



*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate*
DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
Carole A. Buleza, Director

**2008 Creative Festivals Lesson Plan:
Grades 6-12**

THEME:

At the beginning He made them male and female. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh."

Matthew 19:5

GOALS:

To help students understand the theme well enough to express it in art, poetry, creative writing, or photography.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will discuss the meaning of the scripture quotation, "The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" and how this quotation might impact their lives.
2. Students will learn about the various parts of the marriage service and understand the symbolism of the different objects used in the service.
3. Students will compare and contrast the Orthodox Church's expectations for marriage with those expectations prevalent in American society today.
4. Students will compare and contrast the conditions and virtues found in the Archdiocesan prayer book's "A Prayer for Married Persons" and "A Prayer for Single Persons."

TIME: 45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Copies of True/False Quiz (Appended)
- Scripture citations (Appended)
- Antiochian Orthodox Service books (Service of Holy Matrimony)

- Copies of “A Prayer for Married Persons” (Archdiocesan prayer book for laity- Appended)
- Copies of “A Prayer for Single Persons” (Archdiocesan prayer book for laity- Appended)
- Large sheets of paper and markers
- Paper and pencils/pens for each student

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Photos or video of an Orthodox Christian wedding service
- Teaching Pics
- Actual objects used in the Service of Holy Matrimony:
 - Candles
 - Rings
 - Crowns
 - Gospel Book
 - Hand Cross
 - Common Cup and Wine

FOR THE CATECHIST:

Suggested Readings

Scripture:

John 2:1-11. The Wedding at Cana, with notes, *Orthodox Study Bible*, pp. 214-215.

Ephesians 5:22-33.

Marriage, *Orthodox Study Bible*, p. 449.

Chrysavgis, John. Love, Sexuality and the Sacrament of Marriage.

Chrysostom, John. On Marriage and Family Life.

Ford, David and Mary. Introduction, *Marriage as a Path to Holiness. Lives of Married Saints*, pp. xxi-iv.

Magdalen, Sr.. Children in the Church Today. Chapters 1-3, pp. 7-32.

Meyendorff, John. *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

Schmemmann, Alexander. “The Mystery of Love,” *For the Life of the World*, pp. 81-94.

The Way, The Truth, and The Life, pp. 75-78

Service of the Holy Matrimony, *Service Book*, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan, pp. 166-182.

Resources for High School Students

These books may be made available in the church library.

Chrysostom, John, St. On Marriage and Family Life. *Homily 19 and Homily 20*

Ford, David and Mary. Introduction, *Marriage as a Path to Holiness. Lives of Married Saints*, pp. xxi-iv.

Meyendorff, John. *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*.

Schmemmann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World*

Various tracts and pamphlets published for laity on marriage, conception, etc. by Conciliar Press or Light & Life Publishing

Copy of Archdiocesan statistics/documents

Within one lesson it is impossible to delve into the many rich layers of meaning in this theme. You can, however, provide students with basic information, filling in possible gaps of knowledge, and offer them resources for further inquiry. You may wish to acquaint students with particular books, Archdiocesan pamphlets on marriage and sexuality, and statistical information published by the Archdiocese.

We want our young people to know that marriage is *good*, a sacrament of the Church, indeed a way of salvation; that one does not need to join a monastery to lead a holy, pious life. This can be accomplished in marriage as well as in the desert.

We want them to know that sexual relations within marriage are blessed by the Church and that chastity means more than sexual purity, for, as it is translated from the Russian word *tsyelomudrosti*, chastity means “whole-mindedness.” We want our youth to understand why the Church asks for purity before marriage and for them to believe it to be true for them.

Students can have a chance to compare and contrast society’s expectations of marriage with the expectations of the Orthodox Church’s understanding of marriage. Students will review prayers for those who are married and for those who are single. Copies of these prayers are appended.

In the midst of differing views of marriage in American society, we want them to appreciate the beauty and meaning of the Orthodox marriage service, and to grow in their understanding of the potential for joy in a marriage transformed in the Kingdom of God.

THE LESSON PLAN

OPENING:

Assemble students around the icon corner to pray “Our Father.”

