*, Vol 4. (ed.) Anscar J. Chupungco. (Collegeville Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 2000), 280.

¹³¹ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 18-19

¹³² Adrien Nocent, "Marriage in the West," 292.

¹³³ Stefano Parenti, "Marriage in the East," 262.

There was a great contribution of culture to the early stage of ritual development. Culture was subjected to discrimination and reorientation before it was accepted into the liturgy. The early fathers always interpreted culture in the light of Christ. “To avoid misinterpretation of culture into the liturgy, the church fathers always insisted on catechesis.”¹³⁴ They avoided aspects of the practices which were incompatible with their beliefs, mentality and the moral demands of Christianity especially the pagan sacrifice prescribed for such occasions.¹³⁵ According to the early and anonymous *Letter to Diognetus*, “it was not a praiseworthy fact that Christians married like everyone else.”¹³⁶ Local customs were used, but they were used with discretion, education, and caution.

2.2.2. Betrothal and Marriage

History of both the Eastern and Western churches have forms of betrothal and marriage. In betrothal, the couple expresses and (the community) accepts the interim commitment to marry in the future.¹³⁷ This commitment was a prelude to the actual marriage. The two were celebrated at different times and in separate rituals. Betrothal and marriage were chronologically distinct.¹³⁸ Among the Orientals, the Greeks and the Romans, betrothal, and marriage were two separate moments in a person’s life.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 280.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹³⁷ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 7

¹³⁸ Stefano Parenti “Marriage in the East,” 255.

¹³⁹ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 277.

Evidence is found in the gospels about the existence of betrothal and marriage. The most popular one being the betrothal of Mary to Joseph in Matthew 1:18. “Among the Semitic customs, the betrothal was an admission (a recognition) into the family and a mutual engagement.”¹⁴⁰ In the early church, betrothal was not a permission for the would-be couple to live together. Thus even though Mary was betrothed to Joseph, they could not live together unless the marriage rites had been performed. A pledge to marry was not a grant to cohabitation.

In most ancient Greco-Roman cultures, a dowry was paid during the betrothal. During the classical era, the Greeks in the city of Athens celebrated betrothal by arranging a meeting between the suitor and the girl’s father. When they meet, they agree on the dowry as well as the rituals and formalities for the marriage ceremony. “The dowry was an advance payment of the girl’s inheritance and remains her property; the husband has only the right to its usufruct.”¹⁴¹ In Rome, a monetary gift known as *dotale* was given as the dowry. According to the thirteenth-century *Ordines* for marriage, the *dotale* was distinguished from the *consensus* and it was mentioned after the joining of hands. The Imperial law urged the given of the *instrumentum dotale* as proof of *affectus coniugalis*. This was a verification of the presence of the marriage.¹⁴² At the time of Constantine, the practice of offering the *arrha sponsalicia* (prenuptial gifts) was observed¹⁴³ and the Talmud also gives an evidence that betrothal can be enacted with money. The practice of using money as the dowry to seal a betrothal was observed in many cultures.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁴³ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 255.

The history of betrothal ceremonies offers many great symbolisms. Most cultures celebrated betrothal with symbolisms. The ring was an ancient sign of betrothal.¹⁴⁴ In Syria, the exchange of ring was central in the betrothal liturgies. In eastern Syria, a mixture of water, ash, and wine was made in a chalice (the *henana*) for the couple to drink. This symbolizes the dying of the old order and the coming to life in the new. Betrothed Armenian couples exchanged crosses and the Maronites anointed the forehead of the betrothed couple. In the Coptic betrothal rites, there was the offering of the incense. Most western rites especially in the Visigothic rites, the betrothal was symbolized with the joining of hands and a kiss. For Ambrose of Milan, betrothal becomes binding after the kiss.¹⁴⁵ Other symbolisms like the lightening of candles, the giving of flowers, etc. accompanied betrothal ceremonies. The presence of symbolisms in betrothal ceremonies can never be over emphasized.

Betrothal was celebrated within the family or clan but by the sixteenth century, it was moved to the doors of the Church. Gradually, a simple liturgical form was developed and used for the betrothal in the East. “The Romans had also developed a betrothal which for them was clothed in a true and proper legal form. The two family heads arrived at a *stipulatio* which at the time of the empire would become a true contract.”¹⁴⁶

In the Jewish customs as well as among the Greeks and the Romans, the actual marriage was celebrated a period of time after the betrothal.¹⁴⁷ By summing up the practice in the East and the

¹⁴⁴ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 58.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 22

¹⁴⁶ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 277.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

West, Kenneth Stevenson concludes that betrothal normally lasted twelve months and the marriage was celebrated after the long interval.¹⁴⁸ The marriage ceremony¹⁴⁹ was usually a tribal rite, which pertains to the state. In the first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, the right of cohabitation was only permitted after marriage.¹⁵⁰

In the Eastern church, there was a gradual progression towards the celebration of the betrothal and the crowning together. “Evidence of the betrothal celebrated with the crowning in the same rite is found in the wedding rites in Constantinople between the tenth and the fourteenth century.”¹⁵¹ Basically, betrothal and marriage were brought together during the middle ages.¹⁵² In this two-in-one celebration, the betrothal is first celebrated and the couples are dismissed from the assembly. They re-enter the Church preceded by incense and the singing of Psalm 127 to celebrate the crowning. Until today, the Eastern Church still celebrates the betrothal and the crowning together.¹⁵³

2.2.3 Civil Law in Marriage

During the era of Emperor Constantine I, Christianity was decriminalized and tolerated. It became the only acceptable religion. This period saw the insertion of the Church into the cultural and socio-political streams of the ancient society. Creativity and adaptation characterized this period.¹⁵⁴ Most of the local customs which were adapted into the Church were controlled by civil law. The practice

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ In the Eastern Church the marriage ceremony is the Crowning and the Western Church celebrated the veiling. The crowns are symbols of the couple’s victory over passion and the veil is a symbol of the kingdom of God and a sign of modesty and beauty. (Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together: Rite of Marriage*, 6, 21).

¹⁵⁰ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 255.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 260 -261.

¹⁵² Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 15.

¹⁵³ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 269.

¹⁵⁴ Anscar Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*, 18.

of marriage is no exception.

“By introducing the *arrha sponsalicia* (prenuptial gifts) into civil law, Constantine changed the simple freedom to contract marriage into a truly juridical act with legal consequences in case there was a change of mind.”¹⁵⁵ During the pre-euchological period in the Byzantine world, as in the Roman, rules for marriage were the business of the state.¹⁵⁶ Legal negotiations could precede the marriage by several months. Between the tenth and the fourteenth century, civil law left a deep mark on Christian marriage in Byzantium¹⁵⁷

The early Christian Church was not immediately interested in the laws concerning marriage because they had no influence over marriage.¹⁵⁸ They just followed and practiced what was stipulated by the civil laws of their time. Civil law which has always been a part of marriage focusses on the juridic aspect of marriage and it influences the definition of marriage as a “contract.”

2.2.4. Place of Celebration

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, the place for the celebration of marriage was the home of the father of the bride. Marriage was a tribal celebration and even big and important royal weddings were still celebrated in the home. An example is “the wedding of Emperor Maurice in the sixth century, which took place not in church but in the imperial hall.”¹⁵⁹

When marriage was celebrated in the home, the presence of the religious minister was not necessary for the marriage. However, there was still the need to ensure the liceity of the marriage. The Church at least had to be informed about the celebration of a marriage within the family. With the growth

¹⁵⁵ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 255.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 256.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 259.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 256.

of cities, the situation was becoming considerably more complicated. How to ensure the public nature of marriage, when this could no longer be sufficiently ensured either by the Mass, or the nuptial blessing.¹⁶⁰

In a significant solution to the problem of the Church not being able to account for the marriages celebrated by Christians in their communities, there was a change in the Western Church from the home to the Church. Also, in the Eastern Church, after the fourth century, there was a gradual movement of the crowning from the home to the Church. In both cases, there was first the movement of the betrothal to the doors of the church and an eventual movement of the marriage celebration itself.

The eleventh century marks an important change in the place of the celebration of marriage. Canon 14 of the Synod of the Province of Rouen (1012) decreed that the doors of the church were to be the place of the celebration of marriage.¹⁶¹ From that moment on everything changed, the place for the blessing and the marriage was now at the church. “With this change *consensus* celebrated in the family changed to *consensus in facie ecclesiae*. The family rites were repeated at the church and before the priest, the essential witness of the spouses’ faith and their desire to give themselves to each other.”¹⁶² “By 1614 the marriage rite no longer takes place *in facie ecclesiae* but inside the church itself.”¹⁶³ The prayers formerly recited by the spouses in the home were now recited in the church. In the Eastern Church, the removal of the crowns was also done in the church.¹⁶⁴

When the celebration of marriage was moved to the doors of the church, a common concern among the church fathers was whether the civil aspects of the celebration should be separated from the

¹⁶⁰ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 292.

¹⁶¹ Richard B. Hilgartner, Daniel J. Merz, *Guide for Celebrating Matrimony*, (Chicago, Liturgy Training Publications, 2016), 12.

¹⁶² Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 294.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 296.

¹⁶⁴ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East” 271.

church blessing. This was resolved in the eighth century. “According to the Ekloga of 741, the civil effects of marriage could be had in church with the blessing... and a century later the *Novella* of Leo VI (886-912) made the Church’s blessing obligatory.”¹⁶⁵ There was, therefore, an acceptance of celebrating together the blessings and the juridic aspects of marriage in the church as early as the ninth century.

The Sacrament of Marriage is now celebrated in the church. The permission of a competent ecclesiastical authority is needed if marriage is to be celebrated outside the church.¹⁶⁶

2.2.5 Officiating Minister of Marriage

The father of the bride used to be the minister of marriage in the Greco-Roman cultures. Among the Greeks, the greatest sacrifice to the tutelary deities of marriage (Zeus, Apollo, Hera, Artemis, Aphrodite)¹⁶⁷ was originally offered by the bride's father. Also around the first century, in Rome, the bride was officially handed over to the groom by her father in the late evening of the wedding day, after the bridal procession.¹⁶⁸ The father of the bride was deeply involved in the choice of a suitable partner for his daughter as well as the subsequent planning and celebration of the marriage.

However in the East, as early as 382 “some Christian families were asking to have the nuptial crowning done by a presbyter, but Gregory the Theologian (Bishop of Nazianzen) believed that it should be done by the father”¹⁶⁹ Gradually there was a high preference for presbyters to celebrate the marriage both in the East and in the West. Kenneth Stevenson records instances where the

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 257.

¹⁶⁶ Can. 1115.

¹⁶⁷ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 278.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 279.

¹⁶⁹ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 256.

priest led a short marriage liturgy at home. Such a rite sometimes included the blessing of the ring, and other times a blessing of the bride chamber.¹⁷⁰ However, the first official intervention of the priest in a marriage celebration was the Mass and the blessing of the bride (nuptial blessing).¹⁷¹ During the time of Emperor Constantine IV Monomachus, he “reserved the nuptial blessing to the bishop or to a presbyter with the Bishop’s permission”¹⁷² “By the end of the sixth century it was the patriarch’s duty to perform the crowning on the occasion of imperial weddings.”¹⁷³ Even in the pagan Greek customs, the sacrifice to the gods which were performed by the father of the bride was later taken over by the priests and the priestesses.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, in the Talmud, the seven blessings were recited by the bridegroom but later tradition passed it to the rabbis.¹⁷⁵

The movement of the marriage celebration from the home to the church affected the celebrant of the marriage. The father was in charge of his household, hence the customary choice for him to celebrate the marriage in the home. In the church, there was a high priestly influence thus leading to a gradual transfer of paternal roles in the celebration of marriage from the father of the bride to the priest.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 38.

¹⁷¹ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 276.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 257.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 256.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 278.

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 14.

¹⁷⁶ “There is a major theological difference between the Eastern and the Western Churches in terms of the celebrant of the marriage. In the West the principal minister of the Sacrament are the spouses themselves, who promise mutual fidelity in the presence of the Bishop, Priest or Deacon and other witnesses. However, in the East, things are very different, the principal minister of the Sacrament is Christ represented by the Priest, who not only blesses the marriage as in the West, but also acts as minister of the grace of the Sacrament. Thus besides the consent of the spouses, the priest’s blessing is central and an essential act in the formation of the Sacramental bond. In the East neither a deacon nor a lay person can replace the Priest. The marriage is complete when the sacrament has been conferred by the Priest.” (Adrien Nocent, “The Christian Rite of Marriage in the West,” 275 -276)

For many centuries the Bishop, the Priest, and the Deacon have been the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. However, the recently promulgated *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* gives four ministers for the Sacrament of Marriage.¹⁷⁷ Delegated Lay Persons are added to the list. The condition for their addition is for them to assist at marriages at places where there is a shortage of Priests and Deacons. The introduction of delegated Lay Persons is timely and quite opportune in this twenty-first century. Some liturgical scholars have started arguing if this marks the beginning of a return to the old practice of “fathers” celebrating marriages.

2.2.6 Wedding Ring

The practice of giving a ring or a coin as a sign of the marriage appears in most of the old marriage rites of both the Eastern and the Western churches. In the history of the early church, there was a juridical aspect attached to the giving of the ring as a sign of the marriage contract. However, in the Latin Church, the ring is a symbol of the covenant offered by God, the covenant between Christ and his spouse-Church.¹⁷⁸ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* considers it to be “a sign of love and fidelity.”¹⁷⁹ Unlike the West, the practice of exchanging rings still lies at the heart of the Eastern marriage rites. The ring has been sprinkled with holy water since the eleventh century and from the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris, it was incensed as well. It was usually given along with the monetary gift (dowry).¹⁸⁰

There is evidence in the wedding rites of Constantinople between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries that, during the betrothal rites, two rings were exchanged (gold for the groom and iron for the bride).¹⁸¹ Two rings also appear in the eleventh-century Byzantium and Syrian Oriental

¹⁷⁷ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 25.

