



Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

“Till Death Do Us Part”
Marriage in the Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden:
A Comparison

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is an institution found in every society, culture or religion in the world. The Catholic Church has maintained most of her seven Sacrament including that of marriage. The Church of Sweden an established Evangelical Lutheran faith born out of the 16th century Reformation has two Sacraments excluding marriage. This field study was carried out in Gavle, Sweden in spring 2009. A comparative study of marriage in the Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden and the reason each church alludes to based on scripture and tradition was to help me an African Catholic understand differences between the respective churches and also understand why the Church of Sweden accepts same sex marriages. This was my motivation for writing this paper. I hope this paper will serve as a study guide to new people who come to Sweden from other cultures to enable them understand why the “Modus Operandi” regarding Church marriage in Sweden is different from the Church marriage in their native countries.

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTORY WORK

1. INTRODUCTION

Before I came to Sweden on the 11th February, 2009 for the exchange program I had not decided on the topic to write on for my minor fields study. It was while brainstorming on what to write on that I came across the information that the CoS had approved same sex marriage. I became curious because of my background as a Catholic from Ghana and decided to verify and find out why the CoS gave such approval knowing that my Church in Ghana cannot even contemplate this. My desire to know the reason behind the approval that led me to do a comparison of the situation between the C.C. and CoS and write on it. A proper study of the reasons as I have understood it led me to get to the root, which is the study of the differences between the Sacrament of Matrimony in the Catholic Church and the Marriage Rite in the Church of Sweden.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Marriage as an institution is found in every society, culture or religion in the world as a whole. Features of marriage in most cultures of the world until recently were understood as between man and woman but that is no longer the case. We now have same sex marriages but that is not what I intend to discuss in this paper. The Catholic Church (C.C.)¹ has maintained its position on marriage between man and woman over the years and continues to maintain it unflinchingly. The Church of Sweden (CoS)² has changed its position a number of times over the years even to the present day. A marriage ceremony in a church back home in Accra Ghana where I come from is always a thing to look forward to with joy. This happens after traditional³ marriage popularly known as Engagement which always precedes the church wedding. In Sweden investigation shows that it is the same, an Engagement precedes the marriage but unlike in Ghana the would be couples need the blessing of their

¹The Catholic Church will here in be referred to as C.C.

² Church of Sweden will here in be referred as CoS

³ Traditional marriage takes place between the two families on behalf of the bride and groom. The father and an uncle of the groom at dawn visit the parents of the bride with a bottle of schnapps to ask of the hand of the bride for their son and it's known as knocking. When the bride's family accept the offer, a date is set for the tradition ceremony. Both families come together on the chosen date and the groom's family present the items asked by the bride's family for the bride. In Anloga a town in which my younger brother took a bride recently these were the items he had to provide 6bottles of hard liquor, 2 crates of beer, 2 crates of soft drinks, 1 suitcase, 6 half pieces of cloth, 6 headgears, a ring, a wrist watch, set of jewellery, a bible, hymn book, full piece cloth +cash for father-in-law, half piece cloth and cash for mother-in-law and cash for brother(s) in-laws. When all items have been handed over the bride is asked if they should be accepted on her behalf if she says yes then it's done and she becomes the wife of the groom and does not have to go through the white church wedding to be recognised as a wife.

parents and families, in Sweden couples do not need parents and families permission to get engaged. In a wedding, there is a bride and a groom, best man and maid of honour present, vows are exchanged before a priest, and rings are exchanged, followed by the signing of marriage register by couples, priest and witnesses to give legal backing to the marriage. Then comes the taking of pictures, cutting of wedding cake and popping of champagne. Either way the wedding could be held at home, in church, on a boat etc provided there is a priest or representative of the state present. However that is not where the differences lie.

Beneath these seeming similarities lies a difference that may not be noticeable by a lay person witnessing such ceremony. Suppose a person who is not a member of either congregation should witness a marriage ceremony in either church will the differences be noticed and how can they be identified? This study seeks to find answers to the questions asked.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There are real differences that have on some occasion created conflicts between the two Churches in instances where two people each belonging to either Church decide to tie the knot. To look at the differences between the C.C. and the CoS. The Catholic Church sees marriage as a sacrament and the Church of Sweden regards marriage as part of civil society and not a sacrament. Thus what is the reasoning behind these differences?

1.3 AIM OF RESEARCH

To find out what makes the difference between the Catholic Church (C.C.) and the Church of Sweden (CoS) on marriage and determine if there is a way in which the issues could be resolved.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is deemed as marriage in the C.C. and the CoS?
2. Why the C.C. position has not changed as compared to that of the CoS?
3. What is the basis of the CoS change of stance?
4. What is their stance on the sexual orientation of their congregation?

1.5 METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Disciplinary Approaches

This research was conducted over a period of four months in Sweden. I used the three disciplinary approaches of historical, phenomenological and comparative approaches to the study of religions in this field research.