Welcome them to a session that deals with a theme that concerns each of them deeply and express your hope that what is to be discussed will be enriching, helpful, and supportive for them in their daily lives. You might also say you know it can be difficult to be growing up as a teen in American society in general and especially challenging to be an Orthodox Christian in America. With that bit of affirmation, you might then say, “Let’s get to work!”

INTRODUCTION:

Distribute take-home copies of the theme. You might also want to have it printed on a chalkboard or in large letters on a bulletin board. Read the theme aloud for students. You can ask where students might have heard these words previously. As you discuss with students, lead them to Matthew 19:5 to see that the quote for the theme is represented in Matthew’s Gospel where he answers the Pharisees’ challenge about divorce—but quotes Genesis and God’s intended plan for human beings and marriage. Ask students to find Mark 10: 6-9 to see similar words. Emphasize that this lesson will not be about divorce but about marriage—marriage as the Orthodox Church affirms it.

As an ice-breaker, have the students take the True/False Quiz accompanying this lesson. When the students have finished, go over the correct answers together. The quiz might give you some indication

as to what your students know (or don’t know) about the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and what specific areas you may need to focus on.

CONTENT:

Scripture as a testimony to God’s plan for human beings and for marriage

With reference to the theme, distribute the sheet with Scripture Citations.

You might ask each student in turn to read his or her citation and the text aloud to the group. Have students point out which citations have wording directly connected to the wording in the theme. Do the same for the New Testament citations. Concentrate on the citation for “body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” to discuss what that might mean for the way one behaves. (Since we receive Christ’s Body and Blood during Holy Communion, we don’t want to do anything that defiles, or spoils our body, whether by what we say, listen to, see, or do that could harm our body or anyone else’s body—or mind. We should treat our bodies with respect by not smoking, not using drugs or alcohol, not engaging in premarital sex, etc. Say to students, “As Orthodox Christians we fast. What is the purpose of fasting?” Obtain responses. (We fast to discipline ourselves, to control our passions.) Help them make the connection between fasting and controlling one’s passions- if we can control what we eat, we’ll be more likely to control our passions and behavior in other areas as well.

Marriage is one path to salvation, just as monasticism is a path to salvation.

Each of us is created in the image and likeness of God, called to be holy, and to attain deification, which is union with

God. The saints have achieved deification or theosis. The married person and the monastic have the same task in life: to love God above all else and to do His will. *Be holy for I am holy.* (1 Peter 1:16) Here is another famous quotation: *God became man so that man could become like God.* (St. Athanasios)

You might explain as follows: Many times over the years people have thought that the only way to become a saint is to join a monastery and live as a monk or nun. This is not the case at all. There are many married saints and many saintly couples who have not been recognized or canonized as saints. Many Church Fathers comment on this, advising that not everyone is called to the monastic life, just as not everyone is called to the married life. Church canons also advise that no one is permitted to be a monk because he despises marriage; no one should marry and scorn monasticism. One doesn't need to go to the desert to pray. For the married person, one's "desert" can be the marriage relationship and family life. (The parents of the Theotokos, Joachim and Anna, are a wonderful example of married saints.)

Becoming One Flesh: Marital Unity and Love

Help students to understand that in Orthodox Christian marriage, "one flesh" does not mean only a bodily physical union, as in sex, but oneness of mind and soul as well. Tell the students there are several references in the marriage service to "oneness of mind." Have them find examples of some of those references in the service book and share them with the group. Here are a few examples from the betrothal service:

Prayers at the litany- "Preserve them in **oneness of mind** and steadfastness of faith"

Priest's second prayer- "O Lord our God, who has espoused the Church as a pure Virgin from among the Gentiles, Bless this betrothal, and unite and preserve these thy servants in peace and **oneness of mind.**"

At the exchange of rings- "Look upon (names of bride and groom) and establish their betrothal in faith and in **oneness of mind**, in truth and in love."

The Structure of the Service of Holy Matrimony

Explain that there are two main parts: **the Betrothal and the Crowning.** (During this part of the lesson plan you will highlight the objects that are used during the service and explain their significance. If you have photos or a wedding video, you may wish to use these visual aids in conjunction with the objects used in the Service of Holy Matrimony, if you have these available.) Have students follow along with the service book as you discuss each part.

