

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**  
**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

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**MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**  
**MATTHEW 19:1-12**

**Marriage and Celibate Life are Equal Graces of God to the Church**  
**Entrusted to Individual Members**

Moderator  
**Rev. Fr. Timothy Redmond S.P.S**

A long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research work to *Magongo-Mapia* family, especially my parents: Laetitia Kokuhangama S.F.O and John Rwechungula S.F.O, who have shown us a good example of living a Christian marriage. It is through their support and commitment to their vocation, that my call to celibacy came to realization.

## EPIGRAPH

“I also believe that all too many men and women in our culture have a poor idea of what love between man and woman is, and what love between man and man, woman and woman is. More often than not, as dialogues in novels, short stories, films and plays testify, the word **Love** means predominantly and sometimes exclusively mutual physical sexual pleasure. Yet human love is much more than that... If more marriages are to endure and enrich spouses, if single people are to find genuinely human fulfillment in relationship with the opposite or same sex, a better idea of human love must be lived and broadcasted.”

*Christopher Kiesling, O.P.*

Any commitment in life may be hard, but the truth of all is that: the will of God will never lead you where the grace of God will not accompany you. Trust is the point!

*J.J. Rugaiganisa ofm*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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No small debt of gratitude is owned to my classmates. It is through their daily support and Christian encouragement that I kept fit through ups and downs. To all other students from all respective institutes I say a big thanks. They provided me a milieu of collaboration, and this ambience will always be my reference in my future ministry.

Lastly, I thank my community of the Friars Minor, who are the backbone of what I have gone through, for rendering all the support that was needed for me to complete my studies. Special attribute to Fr. Cosmas OFM, who though the burden was great, he reduced it to sweetness. I thank my brother Justus Ruganjwa and my sister Florentina Busi, who kept me in contact with my family especially when mum was sick.

**May Almighty God reward all of you in abundance. Amen!**

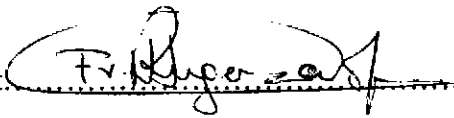
*Friar, John-Josephat Rugaiganisa ofm*

## DECLARATION

I JOHN-JOSEPHAT RUGGIRUSA OFM declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:

Name of a Student



Date 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2003

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed:

Name of Supervisor



Date 30/11/2003

# 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The research work that you are holding in your hands is a work that has taken an amount of time to become what it is. After my Novitiate, that was 1994, I was sent to live in one of the outstations, and in this parish I learnt that people admired my life as a religious. At the time it did not occur to my mind why people would have such an affirmative feeling. As time went on and I moved from one place to another, this feeling grew strong so that I started to ask myself what would be the reason behind this admiration.

So in 1996, I went to philosophy and still I found that people in Zambia had the same admiration for religious men and women. By then my curiosity grew strong, but I could not carry out this research, since at the same time I wanted to make an investigation on who is a human being. Therefore, such research remained a plan for the future. During my pastoral year, that was 1999-2000, I got time to talk to people about it and shared my wonder with the religious. I discovered that it was not only lay people who admired religious life but the religious also on the other hand, after some times in a congregation begin to admire the married status. This opened up my mind and from the time I joined Tangaza College 2000-2001, I made up my mind to study this kind of attitude and come up with an understanding.

This of course would have not been materialized if I did not get a further motivation. It was during my second year that I decided to register myself in the biblical stream and my love for scriptures was boosted up the more. And so, during the class on Matthew, Sr. Carmel Powell gave a very impressive commentary on Matt 19:1-12. This I found so interesting that I decided to take it as a principal text for my essay, since it fitted in well with my long awaited task.

In this research essay, I follow the biblical methodology of writing. We have three chapters in this essay and each has an introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter, I present

the context and the background of Matt 19:1-12. I set the delimitation of the text in question and justify my taking it as a unity. After that, I get into the text itself and present the textual criticism. Here I take B M Metzger as my principle authority, since I find his explanation more convincing, furthermore, within the same chapter, I give some of my own understanding. I have also dedicated a space for parallels of the text, both within Matthew and in larger context of synoptic gospels.

The in the second chapter, I move into the exegetical work and some details of the text. I suggest the structure of our text, which has three parts with their sub-headings. Here I take in account every line of the text and give the necessary explanation, to understand the text and the world in which the community of Matthew found itself. After that follows the third chapter. In this part of the essay I begin by giving theological message and its implications that need to be applied in the daily life of the church. I also look into the historical meaning of the text in order to set the foundation for my applications.