In the historical approach the research was done to establish the former and current relations between the C.C. and CoS and find out their doctrines on marriage and the reason for change in some cases and also for sticking to the old. As a catholic undertaking a comparative study of marriage in the C.C. and the CoS, I must necessarily bracket off all previous knowledge of C.C. in order to allow for an objective comparison of issues, hence the phenomenological approach and the results will prove that. The comparative study approach was also adopted in identifying the difference between the respective Churches as far as the issue of marriage was concerned.

1.5.2 Data Collection

My data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. With the primary sources documentary sources on the respective churches were used extensively although getting English books on the CoS was a difficulty. Thus I relied heavily on interviews when it came to sourcing information on the CoS. Interviews were conducted from both churches. In all, a priest from the C.C. and a priest from the CoS as well as a staff at Church House (Svenska Kyrkan) in Uppsala were interviewed. Two lay Catholics were also interviewed in Stockholm and Gavle. A lay member of CoS was also interviewed. I could not interview a lot of people because of the language barrier. Journals, articles, published literature and academic writings on marriage on both denominations were relied on heavily. I made use of the internet extensively in my work because I could not get English copies of the materials I needed.

Section Two: Relationship between the Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden

2.1 Former Relations

Christianity was accepted by the Swedes in the 11th century and Sweden became a Catholic nation with its archdiocese in Uppsala north of Stockholm. In the middle ages the C.C. had about 2000 parish spread across the country. The founder of the Order of our Most Holy

Saviour St. Bridget (1303-1373) was canonised during this period. There was no rift between the then Catholic church and the state.⁴ However the Lutheran reformation that hit the C.C. in the 16th century led to the Monarchy in Sweden deciding to curb the power of the pope, seizes the opportunity presented them to break away from the C.C. This led to the birth of a state managed Church named 'Church of Sweden'. The Lutheran reformation became established in Sweden in the 1520s during the reign of Gustav Vasa. Some property of the Catholic Church was confiscated by the Crown and monasteries were outlawed. It was laid down in 1593 that the Lutheran faith should be the religion of the country and that all Swedes had to embrace it. The Lutheran Church became the State Church; its official name to this day is "the Church of Sweden". Catholics were exiled and for a century you could be punished with death for being Catholic.⁵ These were very turbulent time as the relationship between Sweden and the C.C. soared.

2.2 Current Relations

When Sweden finally allowed the right of freedom of religion by the passage of the law in 1952,⁶ it still took some time before the C.C., just like other faith apart from the CoS was granted absolute freedom to worship and recognised as a Church and not a foundation. The C.C. still had to acquire governmental permission to establish monasteries in the country. Currently the Catholic Church has about 42 parishes and 100,000 registered members spread across Sweden.⁷ The door to Ecumenical relation then became open between the Catholic Church and CoS in 1970 and participants having published convergence documents on Episcopal ministry, marriage and baptism.⁸ This then facilitated a visit to the country by the head of the C.C. Pope John Paul II in 1989 who was touched by the improvement in relations between the C.C. and the CoS. The Swedish Catholic Church has its own Swedish -born bishop in the person of Anders Arborelius ocd.⁹ There is therefore now a constant dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden.

⁴ Katolska kyrkan: Sverige history of the Catholic Church in Sweden
<http://www.katolskakyrka.se/turnpke.aspx?=707>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Church of Sweden in Ecumenical Dialogues <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/svk/eng/ecumen.htm>

⁹ katolska kyrkan: Sverige history of the Catholic Church in Sweden

Section Three: Marriage in the Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden

3.1 Marriage in the Catholic Church

3.1.1 History behind Marriage in the C.C.

The Catholic Church bases its teaching on the Divine Revelation, this according to the church means that God revealed himself in the fullest way in Jesus of Nazareth as the Saviour. This revelation according to the Church comes to the world through Scriptures and Tradition. For this reason everything the C.C. teaches is based on the teachings of Jesus as generated through the Scriptures and Tradition. By Scriptures the church means the Bible and by Tradition it means the life and teachings of the Christ and the Apostles as was handed down the centuries to the present day. During the Protestant Reformation there was a disagreement on this where Martin Luther and other Reformers taught that Divine Revelation came by Scripture alone (Sola Scripture), the Catholic maintained that it was through the Word of God alone (Sola Dei Verbum) and by “Word” the C.C. means Christ. And as I have said above the teaching came through the Scripture and Tradition. This important difference has many results including the teaching on marriage as we shall see later. Since the C.C. follows both the Scripture and Traditions as interpreted by the Magisterium¹⁰, it follows that all its teaching are derived from Scripture and Tradition as accepted by the Magisterium.

3.1.2 Catholic Church (C.C.) Teachings on Marriage

“Matrimonium” the Latin word for marriage meaning “munus matris” that is the office of the mother. Vatican Council II defines marriage as

“The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the creator and qualified by his laws”.

So in the C.C. marriage is a covenant of love that when Jacob had to work seven (7) years to win Rachel it seemed like a few days to him.