¹⁷⁸ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 295.

¹⁷⁹ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 66.

¹⁸⁰ Adrien Nocent, “Marriage in the West,” 295.

¹⁸¹ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 260.

churches. In addition, during the Reformation, Luther kept the use of two rings.¹⁸² However, history has not always exchanged two rings between the bride and the groom as we have it now. “Prior to the liturgical reforms in the Latin Church, the groom alone gave a ring to the bride.”¹⁸³ Also “in the Normandy, only a ring was blessed and given to the bride”¹⁸⁴ to signify that Christ confers the covenant on his spouse-Church.

The single ring given to the bride does not mean that she alone is bound to fidelity; it is clear that the one who gives it is also bound. But this seems not to have been understood in Germany, where the custom of having the spouses exchange two rings was introduced around the tenth century.¹⁸⁵

The idea behind this custom of mutual exchange of rings in Germany was to emphasize the expected equality and the obligation of both husband and wife in marriage.

In the *editio typica* of the Latin Rite of Marriage in 1952, two alternatives for the blessing of rings were provided. The first alternative is the blessing “for one ring” and the second alternative is the blessing “for two rings.”¹⁸⁶ This means that as late as 1952, the use of only one ring for the Sacrament of Marriage was still accepted in the Western Church. This ring was given by the groom to the bride with a promise of love and fidelity. However, subsequent Rites of Marriage in the Latin Church (including the new “*Order of Celebrating Matrimony*”) have only provided the blessing of two rings.

The Second Vatican Council stressed on the equal obligations of both spouses. In *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, the blessing is not only for the bride but also for the groom. The Church

¹⁸² Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 84-5

¹⁸³ Paul Turner, *One Love*, 33.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 294.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁶ Philip T. Weller, *The Roman Ritual*, (Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), 273.

affirms that the equal obligations of the bride and the groom should be expressed.¹⁸⁷ This is along the same lines with the ideas, mentioned before, regarding the two rings. “The Church is right in wanting to stress the equal obligations of the husband and wife. In this day and age, the Church could not afford to offer a catechesis that would not have an impact.”¹⁸⁸

2.2.7 Consent and Consummation

The consent of the marrying spouses is the most important aspect of the Sacrament of Marriage.

The Latin Church places much emphasizes on it. “Already in the sixth century, the Emperor Justinian decreed that the only thing that was required for a valid marriage was the mutual consent of both parties.”¹⁸⁹ The Eastern churches rather had a late development of the expression of consent in marriage celebration. It was later in the tenth century that the Palestinian euchologion *Sinai* introduced a request for consent. This was unique and rare.¹⁹⁰ Later on “the Slavic churches placed the request for consent between the betrothal and the marriage.”¹⁹¹ The priest was to request and receive the consent of the bride and the groom in order for the marriage to be valid.

The issue of consent as the only means of ensuring a valid marriage has been challenged in history.

In Roman law, a marriage was created by mutual consent, however, in many of the ancient northern European tribes, a marriage was created by sexual intercourse between the spouses after the giving of consent. In twelfth-century Europe, there were brilliant proponents of both points of view. Then in the mid-century, Gratian, the Master of the University of Bologna, proposed a compromise solution which combines both views. Consent initiates a marriage; subsequent sexual intercourse completes or consummates it. This compromised opinion settled the debate and is today still enshrined in the Code of Canon Law (Can 1061).¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 78.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 300.

¹⁸⁹ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament*, 8.

¹⁹⁰ Stefano Parenti “Marriage in the East,” 266.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 269.

¹⁹² Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament*, 8.

“In the East, it is still hard to distinguish between a non-consummated marriage (*ratum*) and a consummated marriage (*consummatum*). Canon 1061 of the Western Code has no counterpart in the Oriental Code, which refers to non-consummated marriage only in passing in Canon 862 when speaking about the possible dissolution of a marriage.”¹⁹³ In the Latin Church, the mutual exchange of consent by the couple before (at least) two witnesses constitutes the essence of the Sacrament. The ability of the couple to perform a complete sexual act also determines the validity of the Sacrament.

2.2.8. Marriage and Holy Communion

It is worth noting the celebration of marriage together with Holy Communion in history. Both the Eastern and the Western churches have traditions that show the celebration of the Eucharist together with marriage. The Eucharist remains the most constant element in the manuscript tradition of Byzantine marriage. In the betrothal rite of the pre-euchological sixth-century Byzantine world, there was the distribution of the “divine-human mysteries,” that is holy communion.¹⁹⁴ There was also the celebration of the liturgy of the “pre-sanctified gifts” in the history of the early church. In this liturgy, already consecrated communion was placed on the altar and it was given to the newly married after the joining of hands. The Eucharist was already consecrated in order to reduce the time spent to celebrate both Sacraments.

However, in the eight-century Eastern Church, there developed a practice that changed the tradition of celebrating marriage together with Holy Communion. The *Barberini Euchologion* introduced the “Prayer for the Common Cup” after the crowning before the Holy Communion.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 276.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 256.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 257.

“The Common Cup remains a simple cup of wine, blessed like any other eulogy.”¹⁹⁶ This Common Cup was shared by the bride and the groom. “In the Armenian rite, the blessing of the cup took place at home after the wedding ceremony.”¹⁹⁷

Gradually the practice of the Common Cup took the place of the Holy Communion in the Eastern Church. The theology behind the Common Cup is different from the theology of Holy Communion which consecrates the newly married to Christ and fosters the new family in love just like Christ and his spouse-Church.

The common cup, given to the couple after the crowning, is explained today as the symbol of *common life*, and nothing shows better the *desacramentalization* of marriage, its reduction to a *natural happiness*. In the past, this Communion was the ultimate seal of the fulfillment of marriage in Christ. Christ is to be the very essence of life together.¹⁹⁸

There is no doubt that the blessing of common cup is related to the decline of regular communion in the Eastern marriage rites.¹⁹⁹ For centuries in the Eastern Church, “Communion has no longer been given, instead, the blessing of the Common Cup, from which the spouses drink three times, has acquired great importance.”²⁰⁰ The present liturgical books of the Eastern churches prescribe that the “betrothal and (thus marriage) should be celebrated at the end of the Eucharistic liturgy. Thus, at least in theory, the traditional link between marriage and the Eucharist is safeguarded.”²⁰¹ Some Orthodox churches have also tried to celebrate marriage together with the Eucharistic liturgy with debatable and varying results.

The current trend in the Eastern Orthodox Churches is towards the celebration of Wedding Masses.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 259.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 259, footnote 20.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 271-272.

¹⁹⁹ Kenneth Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 39.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 270.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 271.

There is a “desire for *wedding mass* after the Roman model.”²⁰² The Roman Rite of Marriage has preserved the traditional link between Communion and marriage. Even though the Roman Rite provides an alternative “Rite of Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass,” (which is to be used when there is a celebration of marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic,²⁰³ when “a significant number of the congregation are non-Catholics or when no priest is available.”²⁰⁴) there is still an option for the distribution of Holy Communion after the nuptial blessings.²⁰⁵ This shows that the Western Church is committed to preserving the traditional link between marriage and the Eucharist. A Wedding Mass has been the ideal form of preserving the link between the Eucharist and marriage.

2.2.9 Divorce (Second Marriages)

The challenges of the issue of second marriages have been with Christianity from the very beginnings. In various forms, the issue hovers around whether divorce and remarriage should be accepted by the Church or not. The challenge is much intensified because civil law allows divorce and remarriage. Most Christians facing difficulties in their marriage are tempted to follow the civil law to the detriment of ecclesiastical jurisprudence. The rite of second marriage is not as studied as the rite of first marriage.²⁰⁶

During the time of Jesus, the family was deeply involved in marriage. In the particular sense, two families marry. In the first century Mediterranean world and earlier, marriage was a bonding of

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 36.

²⁰⁴ Newsletter from the initiative of the of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/rite-for-celebrating-marriage-outside-of-mass/> (accessed 4/17/17).

²⁰⁵ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 108.

²⁰⁶ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 268.

the honor of two extended families. This was done with social, political and economic implications.²⁰⁷ The reversal of this marriage process was divorce. Divorce disengaged the female from the honor of the male, and she is returned to the honor of her family. Like marriage, divorce was also a family issue.²⁰⁸ The early church which lived in the Jewish and Roman worlds practiced their laws on divorce.

In Roman law, the spouses themselves dissolved their marriage, simply by withdrawing the consent which married them in the first place. Just as their free consent had married them, so also their free withdrawal of consent unmarried them. In Jewish law, it was quite different. Only the husband could dissolve the marriage, and he did so simply by writing his wife a bill of divorce and dismissing her.²⁰⁹

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the bill of divorce is to be written if he finds some indecency in her. The indecency is explained by Rabbi Shammai as serious, moral or sexual delinquency.²¹⁰ These Jewish and Roman ideas and practices shaped the doctrine of the early Christian church on marriage and divorce.

“In the first three centuries, the Christian church reinforced the teachings of Jesus about divorce and remarriage.”²¹¹ *Porneia* was the only significant reason for the early church’s acceptance of divorce (Matthew 19:9). This became the first Judeo-Christian marriage ethic. “The fourth mandate of *The Shepherd of Hermas* (140-154) enjoined a man to dismiss his adulterous wife and remain unmarried. The man becomes guilty of her sin if he fails to dismiss her.”²¹² There was an obligation for separation due to the adultery. After the divorce can the couples marry again?

²⁰⁷ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament*, 76.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 85.

In the fourth century, Church Fathers such as Basil and John Chrysostom, whose teachings have shaped the Eastern doctrine on marriage, did not encourage second marriages, even in the case of widowhood. Western Church fathers like Augustine and Jerome also explained that by the very fact of a partner committing adultery, the marital bond is broken and called for a separation. They also rejected remarriage after a separation.²¹³ The most important thing to consider is that these great church fathers called for a separation of the spouses but not a dissolution of the marital bond because the marital bond can never be dissolved unless one of the partners dies. This is in line with the fact that “Paul, who writes well before any of the gospel writers, also reports a prohibition of divorce and remarriage, and attributes it to the Lord. (I Cor. 7:10-11).”²¹⁴

Civil law and Church blessing have been coexisting, but not without the challenges of divorce and remarriage. Emperor Constantine VI’s divorce from Mary of Paphlagonia and his subsequent marriage to Theodore in the eight century left a deep mark in Byzantium. The resolution of the *moechian controversy* which resulted from this scandalous marriage, led Theodore the Studite, to develop a teaching on second religious marriage after a civil divorce. This “teaching can be summarized thus: Although the state authorizes them, the Church should not bless them, and in any case, the rite of crowning cannot be repeated.”²¹⁵

After Emperor Leo VI’s fourth marriage in 906, the *tome of union* (920) allowed three marriages at most under specific conditions. At that time, this directive fixed the rules for second marriages. The oldest euchologia contain no special prayers for second marriages. But in response to the *tome of union*, there appeared a prayer for second marriages in the euchologion *Paris Coislin* 213

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

(Constantinople, 1027).²¹⁶ In spite of all this, “married deacons and presbyters in the Byzantine churches are prohibited from a second marriage, even if they are widowed.”²¹⁷

“It must also be noted that the Orthodox Canon Law, besides envisioning various cases of dissolution of the bond, also provides for the possibility of divorce in the strict sense, based on Matthew 19:6-9 and the doctrine of indulgence.”²¹⁸ The *tome of union* has been developed over the centuries to the extent that, now the Eastern churches accept that “the innocent or the repentant spouse in any divorce proceedings may be remarried in a church ceremony and incur no ecclesiastical penalty.”²¹⁹ “However, the second marriage is not on a par with the first, a fact which its liturgy makes clear.”²²⁰ But in the Latin Church, there is no divorce and remarriage whatsoever.²²¹

²¹⁶ Stefano Parenti, “Marriage in the East,” 269.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 268.

²¹⁹ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament*, 87.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

²²¹ Canon 1141.

Chapter Three

PASTORAL CHALLENGES: EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF MARRIAGE ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN GHANA.

3.0 Introduction

People live in shadows of themselves whenever their culture is not adapted to the religion they practice. Some missionaries evangelize people but not the culture of the people. Whenever this happens, there remains a tension between the culture of the people and some of their religious practices. There are many such tensions and differences in Africa, notable among them is marriage celebration. In the introduction to his book, *Marriage and the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions*, Michael G. Lawler questions the use of the Western tradition which is historically recent as a universal tradition. There are differences between the Catholic, Western and other cultural traditions.²²² The use of the Western tradition in Africa has many setbacks. The complete assumption of the Latin Rite of Marriage (now *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*) in the English-speaking African countries, without any form of cultural adaptation, has been the source numerous challenges for the Church in Africa.

From the definition, purpose, and celebration, some aspects of traditional marriage pose pastoral challenges. An example is the definition of consummation. In the Central African Republic, traditional marriage is progressively realized and consummation of a marriage is fulfilled with the birth of the first child. This tradition is far different from the western opinion which presents consummation as the completion of a sexual intercourse after the exchange of consent before

²²² Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions*, (Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 2002) Page 162-163.

witnesses approved by law.²²³ Similarly, differences in the traditional concepts of other important issues like divorce, cohabitation, polygamy and family involvement in marriage, bring about many pastoral problems.

3.1 Pastoral Problems and Research Questions.

In Ghana and in most African countries Christians celebrate more than one marriage. According to Bishop Alberto Setele of Inhambane in Mozambique, “people must enter into three forms of marriage before they are recognized as fully married. Young people who would like to ratify their marriage must at the same time submit to a traditional procedure which is very expensive, a civil procedure and a canonical procedure.”²²⁴ Celebrating three forms of marriage satisfies the traditional, civil and religious demands of the African.