The Betrothal

The priest gives a large, white, lit **candle** to the groom and also one to the bride. The candles are a symbol of the Light of Christ. A Great Litany is said where we pray for everyone throughout the world, including the couple to be married.

Exchange of Rings. With the **rings** that the priest places on the fingers of the bride and groom, he announces that the servant of God is *betrothed* to the handmaid of God and the handmaid of God is *betrothed* to the servant of God. The groom's ring is placed on the bride's finger. The bride's ring is placed

on the groom's finger. Then, the bride and groom exchange the rings and put their own ring on their fourth finger of their right hand. (Although today, because of the influence of the Western churches, many people wear their wedding rings on their left hand.) There are some different meanings to the rings:

- An unbroken circle that means their love goes on forever
- Faithfulness to each other
- The exchange of rings is a sign that the strengths of one person make up for the weaknesses of the other person.

The Marriage Service.

The priest says, "Blessed is the kingdom!" Emphasize this opening exclamation in the Crowning. Divine Liturgy also begins with this exclamation. It is used because marriage is eternal in the kingdom of God.

The Crowning. The priest takes the **crowns**, blesses the groom and bride three times with the crowns, and places them on their heads. (Russian-style gold crowns are held over the heads by the best man and maid of honor.) Then the priest exchanges the crowns three times and says, "O Lord our God, crown them with glory and with honor." (You might want to demonstrate this triple exchange for students.)

The crowns have three meanings:

- King and queen of their little kingdom on earth, their household
- Martyrs' crowns
- Crowns of the life in the Kingdom of God.

You can explain how St. John Chrysostom talked about marriage as the "little kingdom." The bride and groom would become king and queen of their own little kingdom on earth ruling over their family.

The martyrs who were killed for professing their faith in Christ receive crowns in the kingdom of God. Martyr also means witness. The bridal pair will witness to Christ throughout their life together. In addition, each will also have to make sacrifices for the good of the other person.

The married couple who live a holy life hope to attain their own crowns in the Kingdom of God. The Christian husband and wife receive Holy Communion together and share in God's Kingdom of Heaven even now, and they can continue to do so even after death to this life, because of Christ's Resurrection.

Prokeimenon, Epistle, and **Gospel**
(Point out similar structure in Divine Liturgy.)

Comment about the verse from Psalm 20:

"Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stone. They asked life of Thee and Thou gavest it them."

Ask the students what image comes to mind when they hear "crowns of precious stone." (Crowns of a king and queen...the couple can be king and queen of their little kingdom.)

Comment on the Epistle: St. Paul is telling us that marriage should be like the marriage of Christ and His Church. The bride is reminded to be subject to her husband just like the Church is

subject to Christ. The groom is reminded that he should love his wife as much as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for Her. Ask students to recall what they already know about the Body of Christ and Christ as the Head of the Body. Perhaps someone will also recall that Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is His Bride. You may wish to write these analogies out on the chalkboard or a large piece of paper:

Christ is the Head

Christ is the Bridegroom

The Church is His Body

The Church is the His Bride

Remind students that just as the wife is asked to be subject to her husband, the husband is asked to be willing to lay down his life for his wife, just as Christ gave His life for His Bride, the Church. Contrary to the misconceptions in society, this epistle does not negate the value or freedom of the wife.

Comment on the Gospel reading of the Wedding at Cana: Why does the Church use this Gospel reading? (Christ performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana; it's a prefigurement of the Eucharist which the bride and groom will share throughout their married life together. In the Eucharist we are united to Christ and His Church.)

The Common Cup. Some say drinking the wine from the same **cup** reminds us of the good wine Jesus made at the wedding in Cana, when He changed water into wine—saving the best wine for the last. Others say the bride and groom drink from the same cup to show they will share everything in life together, whether good or bad.