“Marriage is an enduring and exclusive covenant of love between a man and a woman”. (Thomas Pazhayampallil,1995,665)

¹⁰ Magisterium: teaching authority of Catholic Church

According to the C.C., God himself is the author of marriage so the vocation of marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. As stated in Genesis 1:28, God blessed the man and the woman and said to them: *'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it'*. Holy Scriptures then affirm that man and woman were created for one another *"it is not good that the man should be alone"*. Gen. 2:18. The woman, *'flesh of his flesh,'* that is his counterpart his equal his nearest in all things is given to him by God as his *'helpmate'*. The woman represents God from who comes our help.

Mathew 19:4-6 summarises Gods vision for Marriage:

"Haven't you read the scripture that says in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and is unite with his wife and they become one' So they are no longer two but one. No human being must separate, then, what God has joined together."

The above narrations are the bases of the C.C. teachings on marriage and the reasons why from time in memorial they regard marriage as a Sacrament. "Sacrament" means a sacred sign or symbol that effects and causes grace. According to Thomas Pazhayampallil:

*"The Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world because she celebrates the seven sacraments. It is in the celebration of the sacraments that the church is born, grows and draws on the strength necessary to unite her members in the same fidelity to her saviour and to exercise the mission of evangelization which is entrusted to her."*¹¹

The C.C. says the sacraments are the principal means by which one can lead a good Christian life and attain eternal salvation. There are therefore Seven Sacraments in the C.C. namely Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. In the Latin Rite, the celebration of Marriage between two Catholic faithful normally takes place during Holy Mass because of the connection of all the sacraments with the Paschal Mystery of Christ. To them the Eucharist, the memorial of the new covenant is realised, that is the New Covenant in which Christ has united himself forever to the Church his beloved bride for whom he gave himself up.¹² All these leading to the fact that marriage is a sign of covenant love. Thus marriage in the C.C. is like the cycle of covenant love. In this

¹¹ Pazhayampallil, 1995, p.3

¹² Catechism of the catholic church p.363

regard the C.C. situates marriage as a part of humanity and found in the story of creation. The C.C. believes Christ raised marriage to Sacrament status, that is to say, God created humankind to be his friend and Christ came to make us the children of God thus the new creation. Since the sacraments are in the order of creation, God made them Male and Female and geared them towards love and procreation thus the C.C. cannot approve of homosexuality because it does not bring about procreation through the natural order so marriage should be between 'Man' and 'Woman' only.

In the C.C. every sacrament has matter and form, for instance in Baptism the matter is the water and the form is the words, likewise in Holy Matrimony (marriage) the words are the form and the Act of Consummation the matter.

3.1.3 Conditions for Consummation of Marriage in the C.C.

Before a marriage is celebrated there are certain conditions that need to be fulfilled and they are,

- The marriage should be between a mature man and woman, 18years and above
- Man and woman who are free to marry, that is to say they are not related through consanguinity.
- The couple are both of sound mind
- Have made the choice to marry freely without coercion or grave external fear
- Have not contracted any other marriage
- Have gone through the marriage course or counselling sessions of the church.
- The couple both accept the teachings of the Church on marriage as being
 - i. A lifelong covenant without possibility of divorce,
 - ii. Agree to accept children that come out of the union and raise them in the ways of the Church.
 - iii. Agree to use natural family planning without use of contraception and absolutely no abortion.

Since marriage establishes the couple in a public state of life in the church, it is fitting that its celebration be public, in the frame work of a liturgical celebration, before a priest (or a

witness authorised by the Church), the witnesses and the assembly of the faithful.¹³ Although marriage in C.C. is celebrated usually during mass it can also be celebrated without mass.

3.1.4 THE RITES OF MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH¹⁴

Entrance Rite

Liturgy of the Word

Rite of Marriage:

Introduction

Questions

Consent

Blessing of Rings

Exchange of Rings

General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Nuptial Blessing

Sign of Peace

Communion

Solemn Blessing

3.2 MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH OF SWEDEN (CoS)

3.2.1 History behind Marriage in the CoS

As I alluded to earlier, Sweden used to be a Catholic nation until the Reformation spearheaded by Gustav Vasa. Thus before the Reformation Sweden observed all Catholic Sacraments including that of marriage. I must hasten to add, however that, the Reformation began by king Gustav Vasa was not due to any disagreement on doctrinal issues. The shift from the Catholic teachings to a different to the Lutheran teaching was not immediate but rather gradual. As Nathan Soderblom (1866-1931) the great Swedish Archbishop and Ecumenist in a statement on his reforms in the CoS in the light of creating a new identity observed:

¹³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, p.372.

¹⁴ The rites of the C.C. vol.1,1990, p.725-733

*“The reformation did not mean a transfer from one church to another. We have not had two churches in Sweden, one Roman Catholic and one Evangelical. We belong to the same universal church, which under the guidance of the Holy Spirit according to different ways of living at different times has been, and still is in need of renewal, reformation and spiritual awakening”.*¹⁵

The Mass was still celebrated as it was before the Reformation. The teaching on the seven sacraments including marriage was still intact even after the Reformation. It was Olavus Petri (1493-1552) with the support of Gustav Vasa wanting the CoS to sever all tie with the Pope imbibed the Lutheran teaching.¹⁶ This change meant that the doctrine and theology of the Sacrament including the Sacrament of Matrimony in the church ceased to be as in the C.C. and began to be in the now state controlled Church. In effect the teachings of Luther on Marriage became the teaching of the CoS. What was Luther’s teaching on marriage then?