Gradually, the celebration of these three forms of marriages has developed into three different stages of one marriage ceremony. *Ecclesia in Ghana*, explains that “marriage is not seen as the result of a single contractual exchange of consent. It is an evolutionary process, involving many stages or steps.”²²⁵ Each stage comes with different steps of preparation and celebration. With the good relationship between Church and State in Ghana, most religious bodies have been approved by the State to include the Ordinance Marriage into wedding celebrations in a harmonious ritual. This is because the church wedding is celebrated as the second type of Ordinance Marriage.²²⁶ In the Catholic Church, immediately after the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, the couples

²²³ *Ibid*, 162.

²²⁴ Emmanuel Okonkwo, “*Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*”, 119.

²²⁵ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 116.

²²⁶ KMA, <http://www.kma.gov.gh/kma/?marriage-services&page=5354>. (accessed on January 23, 2017)

are led by the priest (a licensed marriage officer of Ordinance Marriage)²²⁷ to sign the marriage certificate from the State. The problem now is how to combine the Customary Marriage with the Sacrament. The Customary Marriage is usually celebrated before the Sacrament of Marriage and it has gradually become a preparatory stage for the Sacrament.²²⁸ Emmanuel Okonkwo observes, “if one fails to perform the traditional marriage, he is no more qualified to receive the Sacrament of Marriage.”²²⁹ Therefore, “the ceremony in the Church is a blessing for people who are already married customarily, as demanded by the Church.”²³⁰ In 1997, the First National Catholic Pastoral Congress in Ghana observed that celebrating the two marriages leads to a duplication of rites. Therefore, the Congress proposed a fusion of the two marriages as a vital way to do away with this duplication.²³¹ The inability to combine the Customary Marriage with the Sacrament of Marriage is the root cause of most of the challenges Christians face in their marriages. This is because it brings a dichotomy in the lives of Christian couples.²³²

As an outcome of this situation, many churches are trying to come out with liturgies, and programs that will unify all the various stages to form a single marriage celebration. This helps to reduce the cost, time, energy etc. involved in the celebration of marriage. For example, most Protestants try to celebrate both the Customary Marriage and the church marriage on the same day at close locations. Sometimes they also celebrate the Customary Marriage on the eve of the Wedding.²³³

²²⁷ Laws of Ghana, *Marriages Act* (Cap. 127), 22.

²²⁸ Kofi Awusabo-Asare, *Matriliny in the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana*, 5.

²²⁹ Emmanuel Okonkwo, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 122.

²³⁰ Emmanuel Richard Mawusi, “Inculturation: Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture. A Necessary Requirement for Effective Evangelization for the Catholic Church in Ghana,” (May, 2009), 154. http://othes.univie.ac.at/6561/1/2009-05-04_0006781.pdf (online pdf. accessed June 7, 2017)

²³¹ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 115.

²³² Okonkwo Emmanuel, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 117.

²³³ An example of the Protestant practice is in the Syrian Oriental Orthodox Rite. Nowadays betrothal takes place on the eve of the crowning. But originally the two were distanced in time. (Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 62)

However, in the Catholic Church, after the beautiful proposal to fuse the two marriages together in 1997, no attempt has been made so far towards the implementation of this integrated marriage rite.

An important liturgical and pastoral question in the Church is “when should the Customary Marriage be celebrated before the Sacrament of Marriage”? The confusion of the situation is such that, some parishes require that couples should perform their Customary Marriages a year, others six months and some others three months, etc. before they are allowed to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in those parishes. I have also observed that there are some other parishes who agree to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage on the same day or a day after the Customary Marriage (just like the Protestants).

The period for prenuptial instructions and counseling is affected by the celebration of the Customary Marriage before the Sacrament. Parishes use the period between the Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage to prepare couples to celebrate the Sacrament. What I have witnessed is that whereas some parishes are practicing one-year prenuptial counseling, others are observing six months and the rest are observing three months or a month of prenuptial counseling. In the same vein, the curriculum for the pre or post-nuptial instructions has also been confusing. There are no regular set-ups, programs or organized curriculum to be followed by all parishes. With my experience, each pastor plans and organizes his own prenuptial instructions to the best of his knowledge and discretion. There is no uniformity. In most cases, post-marital counseling is non-existent at all. To what extent must the Catholic Church in Ghana observe a

uniformity in the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage as is done in the celebration of the other Sacraments?

Couples who have entered into Customary Marriage and have not yet celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage are considered to be living in concubinage and fornication. Perhaps the best way I can describe it is a “lawful concubinage” because of the Ghanaian custom which sanctions and approves of the traditional union. *Ecclesia in Ghana* attests that “for most people, our customary marriages have value and are real.”²³⁴ The customary laws and families, expect people who are traditionally married to stay together and perform their conjugal duties as husband and wife. Therefore, many people continue to stay together after Customary Marriage and even have children while they are awaiting preparations to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage. Moreover, because they are already staying together and enjoying the fruits of their union, a majority of couples relax on their wedding plans. Emmanuel Richard Mawusi attests that “if it takes place at all, the Church marriage is often celebrated years after the traditional marriage.”²³⁵ Some couples intentionally delay or refuse to register for the prenuptial instructions in the Church. The only reason they will celebrate the Sacrament is that “at best it regularizes a couple’s position before the priest and thus provides access to the Eucharist.”²³⁶ Among other things, the 1997 National Catholic Pastoral Congress also agrees that wedding is seen as a “condition for reception of Holy Communion.”²³⁷

²³⁴ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 115.

²³⁵ Emmanuel Richard Mawusi, “Inculturation: Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture,” 153.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 115.

Consequently, couples who have celebrated only traditional marriages are required by their parishes to stop receiving Holy Communion. This is because they have entered into a nuptial bond which is not recognized by the Church. “If one performs only the Traditional Marriage without the Sacramental Marriage of the Church, she/he disqualifies herself/himself from the Sacraments of the Church.”²³⁸ The Customary Marriage has no canonical form and value.²³⁹ As such customary married couples are denied access to Holy Communion in the Catholic Church because they persist in a state of serious sin. Canon 915 forbids such people who “obstinately persevere in manifest grave sin,” from receiving Holy Communion.

The 1994 Synod of Bishops acknowledges that “there is a great number of Catholics excluded from the Sacraments, the source of unity and strength, the reason for their marital situation, still others are barred from coming into the Church by reason of already existing relationships.”²⁴⁰ *Ecclesia in Ghana* reveals that in the 1970s, 70% of all baptized adult Catholics were not married according to the regulations of the Church. With my experience, the percentage of people who do not receive communion in Ghana may be more than two-thirds of the congregation. This is also affirmed by *Ecclesia in Ghana* which states categorically that “non-communicants out number communicants in many of our communities.”²⁴¹ After undertaking a field research in Ghana, Anna Niedzwiedz, a professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Jagiellonian University in Poland writes:

The exclusive distribution of communion among those who fulfill sacramental and Catholic moral standards is often not understood by people who attend Catholic or other Christian churches in

²³⁸ Emmanuel Okonkwo, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 122.

²³⁹ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 115. (The canonical form is that mutual consent be exchanged before a priest and two witnesses).

²⁴⁰ *Synodus Episcoporum*, (Special Assembly for Africa), 68.

²⁴¹ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 156.

Ghana. The percentage of communicants in Ghanaian Catholic churches is usually very low. In the Jema Parish, many members of the Catholic community, among them very active ones (like choir members, members of various church societies and even catechists from out-stations) are not communicants. This is most often due to lack of baptism or due to their marital status (lack of sacramental matrimony).²⁴²

Catholics living in Customary Marriage often bow their heads in shame and guilt during the time for Holy Communion. According to Bishop Alberto Setele of Inhambane in Mozambique “in the expression of some of our priests, this leads to a *Eucharistic famine* of many Catholics in our parishes.”²⁴³ The situation can be worse when such people die. Some parishes refuse to offer Funeral Masses for them, even though the Catholic Bishops’ Conference in Ghana has directed that such church members should be given all the Rites of a Christian Burial.²⁴⁴

Why do people have to stay without Holy Communion because of the ambiguity in the marriage situation? What is the Church doing about this situation that has been the downfall of many good Catholics? Many church members have asked questions as to what is the right thing to do. Many have suffered because of the uncompromising stance of some parish marriage policies and practices. There is a frequent public outcry for changes in the marriage practiced by the Catholic Church in Africa. Most priests especially the younger ones do not seem to be able to reconcile what is going on in the Church and we have been asking a lot of questions too. I have seen that some parishioners move from one parish to another for their marriage celebrations because sometimes some parish policies are too rigid and unrealistic to the current situation of the people of Ghana. Some who enter into mixed marriages leave the Catholic Church to celebrate their

²⁴² Anna Niedzwiedz, “Corpus Christi Procession in Ghana as a Manifestation of Various Identities,” In *JU Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology Newsletter*, No. 49 (Winter/Spring 2013), 8. ([https://www.academia.edu/3215458/Corpus Christi procession in Ghana as a manifestation of various identities](https://www.academia.edu/3215458/Corpus_Christi_procession_in_Ghana_as_a_manifestation_of_various_identities)) (accessed online June 5, 2017)

²⁴³ Okonkwo Emmanuel, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 119.

²⁴⁴ Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference - National Liturgical Commission, *Ordo: for the Liturgical Year 2016-2017* (Takoradi, Franciscan Press, 2016), Introductory page.

weddings in the non-Catholic churches of their spouses because those churches allow them to celebrate the Customary Marriage and the wedding on the same day.

The biggest question is who determines the right policies of marriage to be practiced in a parish? How are the diocesan statutes to be interpreted in the life of each parish? As at now, the laity is at the mercy of the discretion of their pastors. Almost all the Catholic dioceses in Ghana have statutes concerning the proper celebration of marriage in those dioceses reflecting the spirit of Canon Law and The Rite of Marriage (now “*The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*”). However, the interpretation of such statutes in the various parishes brings a lot of differences and confusions. It is high time the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ghana, enacts policies, interventions, and strategies to salvage the situation of marriage in the Church.

3.2 Effects of the Pastoral Problems on the Church

There are visible effects of the pastoral challenges of marriage on the Catholic Church. Among them are financial problems, the celebration of few marriages in the Church, lapse and exodus of members to other churches, lack of qualified personnel for leadership positions, cohabitation, and apathy towards the Sacraments.

3.2.1 Financial Problems

Amoris Laetitia acknowledges that preparations for marriage “drain not only the budget but energy and joy as well.”²⁴⁵ People spend a lot of money to prepare for marriage. Most especially in Africa, celebrating the Customary Marriage separately from the Sacrament of Marriage increases the

²⁴⁵ *Amoris Laetitia*, 212.

financial burden on the couple. *Ecclesia in Africa* confirms that “in Africa, it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village.”²⁴⁶ *Sensus Communis* is a principal aspect of a traditional African worldview and it is also one of the most observable features of contemporary popular African Christianity.²⁴⁷ The Akans have a saying that “there is never a small wedding,” because it is a celebration for the entire community (village or town). Both the Sacrament of Marriage and the Customary Marriage are celebrated with a pomp and pageantry. Separating the two celebrations means that the couple will spend on the marriage feast twice.²⁴⁸ (First for the Customary Marriage and later for the Sacrament of Marriage). This increases the financial burden.

Pope Francis agrees that some people are not able to celebrate the Sacrament “because celebrating a marriage is considered too expensive in their social circumstances.”²⁴⁹ Material poverty has an influence on the successful celebration of the Sacrament. Some staunch Catholics are unable to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage because of the economic burden that the celebration of this Sacrament brings to their families. Some people have to go for loans before they are able to cover the cost of the marriage celebrations. Therefore, they start their new life with a “marital debt” hanging on their necks.

The effect is that fewer marriages are celebrated in the Catholic Church. Universally, the number of Catholic marriages is at its lowest point. For example, in the United States, “the statistics show that while there were over 420,000 Catholic marriages in 1970, that number has dwindled to just

²⁴⁶ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

²⁴⁷ Anna Niedzwiedz, “Corpus Christi Procession in Ghana,” 9.

²⁴⁸ Not forgetting about the Ordinance Marriage. The websites of both the Accra and Kumasi Metropolitan Assemblies indicate an undisclosed amount has to be paid to register the marriage in court.

²⁴⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 294.

over 154,000 for the year 2014.”²⁵⁰ It is an obvious fact in Ghana that more marriages are celebrated in the Protestant, Pentecostal, Spiritual and Charismatic Churches than in the Catholic Church. The revelation of *Ecclesia in Ghana* that 70% of all baptized adult Catholics are not married according to the regulations of the Church gives a high credence to the fact that not many marriages are celebrated in the Catholic Church.²⁵¹ With my personal experience, I stayed in a rectorate of six outstations for four years and I celebrated only five weddings. Meanwhile within the same period about seventeen of my church members celebrated Customary Marriages.²⁵²

3.2.2 Lapse members

In addition, because of marriage issues, some church members have become lapsed Catholics. When these people come to church, they feel discriminated because they cannot receive Holy Communion. In the views of Anna Niedzwiedz, this situation breaks the African communal spirit.²⁵³ Over time, those who are not able to receive the Sacraments develop an apathy towards the Sacraments because they loose touch of the essence of the Sacraments in their lives. On a more serious note, Emmanuel Richard Mawusi has observed that the Rite of Marriage “loses its meaning for the couple and many Catholics consider that a Church marriage contributes little, if anything, in itself to the married state.”²⁵⁴ Sometimes to avoid the psychological trauma of feeling guilty by not being able to receive Communion, they stop going to church. Some of these lapsed Catholics especially those who are involved in mixed marriages, eventually leave the Church. The current

²⁵⁰ Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research, In *National Catholic Reporter* <https://www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/despise-low-catholic-marriage-numbers-some-see-trend-turning-around> (accessed on May 31, 2017).

²⁵¹ Emmanuel Richard Mawusi, “Inculturation: Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture,” 153.

²⁵² Customary marriages are not officially reported to the Church. The Church takes notice of them during the prenuptial enquiries. The seventeen mentioned are the ones that I was fortunate to have been invited. There could be some others which were not even mentioned to me.

