

## HOLY MATRIMONY

33.- The Armenian Church accepts Holy Matrimony as the union between man and woman through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. According to the rules of the Armenian Church, the bride must be at least 16 and the groom 18 years of age. In any case, the legal age of marriage in each state must also be respected.

34.- The Canon of "First Marriage" is to be utilized when it is the first marriage for one of the individuals. For those who have had a civil marriage, the Canon of "First Marriage" is performed if again it is the first marriage of one member of the couple.

35.- Marriage is not permitted between close relatives; they must be no closer than second cousins (grandchild and great grandchild.)

36.- Those who have also had a civil marriage retain the civil certificate as their official certificate of marriage, and are given a certificate from the Prelacy, which becomes their official record of marriage in the church.

37.- Before the performance of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, the priest must request the civil wedding certificate (marriage license) without which the marriage cannot be performed.

38.- Days when weddings are prohibited are Nativity Eve and the day of Theophany (January 5 and 6); the entire Lenten period starting the Sunday of *Poon Parégéntan*, until Easter Sunday.

39.- The bride or groom who is a member of the Protestant church must receive the Armenian Church's sacrament of Confirmation. In the face of extreme difficulties, with the Prelate's consent, the wedding may be performed taking into consideration the fact that one of the individuals is already a member of the Armenian Church.

40.- A person of another faith must be baptized and chrismated before administering the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. If one or the other of the parties does not wish to conform to the canons of the Armenian Church the wedding must not be performed.

41.- The *khachéghpayr* (literally the brother-in-the-cross or bestman) must be a member of the Armenian Church. In exceptional circumstances someone from another denomination may be the *khachéghpayr*, but cannot then become the godfather of the couple's children (See article 23). A non-Christian or someone who belongs to a cult cannot under any circumstances be a *khachéghpayr*.

42.- During the wedding service only the bride and groom, the *khachéghpayr* and the *harsúnkooyr* (literally sister-of-the-bride, i.e. maid/matron of honor) can stand in the chancel.

43.- The matrimonial *narods* (garlands) should be made of red, green and white cords woven together with a cross at the forehead. Suitable crowns may also be used.

44.- It is the obligation of the Pastor to have a meeting with the couple before their wedding to explain the meaning, sanctity and responsibilities of the sacrament vis-à-vis married life. Especially important is cautioning the couple and the attendees to preserve the sacred ambience of the church and the sacrament, and to respect the rules and propriety of the church.

45.- The joining of hands, the administering of the vows and other appropriate portions of the wedding ceremony may be done in English if necessary.

46.- The playing or singing of any non-Armenian Church music during the wedding ceremony is not allowed after the opening Lord's Prayer. On such occasions, the solemn versions of the Armenian Church hymn "*Oorakh Lér*" may be played on the organ for the processional and "*Siyoni Vortik*," for the recessional. Non-Armenian religious music may be played before the ceremony and afterwards, while people are leaving.

47.- During the performance of the sacrament of holy matrimony the use of any other musical instruments aside from the organ is not permitted. If it is unrelentingly insisted upon, their usage may be permitted only before or after the service.

48.- At the end of the service it is absolutely forbidden for the bride and groom to kiss in the church. It is the duty of the parish priest to caution the couple beforehand. It is also forbidden to adorn the couple with gold and congratulate them in church.

49.- A second or third marriage should be performed in the church.

50.- Where there is a church under the jurisdiction of the Prelacy, it is forbidden to perform a marriage in a church of another denomination.

51.- It is not permitted to perform a wedding in any other venue outside of a church.

52.- The couple should be encouraged to have an understanding of the marriage ceremony by providing them with booklets prepared for this purpose by the Prelacy.

53.- At the end of the wedding ceremony it is suggested that the officiating priest explain and exalt the sanctity of marriage and express his fatherly encouragement and congratulations.

54.- The state's judicial decree of annulment or divorce should be accepted without objections.