Isaiah's Dance (Sometimes called Isaiah's Joy). Some translations of the hymn sung here use, "O Isaiah, dance thy Joy." Other texts use, "Rejoice, O Isaiah." (You might check with your parish's usage.) If you have a wedding video, show this part of the service, pointing out the **Gospel book** on the table and **the cross** the priest carries as he leads the newly-married couple around the table three times. Both Gospel and cross show us that Christ should be at the center of the married couple's life. The walk itself symbolizes the couple's first steps as husband and wife in a procession that reminds them their marriage in Christ and His Church is forever and never-ending, even into the Kingdom of God.

Isaiah's Dance is when the couple walks or "dances" around the table in a joyful way because they take their first steps as husband and wife. This walk or dance shows us their marriage in Jesus Christ will never end. Their marriage is fulfilled in the Kingdom.

The Final Blessing. The priest now asks the Holy Trinity to bless the newly-married pair with long life, fair children, prosperity, and faith, abundance of earthly blessings, and for them to be worthy to obtain the blessings of the promise (to become heirs to God's kingdom). The priest gives a prayer for dismissal and intones a "Many Years" for the newly-married couple. The bride and groom then greet their guests.

The Removal of The Marriage Crowns

In many churches, this separate service is celebrated on the eighth day after the wedding or shortly afterward. You might explain that in the Early Church

the newly-married couple wore their crowns for eight days and then returned to the church to have them removed. You might ask students to consider the seriousness with which those early Christians looked upon the sacrament of marriage for them to intentionally wear their crowns that long. How different is this from peoples' attitudes today?

Also, the number eight has spiritual significance, as it is a sign of eternity, the day that has no end, the day of the Kingdom of God.

The Number Three

Students may be interested in knowing that the actions and words of the priest are done three times, and this is in honor of the Holy Trinity:

Rings are blessed three times;
rings are exchanged three times.

The priest blesses the crowns over the bridal pair's heads three times.

The Priest exchanges the crowns three times, each time saying

"O Lord crown them with glory and honor."

The newly-married couple walks three times around the table.

"Many Years" is sung three times.

ACTIVITY:

Students will compare and contrast what they perceive as society's expectations of marriage with the expectations of the Orthodox Church, based on Her teachings. This should also include comparison and contrast of beliefs or practices among other Christian churches or of Judaism.

Arrange for students to work in small groups. Distribute paper and pens/pencils. Remind students that "to compare" means to tell what is the same about two things or ideas. "To contrast" means to tell what is different between two ideas or things. Each group should assign a student to record the responses for the group.

Have students report their findings to the class. You can record their findings on one large chart.

Possible Responses:

Society's Expectations for Marriage

It's OK to live together before you get married. Having sex is expected too.

(Churches discourage living together or having sex before marriage.)

Birth control is often preferred over abstinence.

Abortion is OK, even among married persons.

Rings are a sign of a married person

You have to reserve a reception hall years in advance.

You need someone as a wedding planner.

You wear a wedding ring to show you are married.

Bride and groom have "witnesses"—best man; maid of honor, etc.

Everything will be better once I get married

After I'm married, I don't have to worry about being on my best behavior

Marriage is an "institution"

Some churches say it is a sacrament, e.g., Catholic, Episcopal

Most churches use Scripture as part of the service

It's OK to get divorced and remarried

Same-sex marriage is gaining popularity.

Orthodox Expectations for Marriage

Only between a man and a woman

Must be married in the church, not another site

Married only by a priest or bishop, not even by a deacon

Must be married to an Orthodox Christian or to a baptized Christian

No living together before marriage; no sexual relations before marriage

Some understanding of marriage as a sacrament

Marriage is not a legal contract dissolved after one of the spouses dies

No vows to be said by the bride and groom

A life as a couple working toward each other's salvation

No words, "promises" or vows" made up by the couple to say at the service

Sexual relations within marriage are considered inherently good.

Orthodox Marriage: Comparisons (Similarities with society/other Christians)

Most Churches see marriage as a holy union, but not all see it as a sacrament.

Many couples look forward to big weddings and the service held in a church.

Everybody has to get a marriage certificate from the local authorities

A person has to be of legal age to get married.

Bride wears white; big dress-up occasion; wedding celebration/reception.

There are witnesses: e.g., best man, maid of honor.

Married couples wear wedding rings.

Many couples expect to have children.