²⁵³ Anna Niedzwiedz, “Corpus Christi Procession in Ghana.” 158.

²⁵⁴ Emmanuel Richard Mawusi, “Inculturation: Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture,” 153.

statistics in Ghana show a reduction of the Catholic population from 16.2% to 13.1%.²⁵⁵ Marriage is a significant contributor to the reduction in the population of the Catholic Church.

3.2.3 Leadership Positions

When explaining Canon 915, Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum University, affirms the desire of the Church that “anybody who because of any grave sin should not receive Communion, should not engage in a ministry.”²⁵⁶ Likewise, in many African countries, non-communicants are not allowed to hold leadership positions in the Church. The inability of non-communicants to assume leadership positions²⁵⁷ in the Catholic Church often leads to a loss of human resources. In many instances, the most eligible and educated people in the Church may not have celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage or are living in cohabitation and as such are not able to receive Holy Communion, hence they cannot hold leadership positions. The Church loses potential leaders because of marriage issues.

3.2.4 Persistent Cohabitation

Since the Customary Marriage may encourage traditionally sanctioned cohabitation, some Catholics and for that matter, some Christians do not see anything wrong with cohabitation. People who are cohabiting in Ghana are not in a hurry to leave concubinage because it has become fashionable. After Customary Marriage majority of the young adults feel satisfied and accomplished. They do not feel the need to proceed with a church marriage. Most of the young

²⁵⁵ Catholic Church in Ghana, <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/country/GH.htm> (accessed Feb. 13, 2017).

²⁵⁶ Zenit Display Dispatch, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/liturgy/zlitur401.htm> (accessed June 4, 2017).

²⁵⁷ The Protestant, Pentecostal, Charismatic and Spiritual Churches in Ghana accept the ratification of the customary marriage. Their members who are only customarily married are allowed to enjoy all the rights and privileges of being a member of those churches including having leadership positions and receiving Holy Communion.

folks see church marriage and for that matter the Sacrament of Marriage as a luxury. *Ecclesia in Ghana* referred to a Church blessing of marriage as an “ornament.” In the experience of Emmanuel Okonkwo, there exists in Africa “a climate of opinion where Church marriage is considered a custom for the richer classes who can afford the elaborate ceremonies. It is also regarded an aristocratic affair or an occasion reserved for the educated class and not for all and sundry as the traditional marriage.”²⁵⁸ My personal experience is that some people wait until they are well resourced financially or advanced in age before they approach the priest to arrange for the Sacrament.

3.3 Opportunities

In the midst of these challenges, what opportunities are available for the Church to resolve these problems? In the subsequent topics, I will use church documents, history and the theology of the Sacrament of Marriage to explore the opportunities available for a possible remedy of the challenges posed by the celebration of marriage.

3.3.1 The Catholic Bishops’ Conference

The greatest opportunity is the power of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference to effect necessary changes in the celebration of marriage within its jurisdiction. Church law is very clear on the position of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference in relation to the adaptation of the liturgy to a particular culture. According to Canon 1120, the Conference of Bishops (even those of non-missionary regions)²⁵⁹ can produce its own Rite of Marriage. This will be reviewed and approved

²⁵⁸ Emmanuel Okonkwo, “*Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*,” 167.

²⁵⁹ Mark Francis, “The Other Sacraments and Sacramentals SC 59-82” In *Pastoral Commentary on Sacrosanctum Concilium: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council*. (Chicago, Liturgy Training Publications, 2013) 109.

by the Holy See.²⁶⁰ In doing so, the Conference must aim at meeting the needs of the particular culture instead of just creating a “new family of rites.”²⁶¹ The Church calls for a responsible liberty of the Episcopal Conferences in their bid to adapt the Rite of Marriage to their culture. The Conference is to select the elements to be adopted from the traditions and the culture of particular peoples carefully and prudently.²⁶²

The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* gives the bishops several options. The bishops can adapt the questions before the consent as well as the words of the consent themselves. They also have the permission to add other formulas to the rite. Examples are the formulas for the procession, the blessing of rings, veiling and crowning, joining of hands and the solemn blessing.²⁶³ A response to this freedom, for instance, is when in 1605 the first mission *Rituale* that was put together for Nagasaki omitted the joining of hands and the exchange of rings. This is because the two symbolisms were not significant in the Japanese culture.²⁶⁴

The Conference of Bishops is also at liberty specify adaptations in terms of the sacred music, and the liturgical language to be used in the celebration.²⁶⁵ The only parts of the rite that the bishops are obliged to keep are the canonical form (i.e. the person assisting must ask for and receive the consent of the contracting parties before, at least, two witnesses) and the Nuptial Blessing must always be given.²⁶⁶

The following process is recommended to the bishops in their bid to seek adaptations to the liturgy:

²⁶⁰ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 42.

²⁶¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 398.

²⁶² *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 41.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Kenneth W. Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 115.

²⁶⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 39.

²⁶⁶ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 42 no. 6.

In the first place, a detailed preliminary proposal should be set before the Apostolic See, so that, after the necessary faculty has been granted, the detailed working out of the individual points of adaptation may proceed. Once these proposals have been duly approved by the Holy See, experiments should be carried out for specified periods and at specified places. If need be, once the period of the experimentation is concluded, the Bishops' Conference shall decide upon pursuing the adaptations and shall propose a mature formulation of them to the Apostolic See for its decision.²⁶⁷

At the 1980 Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Rugambwa of Tanzania, in his address said that “it is up to the local church authorities to solve marriage and family problems which they are capable of solving, in view of the cultural diversity of peoples.”²⁶⁸ To this end, according to Canon Law, and Vatican II, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana is the competent ecclesiastical authority with the power to make adaptations to the use of the Latin Rite of Marriage reflecting the traditions and practices of Ghanaians, subject to the approval of the Holy See. As advised by Pope John Paul II, the Conference can set up study commissions for matters concerning marriage.²⁶⁹

3.3.2 The Church on Inculturation

Closely linked to the power of the Bishops' Conference is the position of the Church on inculturation. This sheds much light on the adaptation of the Rite of Marriage. Marriage is a special aspect of a people's culture. “In many places, it is the Rite of Marriage that calls for the greatest degree of adaptation so as not to be foreign to the social customs.”²⁷⁰ With my experience, marriage seems to be the most enthusiastic topic, discussed at most church programs in Ghana. Marriage is significant in the daily lives of people because it is essentially linked to family, which is the basic root of every society. It is therefore important that the celebration of marriage should not be foreign

²⁶⁷ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 395.

²⁶⁸ Emmanuel Okonkwo, “*Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*,” 107.

²⁶⁹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 64.

²⁷⁰ *Varietatis Legitimae*, 57.

to the customs of a people.²⁷¹

The Second Vatican Council is clear on the position of the Catholic Church in the formation of liturgical rules. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* acknowledges that:

In the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community; rather does she respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples. Anything in these peoples' way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy and, if possible, preserves intact. Sometimes, in fact, she admits such things into the liturgy itself, so long as they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit.²⁷²

By quoting from the Council of Trent, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* gives a clear instruction to the entire church for an in-depth inculturation of the Rite of Marriage. It directs that praiseworthy customs and ceremonies followed by any region should be retained when celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage.²⁷³ It is the desire of the Church to preserve and adopt the worthy customs of various peoples and places. Due regard is given to the local customs and traditions of different countries by retaining their significant use in the liturgy. In the apostolic letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II described that an important task of liturgical renewal is to ensure that the rites are rooted in different cultures.²⁷⁴ The liturgy must be capable of expressing itself in every human culture. This makes it more meaningful in the lives of the people.

Anscar Chupungco, a liturgy scholar, has identified the mystery of the incarnation of Christ as the theological principle of cultural adaptation. In his book “*Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*,” he emphasizes the exigency of liturgical adaptation in the Church. He states emphatically, “adaptation is not an option, but a theological imperative arising from the incarnation of Christ.”²⁷⁵ Christ

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 18.

²⁷² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37.

²⁷³ Mark Francis, “The Other Sacraments and Sacramentals SC 59-82,” 109.

²⁷⁴ *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 4.

²⁷⁵ Anscar J. Chupungco, “*Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*,” 59.

incarnated himself in the Jewish race so must the Church incarnate herself in every race. The universality of Christ is the focus of the Church's incarnation in different races.²⁷⁶ This universality is sought and realized in liturgical adaptation. By using the mystery of the incarnation as the basic theological principle, Chupungco affirms that adaptation is essential for the survival of the Church in different cultures.

Chupungco also applies the Counter-Reformational principle of "*Ecclesia semper reformanda*" to the liturgy of the Church: "*Liturgia semper reformanda*."²⁷⁷ When the liturgy is celebrated in different cultures, it "becomes a native of every culture, and since culture is not static, the liturgy will be constantly subjected to various modifications."²⁷⁸ Inculturation like the incarnation of the worship of the Church is an ongoing process which is very much dependent on the various reforms adapted at different places and times. For liturgy to be effective, it must be moved and modified with the movements and modifications of the cultures it seeks to impact.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments cautions that at the same time that the liturgy is adapted to various cultures; it should "transcend the particularity of race and nation."²⁷⁹ In adapting the liturgy, care must be taken so that the essential identity of the liturgy is not lost. This could be done by a careful theological, historical and pastoral investigations into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised.²⁸⁰ Also by maintaining a fidelity to the apostolic tradition, all adaptations must preserve the substantial unity of the Roman Rite.²⁸¹ There should be

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 87.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 62.

²⁷⁹ *Varietatis Legitimae*, 18.

²⁸⁰ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 23.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, 38.

no blind and irrational adaptation of the liturgy. The history and the theology of the Sacrament, as well as, the needs of the adapted culture must influence it. The Second Vatican Council cautions, “There must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them”²⁸²

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* also gives some directions as to how adaptations in the liturgy should be done. It encourages that “inculturation requires a necessary length of time, lest the authentic liturgical tradition suffer contamination due to haste and a lack of caution.”²⁸³ In the process of inculturation, it is important to proceed with caution and not in undue haste. Inculturation becomes more effective when the best precautions are observed at the right time.

In recognition of the primacy of marriage in the lives of her members, the Catholic Church has always allowed and even supported considerable diversity in the Rite of Marriage. The Rite of Marriage can, therefore, be offered as a “model of openness to creativity and inculturation.”²⁸⁴ The Second Vatican Council left much freedom for adaptation. Adrien Nocent is quite surprised that despite this extraordinary openness to adaptation, few countries have used it.²⁸⁵ I am equally surprised that in spite of all the rich cultural elements in Africa, not much is done with inculturation. Attempts made by the Church in Ghana is described by Emmanuel Richard Mawusi as “adorning parts of the Latin Mass with Ghanaian cultural cosmetics.”²⁸⁶ This involves “usage of the vernacular, use of Ghanaian art in liturgical vestments, decorating places of worship and on sacred vessels; and the use of Ghanaian traditional forms of art to express certain elements of the

²⁸² *Ibid*, 23.

²⁸³ *General Instructions of the Roman Missal*, 398.

²⁸⁴ Adrien Nocent, “The Christian Rite of Marriage in the West,” 301.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 298.

²⁸⁶ Emmanuel Richard Mawusi, “Inculturation: Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture,” 145

faith; the use of drums, clapping of hands, dancing and body language.”²⁸⁷ In terms of marriage, the form of the Latin Rite is practically followed to the letter.

At the third Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1974, Cardinal James Knox, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, remarked that since practically all the important liturgical books have been revised, “the first phase of Vatican II’s liturgical renewal has been realized. The second phase, however, which is the adaptation of these books to various cultures, will be the concern of the following years henceforth.”²⁸⁸ The Church looks forward to many attempts to inculturate the liturgy in the future.

Ecclesia in Africa “considers inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular Churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa.”²⁸⁹ The situation in Africa requires adaptations to ensure that Christians will fully understand the Gospel message, and also remain faithful to all authentic African values. African values and the gospel must coexist harmoniously in order for ministry to be effective. The Synod expressed the hope that the Episcopal Conferences, in cooperation with Universities and Catholic Institutes, would set up study commissions, especially for matters concerning marriage, “in order to examine in depth all the cultural aspects of problems from the theological, sacramental, liturgical and canonical points of view.”²⁹⁰ During his visit to Africa, Pope Paul VI told the bishops that “you can, you ought, to have African Christianity”²⁹¹ This is a statement which gives hope to the Church in Africa. Africa is expectant to incorporate her rich

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 142.

²⁸⁸ Ansar J. Chupungco, “*Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*,” 41.

²⁸⁹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 59.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 64.

²⁹¹ Okonkwo Emmanuel, *Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*, 215.

traditional values into the celebration of the liturgy. There is a lot to be done before we can achieve a “new concept of African Catholicism.”²⁹²

3.3.3 Integration

The laws of the Catholic Church are legitimate. However, their application must be contextualized in any given culture. Anscar Chupungco considers the application of church law to local cultures as a wonderful exchange by which cultures are made richer.²⁹³ The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments also affirms that the Church purifies, strengthens and ennobles the customs of each people.²⁹⁴ The light of the Gospel purifies and sanctifies what is good and noble in the native cultures. These noble cultural elements are to be retained in the liturgy.

Most of the problems and their effects on the Catholic Church in Ghana are because the laws of the Church are not applied to the particular circumstances of the people. What we need is an adaptation of the laws of the Catholic Church to the cultural situation of the people. This will help to do away with the “strong feeling of having received a faith not yet fully at home in our lives and culture.”²⁹⁵

There are certain aspects of the laws in the Catholic Church, which cannot be compromised and there are other aspects, which can be compromised by the right authority. An identification of both

²⁹² Anna Niedźwiedź, “Being Christian in Africa: Identities Lived Within A Catholic Community In Central Ghana,” In *Multiple Identities In Post-Colonial Africa*, Vlastimil Fiala (ed.) (Publishing House Moneta-FM, Poland, 2012), 153.