The remaining section of the essay deals with the application of the textual message for married life in the church bringing up the idea of marriage being a grace that is given to individuals for the sake of the kingdom. Thus I show that there is no need for married people to regret having been married, since it is a mission, given and willed by God. After that I look into celibate life and make applications that are deduced from the textual implications. Here I bring the idea that celibacy is not an alternative to married life but rather a life that is given to those and only those who can take it. The essay then tries to go against the idea of taking religious life as a mere job or career. Then I bring in the idea of living a happy religious life which witnesses to the eschatological life, using the image of being at the banquet, which is an image that Matthew uses.

In winding up this chapter I dedicate a space for the challenges that need to be looked at in celibate life and in marriage. I propose that celibate life should be Christ-centered rather than centered on rules and customs. I conclude by challenging the idea of taking either celibate life or married life as an end in itself. I suggest that both should be seen and understood as symbols and instruments of the greater things that are in the plan of God, enveloped in the whole idea of the Kingdom of Heaven

Before I present the definition of the terms that we are concerned with in this essay, I wish to make a note that unless stipulated otherwise, all the biblical texts quoted will be taken from the NAB, the translation found in the African Bible.

# CHAPTER I

## The Context and the Background of the Passage in Question

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with introductory questions: A number of questions are dealt with to give the reader a preliminary understanding of the objective of the research and the style, procedure and the perspective of the paper. The presentation in this chapter, therefore, begins by showing where the text begins and where it ends. Then we present some reasons for limiting the study to this particular part (Matt 19: 1-12) of the gospel. Then follows textual criticism, which is vital for understanding the conclusions in the following chapters. Lastly, we will look into the whole issue of context, both the remote and immediate context. Then the researcher studies the parallels within the gospel of Matthew in comparison with Mark and Luke. For the sake of clarity here I give the definition of the terms that are of our concern in this essay:

i) “The term, εὐνοῦχος refers to a male who has been castrated. Most biblical references to these persons, who by accident or design had lost their capacity to procreate, came from narratives about the kings and their courts, and they were usually excluded from the sacred assembly according to Deut 23:1. In the New Testament the term acquired a new sense. And that is stated as ‘Becoming a eunuch for religious reasons, as it is mentioned in Matt 19:12. It is probably metaphorical for meaning celibate to serve God better,’ as it is expressed in 1Cor 1:32-34.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>L. H. SCHFFMAN. – P.J. ACHTERMER, *Marriage*, 608.

ii) “The Term γάμος refers to ‘the physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, as it is biblically elaborated in Gen 2:21-24.’ In this story, God fashioned one wife for Adam. This expresses the biblical ideal of monogamous marriage, as it is expressed in the gospel of Mark 10:6-9.”<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 The Background of Matt 19:1-12

### 1.2.1 The Delimitation of the Text

#### a) The Beginning of the text (*Terminus a quo*)

The above-mentioned text namely, Matt 19:1-12 is a unity that deals with divorce and marriage, the discussion that leads to the third issue of celibacy.<sup>3</sup> Jesus has just finished a discussion on the issue of forgiveness posed by Peter in chapter 18, and now he faces the Pharisees, as Barclay notes it:

“Here Jesus is dealing with what was in his day, as it is in our own, a vexed and burning question. Divorce was something about which there was no unanimity among the Jews; and the Pharisees were deliberately trying to involve Jesus in the controversy.”<sup>4</sup>

Matthew treats this controversy here to demonstrate Jesus the teacher and one who fulfills the Law. Moreover, he introduces something new that was little considered in the daily practice of the Jews. In fact, that could be the reason why the characters change in verse 10-12 and Barclay points out:

“Here we come to the necessary amplification of what has gone before. When the disciples heard the ideal of marriage which Jesus set before them, they were daunted....To men who had been brought up to listen to sayings like that[*of rabbinic tradition*] the uncompromising demand of Jesus was an almost frightening thing. Their reaction was that, if marriage is so final and binding a relationship and if divorce is forbidden, it is better not to marry at all...[*Jesus concludes this section*], not

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<sup>2</sup>L. H. SCHFFMAN –P. J. ACHTERMIER, *Eunuch*, 285.

<sup>3</sup>This discussion is only found in Matthew and not in the others; Mark and Luke, so it is particularly Matthew’s presentation.