3.2.2 Luther’s Teaching on Marriage

Luther’s teachings were based on ‘Sola Scriptura’. Luther defined marriage as:

*“Marriage is the God-appointed and legitimate union of man and woman in the hope of having children or at least for the purpose of avoiding fornication and sin and living to the glory of God”.*¹⁷

Luther also taught that marriage was not a Sacrament but rather a civil affair that is to say it was a societal issue and not for the Church to interfere with. That marriage was designed by God for all humans and not Christians alone and Christianity was not a prerequisite for a legitimate marriage.¹⁸ He went further to teach that sex is good, important and should be celebrated within Marriage.

It is not a matter of free choice or decision but a natural and necessary thing, that whatever is a woman must have a man ... It is just as necessary as the fact that I am a man, and more necessary than sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, and emptying the bowels and bladder ... And wherever men try to resist this, it remains irresistible

¹⁵ Church of Sweden, identity of the church <http://www.sverskakyrkan.se/svk/eng/identity.html>

¹⁶ Frank C. Senn. Luther and marriage p.399-402

¹⁷ Luther’s Reform of Marriage, part 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

*nonetheless and goes its way through fornication, adultery, and secret sins, for this is a matter of nature and not of choice.*¹⁹

Thus for Luther, humans were designed to be sexual beings and sexual satisfaction should be sort in a covenantal marital relationship between one man and one woman.²⁰

The medieval Church of Sweden (CoS) treated marriage and the family as a natural, contractual and sacramental unit but that is not the case anymore. According to John Witte Jr.

*“Marriage, Luther and his colleagues taught, was a social estate of the earthly kingdom of creation not a sacred estate of heavenly kingdom of redemption”.*²¹

Marriage as an institution has a relatively strong position in Sweden. Most Swedish marriages take place in the Church of Sweden and the number of divorces has increased in recent decades, however the CoS allows people to enter into marriage without any particular condition.²² According to the material on liturgy and worship in the CoS:

“Marriage in the Church of Sweden involves vows of lifelong partnership, in sorrow as well as in joy. It is not regarded as a sacrament but as a vow made by the bride and groom in the presence of God and have the churches intercession and blessing”.

It must take place before witnesses and after the state has certified that they are legally free to marry. There are two (2) sacraments in the CoS and they are Baptism and Eucharist and marriage is definitely not a sacrament. As a Lutheran church marriage is part of a civil ceremony and not a sacrament. However the church accepts there are some sacramental values in marriage where they regard the Augustinian values of marriage as

- I. Children
- II. Mutual love and faithfulness
- III. And the sacramentality of marriage, but this does not mean it is impossible to dissolve a marriage that is just not working. There is no cardinal form to marriage in the CoS. According to the CoS

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ John Witte, Sacrament to Contract

²² Svenska kyrkan-Liturgy and worship-Marriage <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?di=37022>

*“Marriage ceremony in Sweden remains a communal celebration for family and friends though a tendency toward privatization is perceptible”.*²³

In the 1920 the CoS started accepting divorce because to them it was a matter for society since marriage is a societal thing and not a church issue so it was more of a state issue than a religious one. But not all the clergy agree to this assertion. Thus in the CoS marriage is for life but if circumstances make it expedient for divorce then it should be so and there is room for remarriage for both parties again. There are a large number of members of the CoS living together and not married and the Church accepts that and allows children from such couples to be baptised. Such partners are also permitted to partake in Holy Communion without being seen as living in sin. In December 2006 CoS announced the promulgated rite of blessing for civil partnership unions. Thus in Sweden same gender couples can legally unite by the state in a civil union that has the same legal effects as a marriage ceremony without being called a marriage. Archbishop Anders Wejeryd once said and I quote:

“the Church of Sweden of course will continue to give its blessing to same sex couples in partnership as we have done for some time, same sex couples in committed, faithful relationship are entitled to God s blessing” He also went further to say *“We support the view that matrimony is between a man and a woman. This is commonly accepted definition acceptable to most societies and religions”.*²⁴

So now there is blessing of partnership in CoS for couples in same sex unions.

3.2.3 Conditions for Consummation of Marriage in Church of Sweden

These are the conditions of marriage in the CoS

- Partners should both be either 18 years of age or above.
- Should be of sound mind
- Should not already be in any marriage of any form.
- Are not being forced or coerced into the marriage
- Either one of the couple should be a member of the CoS.
- Couples should go through the counselling or marriage school before the ceremony is conducted.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ www.icna.org/icna-new/ 2006-12-19

3.2.4 The Marriage Service in the Church of Sweden²⁵

Organ Music

Hymn

Act of Praise

Introduction

Bible Reading

The Questions

The Blessing of the Ring(s)

The Vows and the Giving of Ring(s)

The Declaration

Hymn

The Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

The Blessing

Hymn

Organ Voluntary

This draws to a close this section where we talked about the relations between the C.C. and the CoS and how they both see and conduct marriage. In the next section an analytical comparism is going to be done on their marriage rite.