²⁹³ Anscar J. Chupungco, “*Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*,” 6.

²⁹⁴ *Varietatis Legitimae*, 18.

²⁹⁵ Emmanuel Okonkwo, “*Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*,” 116.

aspects of the laws would be very helpful in a quest to unify the Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage. For instance, the request and the reception of consent, as well as the nuptial blessing, can never be compromised in the Sacrament of Marriage. In the Customary Marriage too, the “*tirinsa*” cannot be compromised. In addition, no matter how acceptable the Customary Marriage is in Ghana, there are obvious and modern unacceptable flaws in some of the traditions that govern it. An example is polygamy. Therefore, Customary Marriage must be modeled to work hand in hand with the church laws. There should be a major change in some Ghanaian traditional practices and an accommodation of some church principles in order to integrate two.

3.3.4 Symbolisms

The history of the Sacrament of Marriage offers an opportunity to introduce local symbolisms to enrich the Rite of Marriage. These symbolic customs when introduced into the rite will help the people to better appreciate the marriage celebration.

Scholarly comparison between the East and the West shows that the Western Rite of Marriage is less symbolic. With the Tridentine history of much simplicity in the liturgy, the Latin Rite of Marriage is direct and simple. However, the Eastern Rite of Crowning incorporates many symbols. Even in the West, the German and the French responses to the 1969 ritual adaptations are quite symbolic. “The English-speaking countries just reproduced the Latin Rite.”²⁹⁶

Liturgy is more than words. Symbolism in the liturgy speaks a lot. Kenneth W. Stevenson advocates for an introduction of more symbolism into the Western Rite of Marriage. He states, “In

²⁹⁶ Kenneth W. Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 150-153.

an age that is seeing a renewed interest in liturgical symbolism, it would be a mark of imagination and maturity if the Christian West was to adorn marriage with symbolisms that are new to its tradition.”²⁹⁷ A recent response to this proposal is the United States quest for symbols, which has seen the introduction of the *lazzo* and the *arras* in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*.

This proposal is also supported by history which reveals the presence of many symbols in marriage. Among them are the Coptic rite of the anointing of the forehead, the *henana* (a mixture of water, ash, and wine) in Eastern-Syria, the Jewish Talmudic canopy (signifying the presence of God), the blessing of the *lazzo* and the *arras*. Others are the Eastern crowning, the Roman veiling and coins, the Armenian exchange of crosses, the exchange of Bible in Spain etc. Paul Turner also sees the contemporary American presentation of flowers before the statue of Mary and the unity candle as worthwhile symbols.²⁹⁸

Similarly, marriage celebration in Africa offers many positive symbols, which could be introduced to enrich the Rite of Marriage. Among them are the knocking rites in Ghana, tying of the wrists of the couples with a grass in Sierra Leone, the lighting of the bridal fire in South Africa, the presentation of the cowry shells in Kenya, the offering of palm wine and cola nuts in Nigeria and the presentation of the spear and shield to the groom in Eastern Africa. In addition to these, there are almost universal symbolisms like the tying of the knot, the jumping of the broom, and the pouring of libation. These symbolisms present cultural values, which could be truly providential in the preparation for the transmission of the Gospel in the celebration of marriage.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 197.

²⁹⁸ Paul Turner, *One Love: A Pastoral Guide to The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 37.

²⁹⁹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 42.

In the Ghanaian context, *tirinsa* could be adopted as a great symbolism in the Rite of Marriage. *Tirinsa* is sealed with the exchange of gifts, much of which also appeared in history. For example, the *dotale* in Rome, *arrha sponsalicia* (prenuptial gifts) in Constantinople, and *mohar* in the Bible. (Gen 34:12, Exod. 22:16, 1Sam 18:25, Has 3:2).

3.3.5 The Use of Local Customs

Linked to the introduction of symbolism is the use of local customs. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* directs that local customs may be observed if appropriate³⁰⁰ and could be adapted into the Rite of Marriage. This is strongly supported by the use of local customs by the early church. The redeemed people of God did not renounce their culture.³⁰¹ They developed Christian celebrations gradually according to local traditions.³⁰² Even when Missals and Sacramentaries were introduced, they continued to insert local rites before or after the new marriage rites. The Customary Marriage in Ghana is a worthwhile tradition, which could be shaped and adapted into the Rite of Marriage.

3.3.6 Combination of the betrothal and marriage

Another historical antecedent, which will help to influence the Ghanaian situation, is the combination of the betrothal and marriage (crowning/veiling). Like the Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage, which are celebrated as two different stages, a possible solution to the challenges, that the Ghanaian Church is facing could be the combination³⁰³ of the two marriages. This could be done after a careful study of the theology of each of the celebrations.

³⁰⁰ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 29.

³⁰¹ *Varietatis Legitimae*, 14.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 17.

³⁰³ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 115.

3.3.7 Church and Civil Law

Also linked to the two-fold celebration of the betrothal and marriage is the celebration of civil marriage and church marriage together. From the time of Emperor Constantine, civil marriage and religious marriage have coexisted. It is important to consider the current situation of marriage in France. In France, a separate secular rite (civil marriage) must take place regardless of whether or not marriage is to be celebrated in a church.³⁰⁴ In terms of the relationship between civil marriage and religious marriage, Ghana has an advantage over France. This is because in Ghana, churches have the privilege of celebrating civil marriage and religious marriage together in a single ritual.

My focus is on the resultant “increased laxity of people to observe Christian marriage”³⁰⁵ in France because they have to celebrate two marriages. The Church in Ghana is also experiencing similar laxity because people have to celebrate two marriages. (Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage). This French and African pieces of evidence show that when people are required to celebrate two marriages at shorter intervals, they show an apathy towards the second one. Therefore, an attempt to solve the pastoral problems in Ghana should try to do away with the idea of celebrating two marriages.

The bishops of Africa at their 6th General Assembly held in Yaounde, Cameroon in 1981, recommended that Episcopal Conferences should study the dynamic progression of the marriage process in their region and evaluate it in the light of the gospel and see how this process could be celebrated in a Christian way and find that what exact moment the canonical form could be inserted in such a way as to eliminate the present dichotomy between the liturgical and traditional form.³⁰⁶

The combination of the Customary Marriage with the Sacrament of Marriage is a good way forward. What aspects of the Customary Marriage are important and can be merged into the

³⁰⁴ Kenneth W. Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 182.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 121.

³⁰⁶ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 252.

celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage? In the next section, I will do an analysis of the celebration of the Customary Marriage by explaining some pertinent issues, which require consideration, revision, and changes, in a bid to unify the Customary Marriage with the Sacrament of Marriage.

3.4 Issues to consider

A one-time simple marriage celebration, embodying all the required local traditions and church laws, is not impossible in Ghana. Among the pertinent issues that may need a change in this integration process are polygamy, place of celebration, celebrant/minister of the marriage, cohabitation, pregnant brides, and the use of schnapps as “*tirinsa*.” Reflecting on these pertinent issues, I will use the current changes in the traditional naming ceremony (baby Christening) as references to propose some changes for the Rite of Marriage in Ghana.

3.4.1 Polygamy

Some of the traditional laws have become obsolete and have outlived their usefulness. An example is polygamy. Popular folktale among the Akans in southern Ghana explains that in the olden days, during the era of subsistence farming, polygamy was encouraged so that the large family size would provide labor for farming purposes. With the influence of modernity, education, and technology, family members work in diverse job settings now, polygamy is no longer needed in Ghana. It is quite surprising that codifying these traditional customs as late as in 1985, polygamy was still accepted in the “Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law, 1985 (PNDCL 112)” as amended in 1991 by PNDCL 263.

In any case, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage under the Marriage Ordinance (CAP 127) is a laudable idea. It is the answer towards a onetime traditional, civil and ecclesiastically acceptable marriage in Ghana. This is because the Marriage Ordinance is strictly monogamous. Therefore, for a Customary Marriage to be worthy of integration into the Sacrament of Marriage, it must be registered not under the “Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law, 1985 (PNDCL 112)” as amended in 1991 by PNDCL 263,” but under “The Marriage Ordinance of 1951” (CAP 127).

The Sacrament of Marriage is classified as the second type³⁰⁷ of Marriage Ordinance because of the striking similarities. Notable among them is monogamy and indissolubility of the marriage. The way forward is a liturgical combination of the Customary Marriage with the Sacrament of Marriage and registering everything under the Marriage Ordinance. This will do away with serious flaws such as polygamy and divorce in the Customary Marriage, which could be a hindrance to its addition to the Sacrament of Marriage.

3.4.2. The Officiating Minister of the Marriage.

I will describe the officiating minister of a marriage celebration as the person who receives the consent of the spouses during the exchange of vows. In the case of the Customary Marriage, it is the father of the bride. In the Catholic Church, it could be either “a bishop, a priest, a deacon or any other minister designated to celebrate valid Catholic Marriages.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ KMA, <http://www.kma.gov.gh/kma/?marriage-services&page=5354> (accessed 02/22/17).

³⁰⁸ Can. 1108 no.1.

In an attempt towards an integration, the priest is called “father,” so the people already see a father figure in him. It will not be too difficult to designate some of the roles of the father (of the bride) to the “father” (the priest). This is also supported by the history of the minister of the Sacrament of Marriage, which shows a gradual change from the father of the bride to the priest (presbyter). An argument likely to arise is whether the natural father of the bride should also be delegated to celebrate valid Catholic marriages. This argument is supported by *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* which added delegated laypersons³⁰⁹ as valid ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. Consequently, some scholars have started arguing that the addition of delegated lay ministers indicates a possible return to the old practice of “fathers” celebrating marriages. For the purposes of integration in this work, I will give a preference to the designation of the roles of the father of the bride to the ecclesiastically approved minister of marriage.³¹⁰ This is because the priest is a licensed minister of Ordinance Marriage which is included in the celebration of the Sacrament. The natural father cannot celebrate a valid Ordinance Marriage but the priest can.

There is also a precedent currently being practiced by the Protestant, Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Spiritual churches in terms of the naming ceremony (baby Christening) in Ghana. The rite of giving the name to the baby used to be celebrated by the uncle of the baby. Now, people prefer their pastors and church leaders to celebrate this rite. In the light of the above, I believe that it will not be too strange for the priests in Ghana to receive the consent of the bride during the Customary Marriage. The traditions will accept and allow it because priests have a respectable place in the community, many people will be happy for the priest to officiate their Customary Marriage.

³⁰⁹ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 25

³¹⁰ *Ibid*

3.4.3. The Place of the Celebration.

In terms of choosing the venue for an integrated marriage celebration, some of the pertinent questions to be considered are: Can the priest together with some elders go to the home of the bride to perform both the Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage together? Can the church be dispensed of as the venue of the Sacrament of Marriage?

According to Canon Law,

Marriages are to be celebrated in a parish where either of the contracting parties has a domicile, quasi-domicile, or month long residence or, if it concerns transients, in the parish where they actually reside. With the permission of the proper ordinary or proper pastor, marriages can be celebrated elsewhere.³¹¹

The Catholic Church wants marriages to be celebrated in a church with the possibility of a celebration outside a church, only with the proper permission of the competent ordinary.

Interestingly *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* encourages that:

Among peoples whom the marriage ceremonies customarily take place in the home, even over a period of several days, these ceremonies should be adapted to Christian spirit and to the liturgy. In such cases, the conference of bishops, according to the pastoral needs of the people, may allow the sacramental rite to be celebrated in the home.³¹²

This could be a major opportunity to change the venue for celebrating marriage from the church back to the home. Looking at the fact that Customary Marriage in Ghana is celebrated in the home; the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana were not entirely out of order when in 1997 *Ecclesia in Ghana* proposed that the Sacrament of Marriage should be celebrated in the home integrated with the Customary Marriage. "The priest, or his deputy, should be present at the various stages of the traditional rites, especially at the stage where, among a particular group of people, the consent is exchanged. This will fulfill the canonical form."³¹³

³¹¹ Can. 1115.

³¹² *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 44.

³¹³ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 116.

However, the Pastoral Congress was quick to realize that “holding the marriage ceremony in the home, will involve logistical problems since the large numbers may not be able to be accommodated in the homes.”³¹⁴ Additionally, because the Sacrament of Marriage has been combined with the Ordinance Marriage in Ghana, the Pastoral Congress also emphasized that “for the civil validity of such a fused marriage rite, the Bishops’ Conference should try to obtain the State’s recognition of such a marriage taking place in the home and not in church.” According to the Ordinance Marriage Act of 1951 (CAP 127):

Couples married under the Marriage Ordinance may be married in a licensed place of worship, a registrar's office, or in another place specifically authorized by the Registrar. If the marriage was celebrated at a place that was not licensed to perform marriages under the Ordinance, it renders the marriage invalid.³¹⁵

Churches, temples, mosques etc. are the licensed places of worship in Ghana. These places of worship must be gazetted to officially celebrate Ordinance Marriages. Therefore, the law expects that valid marriages must be celebrated in a church. The law also gives a provision for a marriage to be celebrated by special license.

Marriage by the special license is where the registrar general's office waives certain conditions for an ordinance such as the length of time for notices or permits a venue (other than the registrar general's office or a church) to be used for the performance of the marriage.³¹⁶

Inferring from this special license, if the Catholic Church decides to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in the home, then it is either the Ghanaian government waives the requirement to celebrate the Marriage Ordinance in a licensed place of worship or the homes of all Catholics must be registered to celebrate valid Ordinance Marriages. It is impossible to register the home of every Catholic as a licensed place of worship. From the ongoing discussion, it is clear that both the laws

³¹⁴ *Ibid*

³¹⁵ KMA, <http://www.kma.gov.gh/kma/?marriage-services&page=5354> (accessed February 22, 2017)

³¹⁶ *Ibid*.

of Ghana and the laws of the Catholic Church expect that marriage should be celebrated in a church. They only allow marriage to be celebrated outside a church for special reasons.