Orthodox Marriage: Contrasts (These amount to Differences with society's expectations and with commonly-held beliefs, even by other Christians.)

A sacrament

No vows

Not a contract

Not till death do us

part....marriage dissolved at the death of one spouse

No "here comes the bride" wedding march.

Compared to Christ and His Church

Only between a man and a woman, based on Biblical teaching

Not for purpose of procreation only

Love is transformed by the sacramental grace given at the wedding service

Husband and wife are in "community of marriage" within the Body of Christ

Betrothal and Crowning are unique to the Orthodox wedding service

Divorce is tolerated

Remarriage is permitted but no more than three marriages

Married priests

Music at the wedding service is liturgical only

Days proscribed for getting married are fixed by the Church, e.g.,

Not during Great Lent, not on Feast Days or eves of feasts, etc.

Civil marriage before a justice of the peace is not a Christian marriage.

Same sex marriage is not permitted.

Celibacy is encouraged for those who consider themselves homosexual.

After each group has reported to the whole, you might ask for responses about how they feel about marriage in the Orthodox Church now and how they regard marriage.

(Perhaps some will see the Church as “difficult” or unbending. Assure them that any couple wishing to be married would be counseled by his or her pastor and any concerns can be addressed. The Church can make exceptions as long as they do not go against the teaching of the church or the liturgical requirements. e.g., sometimes special music can be sung to accommodate family wishes *before* the Service of Matrimony begins. But on matters of Faith, the Church remains firm.)

Divorce and Remarriage

At this point you may want to discuss the Church’s position on divorce and remarriage. Be sensitive to students whose families are not intact. You might want to speak with your parish priest regarding any sensitive situations. You won’t want to offend any student (or parent) or appear judgmental. You won’t want to make any student feel inferior hearing what the Church teaches about families and marriage knowing that his or her family does not meet the model of the ideal family or marriage. However, we do need to present the tenets of the Church. Tell the students that The Orthodox Church permits divorce as a concession to human weakness.

Remarriage is permitted but the Church doesn’t regard it in the same way as it

does the first marriage. Some of the joyful ceremonies found in the Service of Matrimony are replaced by penitential prayers. Orthodox Canon Law allows a second or third marriage (and greatly discourages a third) but strictly forbids more marriages.

RESPONSE:

Distribute copies of “A Prayer for Married Persons” and “A Prayer for Single Persons.” Be sure students each have paper and pencils/pens. Show students the layman’s prayer book published by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. Some will be familiar with its red cover. Refer to the two prayers contained within. Distribute photocopies of these prayers for each student to review.

Begin with “A Prayer for Married Persons.” Ask students to read it and then list at the bottom of the page each of the things prayed for. How do these compare or contrast with qualities or with what is prayed for at the Service of Holy Matrimony? Discuss.

Next, ask students to read “A Prayer for Single Persons.” Again, ask students to list what is prayed for. How are these different from or the same as the petitions in the prayer for the married person. Why? Discuss.

Have each student name one quality to attain in their personal lives that will help them on their path to holiness, whether married or single, and explain their reasons for focusing on that quality.

CLOSING:

Assemble students around the icon corner. Encourage them in their work for the Creative Festivals. Have the students say “A Prayer of Single Persons” together.

**CREATIVE FESTIVALS 2008
GRADES 6-12**

TRUE/FALSE QUIZ

1. Marriage is a sacrament in the Orthodox Church.
2. An Orthodox Christian can't marry someone who is not Orthodox.
3. An Orthodox person can't marry someone who is not a Christian.
4. The Orthodox Church only allows marriage between a man and a woman.
5. The bride and groom can write their own vows for their Orthodox wedding.
6. The bride and groom can choose the readings they would like to be used during the service.
7. The Orthodox wedding service has two main parts: The Betrothal and the Crowning.
8. An Orthodox wedding can take place any time during the liturgical year.