Section Four: COMPARISM OF THE MARRIAGE RITES OF C.C. AND CoS

4.1 The Catholic Stands

In an interview conducted with a Catholic priest he said the C.C. faith is expressed in liturgy and guides the way of life in the ancient liturgical dictum of *Lex Credendi, Lex Orandi, Lex Vivendi* (Latin). That is to say in the C.C. what is taught about faith is expressed in the liturgy of marriage. So to him the above statement should be used in understanding the sacrament of matrimony in the C.C. He also said the Eucharist is at the centre of C.C. liturgy: "*the Eucharist is the fons et culmen that is the source and summit of the life of the C.C.*" The Eucharist is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery that is the death and resurrection of Christ. The sacrament of matrimony is linked to the Paschal Mystery meaning just as Christ gave his life for the Church then, the husband as head of the family should be willing to do the same.

²⁵ Kyrkohandboken, Den Svenska, pages 31-37

Some Catholics are told to believe that just as Christ births his church from his side so did woman come from the side of man. In the sacrament of matrimony, there is comparism between the Paschal Mystery and the Church of Christ.

4.2 The Church of Sweden Stands

A priest from the CoS who I interviewed also said they see marriage as a civil concept so if a member should marry in City hall or Church it still regarded as a marriage and that member(s) are entitled to partake in all church activities and even receive Holy Communion. They accept that marriage is between two individuals and the church can only support them with their blessing if they wish it. They however believe it has some sacramental values but it's not that of a big issue for the church since marriage is a civil concept and the state really makes most of the laws. In its document on Church Order for the 1999 General Synod, the Central Board of the CoS wrote, in light of the decision on the Order of Worship which was to be taken at the time:

The faith, creed and doctrine of the Church of Sweden find their expression in the Church's service and life. The Church's service and life are to express the faith, creed and doctrine of the church. This is vitally important, both when the General Synod makes decisions on service books and the Order of Worship, as well as for the understanding of these documents. The decision must be an expression of conscious theological reflections. When we listen to the service, read the service books and the Order of Worship, we are given a picture of the Churches' faith, creed and doctrine.²⁶

4.3 COMPARISM OF KEY STAGES IN THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

4.3.1 Opening Prayer

In the entrance rite of the C.C. the preface prayer is as follows

Father, when you created mankind you willed that man and wife should be one. Bind N. and N. in the loving union of marriage and make their love fruitful so that they may be living witnesses to your divine love in the world.²⁷

²⁶ CoS Material concerning Cohabitation and Life together: Considerations by the Central Board of the CoS on same sex relationships. Pg.15

²⁷ Marriage rites (England and Wales) 786.

In the introductory prayer in CoS it is as follow

We have come together in the presence of God to witness the marriage of NN and NN, to ask his blessing on them and to share in their joy. Marriage is a gift of God instituted for the preservation of the community, for the help and happiness of mankind, through mutual support and loyalty in times of joy and sadness. Those who live as husband and wife are to live in trust and love, to care for one another and their home, (to receive the gift of children and bring them up), and to stand faithfully at one another's side.²⁸

When the two prayers are compared it all talking about inviting God to witness a ceremony that he instituted from of creation. Thus both prayers carry the same message.

4.3.2 Bible Readings

In the C.C. the liturgy of the word is celebrated according to the rubric, 3 readings 1st from the Old Testament, a responsorial psalm, a second reading then a gospel reading. The homily is then drawn from the 3 text reading²⁹

In the Cos there are a number of bible readings the 1st is “Jesus said: ‘ in the beginning the Creator made them male and female’ and he added, ‘ that is why a man leaves his father and mother, and is united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. It follows that they are no longer two individuals: they are one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, man must not separate.” (Matt 19.4-6 REB)³⁰

4.3.3 Questions for Couples

C.C. normally ask couple two basic questions

- 1. N. and N., have you come freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?*
- 2. Will you love and honour each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?³¹*

²⁸ Kyrkohandboken, Den Svenska, 31.

²⁹ Rites of the C.C. vol.1, 725.

³⁰ Kyrkohandboken, Den Svenska, 32.

³¹ Rites of the C.C. vol.1, 726.

CoS however ask two questions in one breath

*1. I ask you, NN: will you take NN to be your wife (husband) to love her in times of need and plenty?*³²

4.3.4 Consent

C.C. couples responses are

*I, N., take you, N., for my lawful wife (husband), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.*³³

CoS couples also respond as follow

*I, NN, take you, NN, to be my Wife (husband) to share with you both sorrow and joy, and be faithful to you, until death part us.*³⁴

4.3.5 Nuptial Blessing

C.C. Prays

*Father, by your power you have made everything out of nothing. In the beginning you created the universe and made mankind in your own likeness. You gave man and woman the constant help of woman so that man and woman should no longer be two, but one flesh, and you teach us that what you have united may never be divided.*³⁵

CoS prays

Holy Lord, heavenly Father, eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth, you created all things and formed us as men and women. You gave us grace to care for your creation by the decree of your love. You have united man and woman and given them your blessing. Look in mercy upon those who stand before you and seek your blessing now. Help them to live in your love and peace, in faithfulness together, in fellowship, respecting one another. Keep them in your grace and strength (let their children be to

³² Kyrkohandboken, Den Svenska, 33.