In the case of Customary Marriage, which is celebrated in the home, how do we integrate it with the Ordinance and the Sacrament? First, there is no official law prescribing that Customary Marriage should be celebrated in the home. The celebration of Customary Marriage in the home is only a local custom which has been practiced by the people of Ghana for a very long time. With the current example of the naming ceremony (baby christening),³¹⁷ coupled with the logistical problems and the demands of the civil law, it will not be strange for me to propose that the Customary Marriage should be celebrated in a church, together with the Sacrament of Marriage and the Ordinance Marriage.

This idea of moving the customary marriage from the home to the church is supported by the history of the movement of the betrothal and the marriage from the home to the doors of the church after the third century and eventually into the church itself. Theological reasons of the holiness and the seriousness of the Sacrament of Marriage also supports this idea of moving the Customary Marriage to the church. Celebrating marriage in Church helps couples to participate in the mystical communion with Christ as the center of their marriage. They accept that their faith is a part of their new married life.

³¹⁷ Traditionally, naming ceremony is to be celebrated in the family house of the mother of child, however the current trend among Protestant, Charismatic, Pentecostal and Spiritual churches in Ghana is that babies are taken to the church for the ritual to be celebrated. In the Catholic Church however, it is still celebrated in the house and is followed by the infant baptism in the church. In 1997 The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference proposed a fusion of the traditional naming ceremony and the rite of infant baptism. (*Ecclesia in Ghana*, 111)

Another point worthy of consideration is the suggestion of Stevenson that marriage should be phased like other rites of passage.³¹⁸ In reference to his suggestion, he describes the Armenian and Visigothic rites where marriage starts from the home with the blessing of the bridal dress, rings (jewelry) and gown, then proceeds to a church for the solemnization, and the procession returns to the house for the blessing of the bedchamber. This suggestion is also in line with the practice of the Protestants and the other churches in Ghana, who try to celebrate the Customary Marriage on the same day or a day before the wedding. Should the Customary Marriage be celebrated in the home, and continue in procession to the church building where it is solemnized? This noble idea is possible when the two marriages are celebrated in the same town. However, I will not subscribe to this idea because of the challenges being faced by the Protestants. Most of the times the two celebrations are not in the same town. This is because most clans in Ghana do not practice intra-marriages. There will be a pressure on time and resources to transport people from one place to another. Celebrating on the same day will be impossible when the towns are far apart.

A way of phasing the two celebrations could be celebrating the Customary Marriage in the parish hall or the basement of the church and continuing with the Sacrament in the church. However, there are structural difficulties here, which should not be overlooked. In Ghana, churches do not have basements and not many churches have parish halls. The best way to solve the logistical problem once and for all is to celebrate the two marriages together in a church.³¹⁹

3.4.4. The use of Schnapps (alcoholic drink) for the “*Tirinsa*.”

³¹⁸ Kenneth W. Stevenson, *To Join Together*, 190-191.

³¹⁹ This suggestion is highly supported by the history of celebrating the betrothal and the marriage together in a church.

The use of schnapps as the seal³²⁰ for the Customary Marriage, i.e. “*tirinsa*” has been recently criticized by the Charismatic and Pentecostal denominations in Ghana. These denominations preach against the use of alcoholic beverages, as such, they do not feel comfortable using schnapps to seal their marriages. To most of them, it is against the Christian principles to build the marriage on an alcoholic foundation. I consider this belief quite superstitious and influenced by fundamentalism. The Catholic Church in Ghana has no official position on this matter. However, it is worth mentioning because it has impacted the nuptial worldview of many Christians in Ghana.

In much the same way, the Akan naming ceremony has a symbolic ritual of dipping a drop of alcohol and water on the tongue of the child being named and pronouncing that the child should always differentiate water from alcohol and truth from falsehood. However, people sharing this fundamental opinion claim that when alcohol is used on the tongue of the child, the child will become a drunkard in future. In the absence of alcohol, they use either honey, milk or sugar solution for this ritual.³²¹

Christian denominations, who speak against the use of schnapps, use “non-alcoholic wine” for the “*tirinsa*” or sometimes they give the cash equivalent of the required bottles of schnapps to the

³²⁰ This drink is considered as the traditional seal for most official transactions in Ghana. The history of schnapps as a seal dates back to the barter trade system in first century. In the process of the traditional marriage, schnapps is presented during the “knocking rites” and the “*tirinsa*” as a seal of the rituals. During a divorce of a Customary Marriage, the wife returns the bottle of schnapps to the husband’s family as a seal of the divorce.

³²¹ “The apostolic tradition of Hippolytus of Rome offers a fascinating example. At the first Communion, the neophyte received not only the Eucharistic species but also milk and honey. This, explains Hippolytus, is to signify “the fulfillment of the promise of God made to the Patriarchs, that he would give them a land flowing with milk and honey.” Having crossed the River Jordan through baptism, the neophyte now enters the promised land and tastes of its blessings. This rite is an eloquent portrayal of the Christian Passover; its biblical theme reinforces the imagery. But this type of drink is not unique to Christians. Pre-Christian Romans gave milk and honey to their newborn as a protection from evil spirits. It is possible that Hippolytus was inspired by it, adapted it and gave it a biblical interpretation.” (Anscar J. Chupungco, “*Cultural Adaptations of the Liturgy*,” 16). The use of milk and honey disappeared during the seventh-century. (*Ibid*, 19)

bride's family. Other times too when the bride's family insists that the required bottles of schnapps must be presented, the groom's family has no option than to purchase the drinks and present them in secret to the bride's family. For some families, irrespective of the religious affiliation, no schnapps means no marriage.

Even though the Catholic Church has no official position on this practice, it is worth noting because the idea is gradually influencing the Customary Marriage celebrations of most Catholics. In the likely event of integrating the Customary Marriage into the Sacrament of Marriage, a decision on this matter should be left for the two families coming together in the Sacrament.

3.4.5. Cohabitation

The issue of cohabitation is also another important point to consider in any attempt to harmonize Customary Marriage with the Sacrament of Marriage. This is because customary practices may encourage cohabitation, which is not acceptable in the Catholic Church.

It is an understatement to say that cohabitation is widespread and has an influence on the Catholic Church. Michael Lawler in his book *Marriage and the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions*, “acknowledges the social scientific fact that more than half of all those who marry today, including more than half of all Catholics, cohabit with their spouse prior to marriage.”³²² He also makes “inquiries that cohabitation could, again as in the past be counted as a step in the process of becoming married in the Catholic tradition”³²³ This idea is quite radical but forward-looking.

³²² Michael G. Lawler, *Disputed Questions*, Prologue, x.

³²³ *Ibid.*

Cohabitation is gradually gaining some legal status in the world.³²⁴ This makes Michael Lawler's suggestion a future possibility.

Amoris Laetitia distinguishes between living together before marriage³²⁵ and casual living together. The difference between committed cohabitation and partners who just spend time together³²⁶ is because of the fear of commitment, a distrust of marriage, cultural and contingent situations like security in life. Pope Francis describes cohabitation as *de facto unions*³²⁷ and encourages pastors that such instances “provides occasions for pastoral care with a view to the eventual celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage”³²⁸

The guidelines for the preparation of marriage issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops accept that:

All policies emphasize the delicate balance that the Church must strike on the issue of cohabitation. Policies urge the priest or deacon to be welcoming and to see this as an opportunity for evangelization; at the same time, he must uphold the Church's teaching on the nature of the sexual commitment made in marriage.³²⁹

As part of reiterating the Church's commitment to empathize and help partners who are cohabiting, the group “Faithful to Each Other Forever” warns against two extremes: (1) immediately confronting the couple and condemning their behavior and (2) ignoring the cohabitation. When people living in concubinage are condemned and ignored, they will live in the risk of lapsing and

³²⁴ Refer to Chapter One, page 24.

³²⁵ *Amoris Laetitia*, 53.

³²⁶ *Ibid*, 33.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 294

³²⁸ *Ibid*, 293.

³²⁹ Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm> (accessed on December 14, 2016).

losing their faith. Assisting cohabiters to acknowledge their state of life and the help available for them is a laudable idea. Pope John Paul II also said that:

Pastors and the ecclesial community should take care to become acquainted with such situations and their actual causes, case by case. They should make tactful and respectful contact with the couples concerned and enlighten them patiently, correct them charitably and show them the witness of Christian family life in such a way as to smooth the path for them to regularize their situation.³³⁰

These few examples show that the Church is compassionate about the situation of people in concubinage. And like Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the Church accepts, guides and educates people in living cohabitation with patience, discretion and love. Overall, I will not encourage that the Church should demote couples who are in cohabitation like the Protestants and the other churches in Ghana are doing. These couples must be accepted with love and encouraged to try as much possible to solemnize their marriage. Parishes can have regular educative programs for such couples on the need for them to celebrate the Sacrament.

3.4.6. Pregnant brides

The issue of pregnant brides³³¹ is another important aspect to consider in a bid to unify Customary Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage. Even though the practice has been going on, quite often pastors in Ghana ignore the situation and go ahead to celebrate the Sacrament for the couple. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops discusses that:

pregnancy is always treated as a caution to marriage as opposed to a reason to speed up a wedding, since it may interfere with a person's free consent. If the couple only started to discuss marriage following the pregnancy, then the issue of undue pressure to marry needs to be explored.³³²

A pregnancy which influences the free exchange of consent could be a justifiable reason for annulment. This is a common thing with the jurisprudence of marriage.

³³⁰ *Familiaris Consortio*, 81.

³³¹ Refer to Chapter One, page 23.

³³² Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm> (accessed on December 14, 2016)

It is well known that when the women are tired of cohabiting they use pregnancy as a bait which forces the man to proceed with an ad hoc, premature and a hasty marriage celebration. Priests may save many marriages if as part of the prenuptial inquiries, some attention is given to the bride-to-be who is already pregnant. A good discussion about the issues of interference with the free exchange of consent and undue pressure during the prenuptial counseling may be very helpful to the couple. On the positive side, I side with the dioceses in New Jersey that "in light of our Church's consistent witness to the sanctity of human life, the couple's choice to embrace the pregnancy should be affirmed by the pastoral minister."³³³

3.4.7. Parental Consent

Due to the role that parents play in a Ghanaian marriage, parents are expected to give their consent before the couple approaches the priest to prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage. When the partners do not have their respective parental consents, then it is possible that the Customary Marriage has not been celebrated. Going ahead with such a Sacrament is a recipe for disaster because the marriage lacks a substantial traditional foundation, it will end up being only a nine-day wonder.

Lumen Gentium affirms that parents "stand as witnesses and cooperators of the fruitfulness of mother church, as a sign of, and a share in that love with which the Christ loved his bride and gave himself to her"³³⁴ The Roman Ritual admonishes the Parish Priest to "caution young people not to contract marriage without the knowledge of or against the reasonable wishes of their parents. And

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 41.

if they will not accede to this advice he is not allowed to assist at their marriage until he has consulted the ordinary.”³³⁵ In the spirit of fraternal charity, I will encourage the priest to try to mediate between the couple and their dissenting parents so that a consensus could be established for the marriage to be celebrated.

Chapter Four

PROPOSALS

4.0 Introduction

We have seen the power of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference to make adaptations to the Rite of Marriage. In the previous chapter, certain pertinent issues in the celebration of the Customary Marriage which requires attention, revision, and possible changes have also been identified. Now, some proposals will be made for the observance of certain prerequisites of marriage. These include good programs and policies, which are visibly lacking or need reforms in the Catholic Church in Ghana. A careful attention to the prerequisites will give a strong foundation to the marriage celebration.

4.1. Marriage Preparation

Marriage preparation is very important because it aims at helping young people to discover the dignity and beauty of marriage.³³⁶ The pastoral care of engaged and married couples calls for an understanding of marriage preparation as the church’s responsibility.³³⁷ In *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis puts a greater emphasis on preparation for marriage. He introduces it with a deeper sense

³³⁵ Philip T. Weller, “The Sacrament of Matrimony” In *The Roman Ritual*, (Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), Number 15, page 267.

³³⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 205.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, 211.

of baptismal calling by linking the period of the catechumenate with the prenuptial preparation. This reflects the contemporary description of RCIA³³⁸ as the model of sacramental life by some theologians. The theology and the various rites of the RCIA are an invaluable resource which could be adapted to enrich the preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. Among the rites worthy of adaptation are the election or enrollment of names, the scrutinies (purification and enlightenment), the rites of presentation with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, ephephetha rite, anointing with the oil of catechumens, renunciation of sin and profession of faith with the whole congregation as well as changing the name of the catechumen to "the elect." The universal church will benefit immensely if a comprehensive marriage preparation program involving adapted forms of these rites is introduced.

Amoris Laetitia makes a significant proposal. This proposal which is inferred from the RCIA is the involvement of the entire community in the marriage preparation process. "The complexity of today's society and the challenges faced by the family require a greater effort on the part of the whole Christian community in preparing those who are about to be married."³³⁹ Speaking about its great benefits, Pope Francis encouraged Christian communities to recognize the support they themselves receive from assisting engaged couples as they grow in love. He writes,

The synod fathers agreed on the need to involve the entire community more extensively by stressing the witness of families themselves and by grounding marriage preparation in the process of Christian Initiation by bringing out the connection between marriage, baptism and the other Sacraments. The fathers also spoke of the need for specific programs of marriage preparation aimed at giving couples a genuine experience of participation in the ecclesial life and a complete introduction to various aspects of family life.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Full name: Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults

³³⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 206.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 206.

Specifically, an adaptation of the Election or Enrolment of Names will help to integrate the pre-marital preparation program into the broader dynamic of ecclesial life. The election will formally ratify the readiness of the couple for the Sacrament of Marriage. The involvement of the community in the election process will help to give an official and a public approval of the new state of those about to marry. The community will also give “honest and carefully considered testimony”³⁴¹ about the couple during this proposed ‘enrolment of the engaged.’ Therefore, the church faithful will become examples and role models when they participate in the prenuptial rites by praying and sharing their experiences with the “elect” to marry.