<sup>4</sup>W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 195-196.

everyone...only those to whom it has been granted to do so... Only the Christian can accept the Christian ethic.”<sup>5</sup>

These two aspects of Christian life, marriage and celibacy, which were formerly unrelated in the Jewish-mind, are brought together in Jesus’ teaching as presented by Matthew. What we are concerned with in the text begins at v.3; this is because every time Matthew brings something new there is a change of place, which is indicated in verses 1-2. Secondly, the characters change also. We see that in the previous text, the character was Peter, and the topic was forgiveness. Now the discussion is between Pharisees and Jesus. The first substance of the discussion deduces from natural-animal-behaviour, namely self-preservation (mating). The second element is for the sake of the gospel, meaning celibacy (for the sake of a certain duty). These two elements are placed in one situation, even though presented by different characters. Thus it is evident that the latter is deduced from the former, as a reaction. Then these two become important and foundational in the Christian calling, thus leading the members of the community to self-offering to God and others, since both are given as “Graces from God.”<sup>6</sup>

#### **b] The End of the Text (*Terminus ad quem*)**

Our text ends with v.12, which is a conclusion that gives a command yet creating awareness to the listeners that not everyone is capable of following the last grace. This does not say everyone should live according to the primal call. As in the previous discussion the apostles get out of the way and Jesus concludes the discussion, then what follows is presented by other characters and

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<sup>5</sup>W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 205-6. (Note that the researcher added the italicised words in the text).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 206-207. This actually means, that “no one on *earth* can live out Jesus Christ’s teaching without Jesus Christ. And if Jesus was only a great and good man, even if he was the greatest and the best of men, then at most he is only a great example. His teaching becomes possible only in the conviction that he is not dead but present here to help us carry it out. The teaching of Christ demands the presence of Christ, otherwise it is only an impossible—and a torturing—ideal...Christian marriage is possible only for Christians.”

brings a different scene altogether, in fact the behaviours of the apostles change. Barclay seems to support the idea of limiting the text here, when he writes:

“Jesus gives two answers... *one on marriage and the other on eunuchs*. The passage finishes with a very puzzling verse about eunuchs. It is quite possible that Jesus said this on some other occasions, and Matthew puts it here because he is collecting Jesus’ teaching on marriage, for it was always Matthew’s custom to gather together teaching on a particular subject.”<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, no one can pretend to take what is not granted; already this last sentence sets a criterion of discernment in choosing the way one should live his or her world-life-existence. If it is one’s grace, take it, if not take another, that is in v.12. In this verse the conversation about marriage and celibacy comes to an end, with a call of taking seriously what one is given or rather what one is called to be, since it has to go with the whole idea of being granted, therefore it is a commission and mission to the individual.

### **c) The Reasons for Limiting the Study only to this Particular Text**

Within the parameter of the new understanding of the Kingdom, marriage and celibacy are presented as gifts of God to complement each other in the Church’s life and mission. Presented as γάμος καὶ εὐνοῦχοι in the Greek, they are both leading to fulfilling the human life, (despite their demands), thus being instruments for the Kingdom of Heaven. The two elements of Christian calling are taken together in this work, with the hope of illustrating how they are grace to humanity and especially to the Church. Though different in dimension, both are necessary for the ecclesial life. Moreover, it is clear from the gospel of Matthew that the two issues are discussed at the same place, even if this is due to Matthew’s redaction,<sup>8</sup> due to the fact that different characters, with completely differing motives, present them. Nevertheless, in Matthew’s logic the latter is provoked by the discussion that had been going on between Jesus and his opponents. Disciples bring it up as

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<sup>7</sup>W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 207. The italicised words are added by the researcher, for the sake of clarification.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. footnote no.7.

a solution to the former, and then the conclusion shows that the two discussions are brought to one understanding, which is made by Jesus: *both are gifts of God* and if given to anyone he/ she ought to fulfill that call.<sup>9</sup> As Mann comments on this:

“Matthew indicates that a final and definitive stage has been reached in the ministry by the first verse of this section. Although the material in this chapter appears to be made of loosely connected episodes, it serves as summary of all that has proceeded it, and at the same time as introduction to the final events and concluding teaching of the ministry.”<sup>10</sup>

What follows afterwards is a different story all together, though related in a broader picture of Matthew’s understanding of *τη βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, it does not necessarily seem to be part of the text of this work.

### 1.3 Textual Criticism

In Matt 19:3-12, there are quite a number of terms, which need to be looked at in detail, and that is my concern at this point, as we look at Matt. 19:4.