³³ Rites of the C.C. vol. 1,727-728.

³⁴ Kyrkohandboken, Den Svenska, 34.

³⁵ Rites of the C.C. vol. 1,730.

*them a joy and help) and give them after their life on earth your blessing for ever, through your Son, Jesus-Christ, our Lord.*³⁶

From the above comparison it can be seen that there are slight differences in the wordings of the text from both the C.C. and the CoS. they basically draw their text from the bible. According to the C.C. the bible is just one book and that is Christ. The CoS also says the bible text translation is sometimes extremely unclear how a word, a sentence or a paragraph is to be translated.³⁷

Section Five: Discussion of key differences

5.1 Table 1.1: A Summary Table of Differences

CATHOLIC CHURCH(C.C.)	CHURCH OF SWEDEN (CoS)
Sees Marriage as a Sacrament	Sees Marriage as a Civil Union
Do not accept Divorce	Accept Divorce
Do not accept Abortion in any form	Accept Abortion
Do not accept Contraceptives only Natural Family Planning (NFP).	Accept all forms of Contraceptive.
Do not accept homosexuality.	Accept homosexuality and even blesses Registered Partnership of same sex unions

5.1.1 Divorce

The C.C. takes the consent “*until death do us part*” very seriously hence they do not accept divorce that is to say indissolubility of marriage, however a marriage can be annulled if there is enough evidence to prove that the marriage was entered into based on a falsehood, that is to say there was no marriage at all, but divorce says there was a marriage and its now broken. A Catholic I interviewed said that this makes being a Catholic very difficult because her

³⁶ Kyrkohandboken, Den Svenska, 36-37.

³⁷ Material concerning Cohabitation and life together: Consideration by the Central Board of the CoS on same sex relationships

marriage broke down after a year and a half, although she sees marriage as a sacrament, her husband a non catholic has divorced her but she is still married to him according to the laws of the church so she cannot remarry and she tried getting an annulment and gave up after ten years of petitions. According to her the most painful part is she cannot partake in Holy Communion so although she is Catholic she does not attend mass anymore because she thinks the Church Authorities love the Laws more than they care about the welfare of their members she also said and I quote “*The Catholic Church is very conservative about women issues and expects more sacrifice from the woman than the man and that is very frustrating.*”

Is infidelity and in reconcilable differences enough ground for the permission of divorce after taking vow before God and man? An interviewee of the CoS responded that it’s an intention which is very important but since one cannot say what will happen in the marriage, ‘*until death part us*’ is not a legal promise so when in crises a couple can chose to make a decision to stay in or quit. Perhaps the CoS in its wisdom saw that was too much suffering for partner in marriages that were not just working and realise if they give them the chance to separate it will be better. The CoS takes the human rights of their members seriously because a married person in an abusive relationship in which his or her life is threatened every day should not have to endure pain till death can save him or her. The CoS permit remarriage and one does not feel isolated from the church since you can still partake in all the activities of the church including receiving Holy Eucharist if you so wish. A young married Swedish student I interviewed thinks the marriage vows should be changed because people grow apart after being married for long and the vows should not be what is keeping them together when they want to go their separate ways. He however thinks divorce should not be taken lightly and all available options should be exhausted before opting for divorce.

5.1.2 Abortion

In the C.C. abortion in any form is not accepted under any circumstances what so ever, so they take the commandment thou shall not kill very seriously. So if even the mother’s life is in danger they believe nature should take its course so abortion is absolutely wrong so that if there is a rape case and a pregnancy result, the baby should be born and given up for adoption since that child will bring joy to a family desperately looking for a child. In the CoS there is a portion in the nuptial blessing that bless children so I wonder why they accept abortion. In an interview with a priest from the CoS he said they accept abortion, however abortion just to terminate pregnancy because the contraceptive did not work is wrong, but if it’s in cases of

serious trauma or a death will occur if it's not done then that's permissible. He then cited an example of case in Brazil where a Catholic Archbishop had excommunicated a doctor and mother of a 9year old girl who was raped by her stepfather from the church because an abortion was performed on the girl. To him in his personal opinion the Archbishop was wrong what about the stepfather who committed the heinous act he still remains an active church member whilst those showing mercy to the girl rather get punished. The Catholic priest I spoke to about this also said the pregnancy should have been kept and the baby given up for adoption immediately it was born, then an innocent soul would not have been killed. A Staff and a member of the CoS who I spoke to also said it was tragic that there were so many abortion going on but that they still believe it is the woman who should still make the decision on what she wants to do, however the church was working on some policy to see if they could conscientise members to think carefully before going for an abortion since it was not the only option available to them.