As part of the election, the scrutinies, which are solemnly celebrated on Sundays could also be relevant to the marriage preparation.

The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good. For the scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. These rites, therefore, should complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.³⁴²

The scrutinies have a spiritual purpose and are reinforced by an exorcism, rites for self-searching and repentance. A spiritual preparation for marriage is very important especially when the entire ecclesial community participates and supports the engaged couple with prayers.

For the Ghanaian situation, during the publication of the marriage banns, a parallel could be drawn from the Rite of Election. For the first week of the publication, the engaged couple can be officially introduced to the congregation as “candidates” for the Sacrament of Marriage. After a brief

³⁴¹ Liturgy Office of England and Wales, *Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Study Edition, (Wales, Burns and Oates, 1985), 3. <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RCIA.pdf>, (online accessed on July 14, 2017)

³⁴² *Ibid*, 21.

introduction, a short prayer can be said for the engaged couple. The prayer of acceptance into the order of catechumens³⁴³ can be adapted for this purpose. During the second publication of the banns, the couple can be officially scrutinized. The successful scrutiny and the subsequent prayer of the congregation will be a formal expression of the will and readiness of the engaged couple to receive the Sacrament. For the final publication of the banns, a short rite of exorcism can be observed for the engaged couple. This will prepare them spiritually for the marriage. The prayers of exorcism³⁴⁴ can also be adapted for this purpose. Apart from the fact that this process of the publication of banns ensures community support, it will also make the publications of banns a celebration of love and not be frightening for the couple.

Another proposal which is inferred from the Rite of Baptism is the renewal of vows. Similar to the communal renewal of faith and the baptismal promises during the Rite of Baptism, it will be an innovation if it becomes possible for the married in the community to renew their wedding vows with the new couples whenever the Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated. This will help to strengthen marriages because the vows are often renewed in the community.

4.1.1. National Policy and Curriculum

The formulation of a formidable, interesting and a comprehensive national policy on marriage is an important step towards the achievement of uniformity. The 1980 Synod of Bishops proposed “episcopal conferences and dioceses should draw up guidelines for marriage preparation programs.”³⁴⁵ First and foremost, by incorporating good principles for inculturation and absorption of the Customary Marriage into the Sacrament of Marriage, a Ghana National Catholic Policy of

³⁴³ RCIA, 94.

³⁴⁴ RCIA, 113-118.

³⁴⁵ Emmanuel Okonkwo, “*Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*,” 108.

marriage is a core step towards adaptation. This policy should factor into it the proper enforcement of the various diocesan statutes so that it becomes an effort towards the fashioning of a Ghanaian identity in our marriage celebrations.

The Catholic Church needs a solid pre and post-nuptial instructions for couples. There should be a strong emphasis on prenuptial counseling for the Church in Ghana and Africa as a whole.³⁴⁶ *Ecclesia in Ghana* points out that “right from the beginning of this whole process, an intensive catechesis on the sacramentality of marriage and its indissoluble nature should be given by the priest to the couple.”³⁴⁷ The process of adaptation should help us to develop renowned marriage programs like “Pre-Caná,” “Engaged Encounter,” “Small Group Marriage Preparation Program,” “Parish Marriage Preparation Program,”³⁴⁸ and “Education for Marriage.” These programs should be adopted and adapted in Ghana. The bishops can “collaborate on a mutual policy of a three-month preparatory period for marriage.”³⁴⁹ This three-months realistic policy will regulate and do away with the different (one year, six months etc.) periods of preparation which are practiced in some parishes. The policy should come out with a curriculum and guidelines on how to go about prenuptial instructions. The culture and the challenges of marriage in Ghana must be factored into this policy and guidelines. The various dioceses should use this manual of guidelines and curriculum as a blueprint to formulate their own particular diocesan statutes of marriage. In the

³⁴⁶ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling, A Comprehensive Guide*, (United Kingdom, World Book Publishers, 1980) 59. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/01-1_053.pdf (accessed online June 3, 2017)

³⁴⁷ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 116

³⁴⁸ Carl J. Arico, “Methods and Techniques: A General Checklist for Diocesan Policies on Pastoral Marriage Preparation” In *Marriage Studies: Reflections in Canon Law and Theology*, Vol. 1, Thomas P. Doyle, O.P. (Ed.), (Ohio, American Canon Law Society, 1980), 39.

³⁴⁹ Thomas Milton, O.S.C.; “Preparation for Marriage: An Analysis and Critique of Marriage Preparation Programs” In *Marriage Studies: Reflections in Canon Law and Theology*, Vol. 1, Thomas P. Doyle, O.P. (Ed.), (Ohio, Canon Law Society of America, 1980), 5.

diocesan statutes, both “the remote and the proximate stages of marriage preparation”³⁵⁰ should be considered. Parishes must also formulate their own instructions reflecting the diocesan and national programs. e.g. Pre-Cana in the USA.³⁵¹

“Many policies stipulate what content *must* be covered in a formational program along with other desirable topics.”³⁵² Some of the topics that have been helpful in the North American instructions to prepare for a Christian marriage are

Communication (includes conflict resolution, problem solving); Sacramental marriage (a permanent, covenantal, exclusive, unconditional, life-giving, commitment that unites the couple as a sign of Christ's love); sexuality (includes natural family planning, intimacy); and spirituality (includes faith, moral decision making, values, prayer).³⁵³

Other “recommended topics are self-awareness (includes personality inventories, roles); parenthood (includes the family of origin and extended family issues); and finances (includes stewardship, lifestyle, and career issues).”³⁵⁴ An adaptation of these topics to the Ghanaian context of marriage is essential.

With the increased rate of divorce in the world, prenuptial counseling must give attention to the risks and problems that the young couple may encounter in marriage. *Ecclesia in Ghana* acknowledges that “the lives of many young people have been ruined because they went into marriage unprepared for the difficult task that awaits them.”³⁵⁵ Pope Francis puts an emphasis on the fact that it is the responsibility of the ecclesial community to assist the engaged couples to

³⁵⁰ Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm> (accessed on December 14, 2016).

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 258.

recognize and deal with risks and problems. “Couples need to be able to detect danger signals in their relationship and to find, before the wedding, effective ways of responding to them.”³⁵⁶ The timely preparation for marriage demands a firm resolution of the couples to be ready for conflict situations. A good curriculum of prenuptial counseling should offer resources that the couples can turn for help when problems arise. Among the resources are the names of places, people and services³⁵⁷ that are available to help the young and vulnerable couples. Most importantly, it is good to remind them of the availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

4.1.2. “Marriage School”

As part of the religious education in various parishes, a special marriage class could be set up for the confirmed young adults, between the ages of 15-20 or high school students. The value of classroom instruction in marriage and family life during Junior and Senior High School and College is very significant.³⁵⁸ This class which could be affectionately called “the marriage school” will continuously educate the lay faithful about the Catholic teachings on marriage, the gift of love, the theology, the laws, the rites and the liturgy, the options, and the limitations. This budding idea will go a long way to arrest cohabitation and the resultant apathy towards the Sacrament of Marriage. It could be a good proximate marriage preparation.

Proximate marriage preparation is defined as the time from puberty to a formal engagement. It is the responsibility of parents, along with pastoral ministers, to provide integration here of the religious formation of young people with their preparation for life as a couple (Canon 1063). It is also critical to address the role of media and the importance of media education during this stage. So often, the role models, values, expectations, etc., that were at one time taught in the home are now profoundly being impacted by TV, movies, and music to today's young people.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 210.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 212.

³⁵⁸ Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm> (accessed on December 14, 2016).

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*

The marriage school will help the youth to understand the wisdom behind the Church's teaching on sexual intimacy within the Sacrament of Marriage. Following the direction of *Amoris Laetitia* that children and the youth must be educated about sex and sexuality,³⁶⁰ implementing the marriage school will educate and encourage the youth to live separately and chastely before their marriage as a spiritual preparation for marriage.³⁶¹

4.1.3 Marriage Counseling Team

Additionally, it is good to emphasize that instead of one person (the priest) alone conducting the prenuptial counseling, each parish should form and train a marriage counseling team. Marriage preparation is more effective when conducted by a team.³⁶² The team can comprise of the clergy, lay married couple, professional counselors, and parish staff. This parish team should “recognize that there are other professionals such as lawyers, social workers, judges, school counselors, etc. who work in family counseling, we need to include them in the family effort.”³⁶³ The priest should guide, supervise and coordinate the activities of this team.

As coordinators of the marriage counseling team of the parish, there should be a special training in marriage preparation for priests so that they can understand the complexities of people’s married lives. Such a training should be rooted in the seminary formation programs. *Amoris Laetitia* affirms that “ordained ministers often lack the training needed to deal with the complex

³⁶⁰ *Amoris Laetitia*, 153, 280

³⁶¹ Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm> (accessed on December 14, 2016).

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ Thomas Milton, “An Analysis and Critique of Marriage Preparation Programs,” 5.

problems currently facing families.”³⁶⁴ With my experience as a young priest in Ghana, I have realized that in terms of marriage preparation, seminary training alone is not enough. Pope Francis advice that “seminarians should receive a more extensive interdisciplinary, and not merely doctrinal, formation in the areas of engagement and marriage.”³⁶⁵

Additionally, there should be ongoing training and follow-up programs for priests at regular intervals. A study conducted in 2014 at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, recommended to the Catholic Secretariat and other church councils to “organize regular in-service training for Christian marriage and family counselors.”³⁶⁶ National groups like “Education for Marriage” should be established in Ghana by the Conference of Catholic Bishops. This national group can schedule with the various dioceses year long programs so that at regular intervals they meet and train the priests.

In the USA, “Education for Marriage has put its major thrust into marriage preparation by adequately training the clergy in how to work and counsel couples planning to marry.”³⁶⁷ The good news for Ghana and other mission countries is that “Education for Marriage” is willing to act as a catalyst to help priests in other countries or regions.³⁶⁸ When the Bishops’ Conference reaches out to them, they will help Ghana to set up a platform which will show the clergy ‘what they need’ in order to counsel married couples especially those in the many rural areas of Ghana. This is because their program is village friendly. Adequate training in counseling skills is a must for all priests.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁴ *Amoris Laetitia*, 202.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 203.

³⁶⁶ Joshua Nartey, “Marriage and Family Counselling in Cape Coast Metropolis,” In *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No.4 (IJRSS & K.A.J. 2014), Abstract.
http://ijssk.org/uploads/3/1/1/7/3117743/4_marriage_and_family_counselling.pdf (accessed online June 2, 2017)

³⁶⁷ Thomas Milton, “An Analysis and Critique of Marriage Preparation Programs,” 6.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

4.1.4. Involvement of Parents.

Amoris Laetitia states that “for every couple, marriage preparation begins at birth. What they received from their family should prepare them to know themselves and to make a full and definitive commitment.”³⁷⁰ It continues that “those best prepared for marriage are probably those who learned what Christian marriage is from their own parents.”³⁷¹ In the light of the above and due to the influence of the family in Ghanaian marriages, parents and close family members of spouses should be included in the marriage counseling. These family members know the bride and the groom, therefore, their inclusion will enrich the program and help the spouses with good suggestions based on their own experiences. “Parents always want the best for their kids and the kids want to listen to them when they are preparing for marriage. Parents should not be speechless during their sons’ or daughters’ marriage preparation...they have the right to speak up.”³⁷² This inclusion of the family members in the prenuptial curriculum will also be an opportunity to educate the family members about their roles and duties as in-laws.

4.1.5. Mass Weddings.

As a way of reducing the cost of celebrating marriage, dioceses in Ghana should make it a policy that each year every parish in the diocese must prepare and celebrate “mass weddings.” When a parish does not have many couples to marry in a particular year, two or three parishes can come together to celebrate the mass wedding. When couples are instructed and prepared together, it becomes less time consuming and less costly. The parish can help the couples to choose a less

³⁷⁰ *Amoris Laetitia*, 208.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Thomas Milton, “An Analysis and Critique of Marriage Preparation Programs,” 9.

expensive uniform, preferably a traditional cloth for the occasion.³⁷³ They can have the wedding reception together in a common location especially in a parish hall. The diocese can also make it a policy for parishes to support the yearly program by taking care of a part of the cost. I believe this will help to encourage many members of the parish to celebrate the Sacrament.³⁷⁴

4.1.6. Post-Marital Instructions

An analogy could be drawn between mystagogy (which is the fourth stage of the RCIA) and post-marital instructions. They both aim at a life-long formation of the Christian. Pope Francis underscores this analogy when he emphasizes that “both short-term and long-term marriage preparation should prepare couples not only for the wedding but for a lifetime married life.”³⁷⁵ This is also affirmed by the Kenyan Bishops who have observed that “many [young people] concentrate on their wedding day and forget the life-long commitment they are about to enter into.”³⁷⁶ Post-marital instructions should aim at forming the couples to a deeper understanding of their Christian faith, family life and incorporate them into the full life of the Christian community. It should help them to discern and identify their roles in the Church. The pastor, the marriage counseling team, the parish staff and the entire parish community should encourage and support the couple. The readings at Mass and the homilies are important resources for post-marital instructions.

³⁷³ *Ecclesia in Ghana* takes a categorical position on the use of wedding gowns. Number 116 states “It remains to be added that the western white dress is not necessary for our marriage celebrations. Normally the white dress symbolizes purity and virginity. But many of the Church marriages take place between partners who have married for some time already, and are therefore not virgins. Local dresses are more than adequate.

³⁷⁴ Some well-to-do church members in Ghana sometimes reject mass weddings claiming a preference for their own exclusive celebrations.

³⁷⁵ *Amoris Laetitia*, 211.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 215.