TRUE/FALSE QUIZ ANSWERS

1. TRUE. Marriage is ordained by God and blessed by the Church.

2. FALSE. An Orthodox person does not have to marry another Orthodox person to be married in the Orthodox Church.

3. TRUE. An Orthodox person can be married in the Orthodox Church as long as he or she is marrying another Christian.

4. TRUE. The Orthodox Church does not allow same-sex marriage.

5. FALSE. There are no vows in an Orthodox Christian wedding service.

6. FALSE. The same Epistle and Gospel readings are used in every Orthodox Christian wedding service.

7. TRUE. The Betrothal is the portion of the wedding service when the rings are exchanged. The Crowning is the part when the couple is actually married.

8. FALSE. There are certain times during the Liturgical year when marriages cannot take place, such as during Lent.

CITATIONS FOR SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR MARRIAGE

- Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth
- 2:18 It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.
- 2:23 Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”
- 2:24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.
- 2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.
- 1Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- 1Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own?
- 1Peter 1:16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*”

(See also 1 Cor. 7:1-11 regarding chastity and marriage in general.)

Pose the following questions:

What does God say human beings are created to be? (Are created in the image of God, either male or female)

What is the purpose of getting married: [It’s not good for man to be alone; he should have a helpmeet, someone to live with and to have children with....to leave one’s father and mother and (cleaves to) and is joined to his wife to become one flesh. And God said be fruitful and multiply....have children.]

A PRAYER OF MARRIED PERSONS

Here is the prayer as found in the Prayer Book issued by the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese:

O merciful God, we beseech thee ever to remind us that the married state is holy, and that we must keep it so; grant us thy grace, that we may continue in faithfulness and love; increase in us the spirit of mutual understanding and trust, that no quarrel or strife may come between us; grant us thy blessings, that we may stand before our fellows and in thy sight as an ideal family; and finally, by thy mercy, account us worthy of everlasting life; for thou art our sanctification, and to thee, we ascribe glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Look at the individual petitions to see what the Church asks married persons to pray for:

O merciful God, we beseech thee ever to remind us that the **married state is holy**, and that we must keep it so;

grant us thy grace, that we may **continue in faithfulness and love**;

increase in us **the spirit of mutual understanding and trust**, that no quarrel or strife may come between us;

grant us **thy blessings**, that we may stand before our fellows and in thy sight as an ideal family; (God's choice of blessings, not what we think we want)

and finally, **by thy mercy**, account us **worthy of everlasting life**;

for **thou art our sanctification**, and to thee, we ascribe glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

A PRAYER OF SINGLE PERSONS

O Blessed Lord, who has set up for us an example of ideal purity, strengthen me, I beseech thee, when temptation besets me, and when strong passions seek to overwhelm me, that I may remain constant in virtue and innocent in thought, word, and deed, doing such things only as are well-pleasing unto thee; grant me growth in wisdom and understanding, that I may serve thee in holiness all the days of my life; through the intercessions of thine all-immaculate Mother and of all thy Saints, especially my patron Saint *N*. Amen.

Look more closely at the words of this prayer. See how the Church asks us to pray for qualities to help us remain pure, virtuous, innocent, and holy as teens or unmarried adults.

A reminder that Christ serves as an example of ideal purity;

A request for **Strength**

when temptation besets me and when strong passions seek to overwhelm me
(so that I may) remain **constant in virtue and innocent in thought, word, and deed**

A request for **Growth** in wisdom and understanding to serve thee in **holiness**

(For Help) through the **prayers** of the Theotokos, all the saints, and especially one's patron saint.

God knows our human nature. God that it is difficult to remain pure and to overcome temptations, so the Church reminds us to pray to God, our Lord, for strength to overcome temptations and control passions. We also pray for wisdom and understanding as we grow so that we can serve God in holiness. God knows we need help. The *prayers* of The Theotokos, all the saints, and especially our patron saint help us to be strong, remain virtuous and innocent, to be holy. Of course, if we don't pray to our immaculate Mother or to the saints—or pray for our friends and family and ourselves—that help may not always be there.

Our human nature is such that we long to have a helpmeet and have the natural desire toward procreation. As single people (youth, teens, unmarried adults), we need to pray for strength, virtue, innocence, chastity. But just as important, the Church recognizes that in marriage the grace is given to live a virtuous, holy life filled with chastity and love for one's spouse and only one's spouse. As St. John Chrysostom puts it, this is part of the "mystery" of marriage.