5.1.3 Contraceptives

The C.C. does not accept the use of contraceptive before or after marriage. To them sex is for married people only and these people are ready to accept whatever comes from being sexually intimate. That is why they still preach chastity before marriage and since time in memorial insist on abstinence from premarital sex. They teach members to use natural family planning since there is more to marriage life than just sex. According to Thomas W. Hilgers in a brochure wrote *“yes natural family planning requires communication but that is what helps a marriage last. In a survey of couples who had used artificial contraception and natural family planning, they all said that by using natural family planning, they talked more and it improved their marriage life”*.³⁸ So the C.C. says the use of contraceptives has done more harm than good. The CoS however accepts all forms of contraceptive. In Sweden contraceptive are distributed free to those underage and over 15 years of age, they are available to purchase freely by any one.

5.1.4 Homosexuality

The issue of homosexuality in the C.C. is still a thorny one; they do not accept it in any form. To them it is against the bibles principles since God made them male and female and geared them towards love and procreation and since they cannot procreate, the C.C. cannot approve

³⁸ Thomas W. Hilgers *A Fertility Care Education Brochure* Pope Paul VI Institute Press Omaha, Nebraska. 1998

of such a relationship let alone consider a marriage between members of the same sex. The C.C. sees homosexuality as:

*‘Unnatural and disordered to them homosexual persons deserve respect as all God’s children. The tendency itself is not sin, homosexual persons are called like all God’s children to a life of chastity and the practice of it is disordered and unnatural. They need the grace of God and pastoral care for healing. Thus to the C.C. homosexuals are not to engage in sexual acts but rather live a life of chastity’.*³⁹

A Catholic lay faithful I spoke to said marriage is a sacrament for man and woman so should not be given to same sex couples, but will not be against some form of blessing for such couples in the C.C. he said and I quote *“the Church should be for all and should accept all, if you cannot find acceptance in Church where else will you find acceptance.”* In the first reading quoted from the rites of marriage in the CoS *‘in the beginning the Creator made them male and female’* and he added *‘that is why a man leaves his father and mother, and is united with his wife the two shall become one flesh’* why then does the Church accept homosexuality? Could it be because of the past relationship with the state that the laws of the state guide life in the Church so their theology then becomes built around the state laws? A priest said that the church has no problem with accepting homosexuals. Thus they have priest and bishops who are openly homosexual. They however have a blessing for registered partnerships which is not called a marriage ceremony but a blessing. It is not all members of the church who accept this view so if a same sex couple want to get a bless and the priest in their parish does not want to perform the ceremony, he informs another colleague to do it on his behalf.

5.2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The aim of the research was to find out the differences in the C.C. and the CoS on marriage and possible areas of compromise. While conducting the field’s studies, the interviews I held and the materials consulted on the topic I came across some differences between both Churches. A critical look at the marriage service of both Churches show that they both go through basically the same ritual but with different wordings:

³⁹ Catechism of the C.C. nos.2357,2358,2359

- i. Opening prayer
- ii. Bible Reading
- iii. Questions
- iv. Consent
- v. Nuptial Blessing.

In this regards they are no different. My dilemma however is: Is the CoS going to use this same ritual for same sex couples? Since the concept is new perhaps there will be some changes in the ritual in the years to come. Marriage as a Sacrament and marriage as a civil union are all marriages, however in my opinion as a sacrament make it more difficult for people to take it for granted knowing that getting out of it is close to impossible and make then want to work hard at ensuring that the marriage survive, but as a civil union it can be broke any time and some people might even be regarded as serial marriage contractors. In Ghana Christian marriages are seen as a sacrament and the stigma attached to divorce prevents a lot of people from opting for it. An interesting observation made was that in the C.C. divorce is not granted but rather annulment based on evidence that the marriage was contracted on false pretence. Are we to believe that all marriages annulled were on false pretence or there were evidence to show that the marriage was not consummated? Am forced to believe that most Catholics wanting to get their marriages annulled will lie just to get their way out of an unpleasant situation to enable them get remarried and partake fully in all activities of the Church. Information shows that some Catholic marriages have been annulled in the USA but that of Sweden I cannot tell. The CoS accept divorce and permits remarriage and divorced members still partake fully in the Church and do not feel alienated from the congregation. However there are some priest in the CoS who do not accept divorce and remarriage so will not conduct marriage ceremonies for second time couples.