It is good to propose that the Bishops' Conference should make it a policy for each parish to form a support movement or an association to include all the married couples in the parish. This group should meet at regular intervals for practical and experiential discussions about marriage. The priest and other resource persons could be invited as facilitators. The various dioceses also need to formulate a comprehensive post-marital instructions guide so that when such a group meets they will have some guidelines to follow. Among the recommended programs are

meetings of couples living in the same neighborhood, brief retreats for couples; talks by experts on concrete issues facing families, marriage counselling, home missionaries who help couples discuss their difficulties and desires, social services dealing with family problems like addiction, infidelity and domestic violence, programs of spiritual growth, workshops for parents with troubled children and family meetings.³⁷⁷

Amoris Laetitia suggests that “it could also be helpful to ask older married couples to help younger couples in the neighborhood by visiting them and offering guidance in the early years of marriage.”³⁷⁸ For the post-marital well-being of couples in a parish, the practice of sponsor couples or mentor couples practiced elsewhere in the world especially in the United States is a laudable idea to be introduced in Ghana. “Mentor couple refers to any one-on-one relationship where a married couple works with one engaged couple.”³⁷⁹ Parishes can introduce this program by pairing up young couples (under five years of marriage) with older and experienced couples so that they will form an enduring relationship to mentor and learn from each other. The older couples will be role models to the younger couples.

In the light of the above, should the practice of “godparents” be introduced into the Rite of Marriage? Looking at the tradition, theology and the importance of “godparents,” in the Rite of

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 229.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 230.

³⁷⁹ Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm>, (online accessed on December 14, 2016)

Baptism, I think it will be a laudable idea to introduce it into the Rite of Marriage too. This analogy is worthy of consideration in the universal church.

Furthermore, pastors should also take a keen interest in the well-being of the marriages they celebrate. From time to time, especially during the wedding anniversaries, the pastor can invite the couple for discussions about the well-being of their marriage and family. Special retreats can also be organized for couples prior to their wedding anniversaries. Additionally, to ensure an ongoing formation of married couples, the 1997 Pastoral Congress recommends that parishes can implement important programs like an annual renewal of marriage vows and ‘Marriage Sundays,’ Ecclesiastical Honors and Awards for married couples with 10, 25, 40, 50 years, spirituality of married life, family prayer and study groups to be encouraged in neighborhoods and Basic Christian Communities.³⁸⁰

4.2. A Proposed “Ghanaian Rite of Marriage”

To culminate the proposals in this work, I am proposing a “Ghanaian Rite of Marriage” for a consideration by the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference. This rite combines the most important aspects of all the three types of marriage that Catholics are supposed to go through in order to celebrate a marriage that is considered culturally, civilly and sacramentally valid. It is a simple rite which reduces the many processes of marriage. Marriage in this proposed rite is a single event, less time consuming and economical. It satisfies the requirements of all the three marriages by taking into account the provisions of Canon Law, the civil laws, as well as the customs guiding

³⁸⁰ *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 259.

marriage. The most important aspect of this proposed rite is that all the three marriages are celebrated at one place, in a church.

4.2.1. The Rite

With the proposed Ghanaian Rite of Marriage in focus, after the girl and the boy have presented themselves to each other's family and the preliminary family investigations have been conducted, the traditional "knocking rites"³⁸¹ should be performed. I propose that the engagement ring is given during the performance of "the knocking rites," before the bride-to-be's family presents the list of the items they require for the "*tirinsa*" to the groom-to-be's family. It is a laudable idea if the Bishops' Conference adapts the "The Order Of Blessing an Engaged Couple"³⁸² to "the knocking rites." This will ensure that the engaged couple receives spiritual support for the period of the engagement. It will also be a guarantee of the involvement of the Church right from the beginning of the process.

After "the knocking rites," the engaged couples should register with the parish office six months before the date they wish to celebrate the Sacrament. Contacting the parish office six months earlier will help the parish to schedule the marriage, prepare and do the necessary prenuptial inquiries, request for the required dispensations (if applicable) and also arrange with the prenuptial counseling team to prepare a counseling program tailored to the particular needs³⁸³ of the engaged couple. The actual prenuptial counseling should start three months before the wedding date and some family members of the marrying partners (especially their parents, siblings and uncles)

³⁸¹ Refer Chapter One, page 8.

³⁸² *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 218-236.

³⁸³ Examples of some particular needs are young couple, cohabited couple, pregnant bride, couples with children, house wife, one with a terminal illness, with adopted children, one partner customarily married before etc.

should be involved in a session or two of group counseling. During the publication of banns, the rite of election can be celebrated as proposed above. (Page 91)

On the day of the marriage, both the families of the bride and groom should join the procession to the altar. If there are so many family members, only the parents, siblings and the uncles who usually serve as witnesses to the marriage should join the procession. The procession will start with the ministers, followed by the priest (clergy). The other family members will follow the priest, after which the bridesmaid and the best man will come. They will also be followed by the page boys and the flower girls. Next to come in the procession will be the groom who will be flanked by his parents. The last to come in the procession will be the bride who will also be accompanied by her father and mother. This type of procession follows the recommendations of the Rite of Marriage in the Roman Ritual.³⁸⁴ In the church, the family of the bride and the groom will sit on either side of the pews at specially designated places with the bride and the groom sitting in between their parents on special chairs in front of where their respective families are sitting.³⁸⁵

After the introduction to the Mass, (rite of welcome) in which the celebrant briefly acknowledges the presence of the two families and some other invited guests, the traditional celebration of *akwaaba and amanee* (welcome and intention) should be observed. In this simple ritual, the celebrant will ask the families their purpose of coming into the church. The form could be as simple

³⁸⁴ “The rite recommends that the parents of the bride and the groom accompany their daughter and son in the procession.” The canonical witnesses (best man and maid of honor) and other attendants precede the bride and the groom in the procession (Marriage preparation analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/mpanalysis.cfm>, accessed on December 14, 2016).

³⁸⁵ This form of procession and sitting arrangement is practiced in “The Rite of Ordination” at the Kumasi Province. The ordinandi are joined in the procession by their parents and they sit in between their parents on special seats in front of the congregation from the beginning of the Mass till after the Rite of Election and Presentation of the Candidates. (*Ecclesia in Ghana*, 117)

as the one in the baptismal liturgy. “Celebrant: What do you ask of God's Church for the bride(name) and the groom (groom)?”³⁸⁶ The spokesperson for the family of the groom will be the one to give a response to the celebrant. This will satisfy the practice in the Customary Marriage where the spokesman of the family of the groom declares the intentions of the assembly.³⁸⁷ The celebrant will receive the intention with a request for the grace of God and the congregation to support the bride and the groom with prayers.

After the declaration and reception of the intention, the liturgy of the word is celebrated in the same way as prescribed by *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. A homily is given after three readings. After the homily, the priest returns to his presidential chair at the altar and the Customary Marriage is celebrated according to the traditional customs of the marrying parties. I will use the Akan Customary Marriage as an example here. When the priest returns to his chair, the ministers will bring a table covered with a white cloth to the front of the church. The family of the groom will present the items for the “*tirinsa*” on this table so as to satisfy the traditional demand of a public display of the items. The father³⁸⁸ of the bride will, in turn, follow up to request and receive the consent of the bride by asking her three times if the items presented for her “*tirinsa*” should be accepted. For all the three times the bride will also respond with a “Yes.” After the bride has expressed her consent, both the groom and the bride will leave their seats with their parents and stand in front of the altar.³⁸⁹ With this, the spokesperson of the groom’s family will lead the groom’s family in a proclamation to express their appreciation to the bride’s family and the entire

³⁸⁶ Adapted from the reception of the child in the Rite of Baptism for children.

³⁸⁷ Refer to chapter one page 8

³⁸⁸ By receiving the consent of the bride, the father serves as the officiating minister of the Customary Marriage.

³⁸⁹ At this stage the seats of the bride and the groom are changed from in front of their families to a special place reserved for the couple in the church. The changing of the seats will symbolically indicate their transition into married life.

congregation for a successful celebration of the Customary Marriage. Immediately after the words of thanksgiving, the father of the bride will openly inform the congregation that tradition has been satisfied so the priest can proceed with the Sacrament.³⁹⁰ At this stage, the entire congregation will give a big round of applause and the choir can sing a song to usher the congregation into the mood of the Sacrament.

The celebration will continue with “The Questions before the Consent”³⁹¹ as in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. A Litany of the Saints³⁹² and a celebration of love should be observed after “The Questions before the Consent.” With the celebration of love, the celebrant will give a brief introduction about the importance of love in a family and invites the married as well as the entire congregation to join in a renewal of a commitment to love. In this renewal, the “blessed” formula in “The Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage” in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 242 will be a great resource. This formula should be adapted for congregational use. The exchange of consent of the bride and the groom will follow this communal celebration of love.

After the exchange and reception of consent, wedding rings are exchanged and the bride and the groom give each other a hug (not a kiss).³⁹³ During the offertory procession, the newly married

³⁹⁰ An example of the ritual of the father presenting the person seeking the sacrament is also seen in the ordination ritual of the Kumasi Province. One of the fathers of the ordinandi is chosen to present the candidates as gifts to the church with a promise that the families will support them to be good priests, without requesting anything material from them.

³⁹¹ *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 60.

³⁹² Ghanaians love the litany of the Saints. According to *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 108 the veneration of the saints is closer to ancestral worship and it appeals more to Ghanaians.

³⁹³ Most Ghanaian tribes are very reserved about kissing in public. It is considered a borrowed culture which is immoral and promiscuous. Public display of affection is not a part of the Ghanaian culture. After a successful exchange of consent in a Customary Marriage, couples are not allowed to kiss. Most people only hug in public.

can lead the procession with the bread and wine. And their friends and family can join them in the procession with songs of praises and dancing. The Eucharist which is the highest point of the celebration should be solemnly observed as prescribed in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. The nuptial blessing is given and Holy Communion is also received.

When the prayer after communion has been said, the priest (a licensed minister of Ordinance Marriage) will lead the signing of the marriage certificate so as to legalize the marriage under the Ordinance (CAP 127). After the solemn and final blessings have been given, only the bridal entourage (i.e. the bride and groom, bridesmaid and best man, page boys and flower girls) will join the priest and the ministers for the recession. The wedding reception may continue in the Parish Hall or in a selected location which will be chosen by the couple as described in Chapter One.

4.2.2. Overview of the Rite

The Introductory Rites

- Welcoming Rites
- Traditional *akwaaba and amanee* (welcome and intention)
- The Gloria

The liturgy of the Word

- Three Readings and a Responsorial Psalm
- Homily

The Rite of Marriage

- The “*Tirinsa*” Rites.
- The Questions before the Consent

- The litany of Saints and The Communal Celebration of Love
- The Exchange of Consent and Rings

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Offertory Procession led by the couple
- Consecration
- Nuptial Blessing
- Communion

The Ordinance Ceremony

- Signing of the Civil Marriage Certificate

The Concluding Rites

- Solemn Blessing and Dismissal
- Recession

Wedding Reception

Conclusion

Different people practice different forms of marriage in the world. The intrinsic relationship between marriage and culture cannot be underestimated. According to Cardinal Ratzinger “In all human experience that the Church designates as sacramental, there is none rooted in the cultural identity of peoples than marriage.”³⁹⁴ Marriage is very important because “the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family.”³⁹⁵ The 1994 Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa described marriage as “the main post of the hut.”³⁹⁶

The level of change in marriage is a clear indication of the cultural explosion Ghana is experiencing. With the evolution of culture and its resultant changes, marriage practices have also been evolving and changing. The Customary Marriage is still undergoing changes due to influences from religion, education, technology, modernity, western and other cultures. There is an interrogation of many of the rites and rituals. With time certain customary practices like (*Asiwa*) betrothal and ghost marriage have faded away. Yet there are some modern challenges like polygamy and cohabitation which still raise enough concerns. There is the need to deconstruct polygamy, cohabitation and the effects of celebrating two or more marriages.

In this work, I have adapted myself to find a concrete and a workable solution to the fact that Customary Marriage and The Sacrament of Marriage exist as distinct ceremonies in some parts of Africa, especially in Ghana. I proposed a way of bringing the two together to avoid any form of duplication or multiplication of rites. This proposal to integrate Customary Marriage into the

³⁹⁴ Emmanuel Okonkwo, “*Marriage in the Christian and Igbo Traditional Context*”, 107.

³⁹⁵ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 50.

³⁹⁶ *Synodus Episcoporum* (Special Assembly for Africa), 68.

Sacrament of Marriage will go into history as one of the possible solutions to the pastoral challenges faced by the Ghanaian Church in the celebration of marriage. It will help to evolve and shape the Customary Marriage while inculturating the Sacrament of Marriage. The Church has always recognized marriage as a cultural product, therefore this proposal will help to adapt the traditional lives of the people to the Sacramental life of the Church. In a way, it also helps to fulfill the Church's call to treasure what is good and noble within each cultural tradition as described in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37.

I sincerely hope that the result of this study is not only a hypothesis but rather a profitable and a functional calculation, and an answer to a challenge meaningful to the lives of Ghanaians and Africans in general. The consideration and the implementation of the proposals in this work will be a big sigh of relief for many Ghanaians.

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Appendix 1

ENGAGEMENT RITES

1. Dowry Fee
2. Bible and Rings
3. Cloth ½ Pieces (6)
4. Hand Bags (2)
5. Pair of Slippers (2)
6. Nightgown (2)
7. 12 Panties
8. Six head gears and perfumes
9. Six dresses
10. Two pairs of shoes
11. Suitcase (containing all the items)
12. (1) full piece cloth and money (father)
13. Half piece of cloth and money (mother)
14. Brother-in-law (money)
15. Thanks to the family (*nbeguafo*)
16. Drinks for the occasion 4 minerals
17. Set of jewelry and *aggery* beads
18. 1 bottle of schnapps
19. Acceptance of drinks and cash
20. Underwear (3)
21. Brassier (3)