How come Catholic families do not have large number of children compared to their Lutheran colleagues? Does this mean the abstinence and natural family planning practiced by Catholics works fully? My assumption is that the C.C. presumes their members are abiding by the law or aware that their member are using contraceptive and still maintaining their law. Abstain from sex when one is not ready to deal with the consequences that come with in my opinion is healthy. But in this generation where people have high sex drive is it still reasonable to tell people to not use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy? The world economy has taken a nose dive and people are losing their jobs in the thousands if all Catholics stick to

this law religiously and the natural family planning does not work who takes care of all the unplanned babies that will be made. In Ghana am aware of a few Catholics who know they are not to use contraceptives but still use it. The CoS accepts all forms of contraceptives which makes it easier for the members to be true to themselves and the Church. There are some CoS priest who do not accept the use of Contraceptive pills because they act as a form of Abortion. However the use of contraceptives has no stopped unplanned pregnancies from happening because it is not full proof and neither has it stopped the spread of communicable diseases like HIV-Aids so perhaps the C.C. is not too archaic in its thinking at all.

Abortion is not acceptable in any instance by the C.C. and this is still a hard stand for a lot of people even Catholics. The lay Catholics I spoke to with except of the priest were of the view that abortion in principle is wrong but if the life of the woman is in danger due to the pregnancy then it is better to lose one than both. In my opinion I think when it is medically dangerous to carry the pregnancy to term, then there is nothing wrong with aborting the foetus. But abortion just to get rid of a pregnancy after sex is very wrong. In the CoS abortion is permitted and accepted but an official I spoke to was of the view that because it is legalised and accepted by the church it is being misused and if the law could be tighten a bit to make the women look at other option before going for it then that will be good. Also because of the opportunity to have it done easily people do not take enough care to prevent pregnancy because they know they will get easy access the pills. He said he did not think this healthy for frequent users of the pill or the procedure. In Ghana abortion is an abomination in the traditional setting, neither is it accepted in Christian circles. Pregnancy out of wedlock is seriously frowned upon not to think of adding the crime of abortion to it. It is however done in secret. Abortion is not legalised in Ghana hence a lot of people use very crude means to get rid of unwanted pregnancies. This makes it easy for quake doctors to operate on the quiet and cause a lot of damage to their victims. In cases of complication in Ghana the law permit abortion. However abortion is done by some Christians although they know their faith does not permit it.

In the research conducted, the acceptance of homosexuality as a way of life for the C.C. is still a hard issue because they see it as an unnatural and disordered behaviour abhorred by God since time immemorial. Data gathered also show that homosexuals see themselves as being created that way and they were not given a choice to be what they are. The C.C. wants all homosexuals who are Catholics to be celibate and that must be hard because celibacy is a

choice, so for it to be imposed on you will be hard to deal with. In my opinion the Catholic Church should revisit the issue of homosexuality again because their numbers seem to be increasing and their stance on the issue will either drive those who have that preference away from the church or do it under disguise. The CoS however has gone ahead to accept homosexuals and even now agree to the blessing of partnership between such couples however not all priest agree to bless such unions. This I find very interesting because the CoS teachings are from Luther and he taught Sola Scriptura where in scriptures does it say homosexuality is acceptable and such people should be allowed to get married. After all Luther said sexual satisfaction should be sort in a covenantal marital relationship between one man and one woman. In Ghana homosexuality is a taboo and an abomination. If even it is being practised it will be done in secret and when talked about in Christian circle condemnation is what it will get. I do not see an acceptance of it even in the circular community.

Section Six: CONCLUSIONS

In this study the following conclusions were arrived at:

- Marriage in the C.C. is a sacrament that is between a man and a woman as instituted by God stated in the creation story and reaffirmed in Mathew's gospel 19:4-6.
- Marriage in the Church of Sweden is a civil union that is to say vows made by bride and groom in the presence of God and have the churches intercession and blessing. There is an addition of blessing of partnership, a form of marriage for same sex couples by the Church; however plans are far advance to make blessing of partnership equal to marriage.
- The C.C. bases all its teachings on Divine Revelation and it is expressed through Scripture and Tradition and since Divine Revelation has not changed thus for the C.C. marriage will always be between a man and a woman. The Church of Sweden base it teaching on Luther, and he also taught Sola Scriptura
- The Church of Sweden base it teaching on Luther, and he also taught Sola Scriptura.
- Because the Church of Sweden was a state Church any laws the state made affected them automatically so they could not help but change as the years went by.

- The C.C. emphasises abstinence and sex should be between married man and woman however those with homosexual tendencies should remain celibate and seek the grace of God and pastoral counselling.
- The CoS accept that their members have different sexual preferences and embraces all without making any one feel dirty for being different.

In conclusion it can be said that the Catholics Church is faithful to the core of its teachings on marriage. There may be variations in minor aspects of the celebration from one cultural context to another. But in the CoS, it follows that the change in policy by the government of the country automatically affects the teachings of the Church in social ethical issues. An objection may be raised that it is not right to use the same parameters to judge the practice in the Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden simply because they are two different Churches. However one must not forget that the two churches are engaged in ecumenical dialogue and if the dialogue is to bear fruit, an institution such as marriage cannot be overlooked. That is why the marriage question raised above is not only valid but necessary. The nature of the church of Sweden since reformation is that it was a national church up to year 2000. This means that the government decides what is done in the church. Even after separation of Church and state in 2000, the CoS still bears the mark of the long relationship. This means that what the Magisterium is for the Catholic Church is what the Parliament has been for the Church of Sweden.

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