3Καὶ προσήλθον αὐτῷ Φαρισαῖοι πειράζοντες αὐτὸν καὶ λέγοντες· Εἰ ἔξεστιν ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπολύσαι τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν; 4 ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ὅτι ὁ κτίσας ἅπ’ ἀρχῆς ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς; 5 καὶ εἶπεν, Ἔνεκα τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ κολληθήσεται τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἷς σάρκα μίαν 6 ὥστε οὐκ ἐτι εἰσὶν δύο ἀλλὰ σὰρξ μία. ὁ οὖν ὁ θεὸς συνέζευξεν ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωριζέτω.<sup>11</sup>

For this case in verse four, it is easier to suppose that the copyists changed the word *ποιήσας* (which is supported by several excellent witnesses) to *κτίσας*, thus harmonizing it with the Septuagint text of Gen 1:27 (which is quoted in the immediate context), than to suppose that *ποιήσας* was altered to suit the Hebrew word used in Gn 1:27 —(בָּרָא, which means “*created*”).<sup>12</sup> The following verses do not present any difficulty until in verse 7, as it is presented in Matthew’s terms:

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Matt 19:12.

<sup>10</sup> W.F. ALBRIGHT, — C.S., MANN, *Matthew*, 227.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. K. ALAND – M. BLACK – C.M. MARTIN – B.M. METZGER, for the Greek-Texts in this research, 71-73.

<sup>12</sup> B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 38.

7 λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Τί οὖν Μωϋσῆς ἐνετείλατο δοῦναι βιβλίον ἀποστασίου καὶ ἀπολύσαι (αὐτήν) ἄλλοις ἄνθρωποις ὅτι Μωϋσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληρο-καρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν ἀπολύσαι τὰς γυναῖκας ὑμῶν, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς δὲ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως.

Matt. 19:7– ἀπολύσαι [αὐτήν] from the text, it is difficult to decide whether αὐτήν is an addition (as τὴν γυναῖκα undoubtedly is) to a concisely stated expression, or whether the word was deleted in order to assimilate the passage to the near parallel in Mark 10:4. Since the external evidence is so nearly balanced, the committee decided to retain the word enclosed within square brackets.<sup>13</sup>

9 λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσει ἄλλην μοιχᾶται.

Matt 19:9, μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσει ἄλλην μοιχᾶται, the “exception clause” in the Matthean account of Jesus on divorce occurs in two forms: παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας (“except on the ground of unchastity”) and μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ (“except for unchastity”).

“The exceptive clause is an inspired gloss of Matthew, but immorality or uncleanness (πορνεία) means uncleanness in the legal sense of marrying within the forbidden degree of kinship, a gloss which was inserted to conform with the decision of the council at Jerusalem to retain the Jewish dietary laws and their laws governing (πορνεία or incest). Thus, gentile converts ‘are to abstain from anything that has been contaminated by idols and from immorality (πορνεία), from anything strangled, and from blood.’ (Acts 15:20) and also (1Cor 5: 1) i.e. married to his father’s wife.”<sup>14</sup>

This then gives us the ground for further discussion, since already in Matthew there are two ways of explaining the issue of divorce. This tells us that this should have been a serious argument of the time. It is probable that the witnesses (include B D f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup>) that have the former reading may have been assimilated to Matt 5:32, where the text is affirmed. Likewise the phrase ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχευθῆναι (“makes her commit adultery” [i.e. when she remarries]) has come into several witnesses (including B C\* f<sup>1</sup>) from Matt 5:32, where it is affirmed. This indicates to us that at a certain moment in history, the woman also is considered a subject of the divorce unlike other

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<sup>13</sup>B. M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 38.

<sup>14</sup>P. F. PALMER, *Sacraments of Healing and Vocation*, 85.

evidence that considers the man only.<sup>15</sup> The short reading of 1574, καὶ γαμήση ἄλλην has been conformed to the prevailing text of Mark 10:11, the term μοιχᾶται: after μοιχᾶται several witnesses (including K W Δ Θ Π f<sup>13</sup>) add καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν (or γαμήσας) μοιχᾶται (“and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”). Although it could be argued, that homoeoteleuton (μοιχᾶται... μοιχᾶται) accounts for its accidental omission from... D L 1241 *al*, the fact that B C\* f<sup>1</sup> *al* read μοιχᾶται only once (at the conclusion of the combined clauses) makes it more probable that the text was expanded by copyists who accommodated the saying to the prevailing text of Matt 5:32. This argument is more probable since the tendency of any copyist is to add an explanation or to leave things out that do not make sense to them. The next concern is in the following verses 10-11, where the difficulty is on the use of demonstratives that are added or left out.<sup>16</sup>

10 λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ (αὐτοῦ) Εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναίκος, οὐ συμφέρει γαμήσαι. 11 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον (τοῦτου) ἀλλ’ οἷς δέδοται 12 εἰσὶν γὰρ εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες ἐκ κοιλιάς μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνοῦχίσθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνοῦχισαν ἑαυτοῦς διὰ τὴν βασιλεῖαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρεῖτω.

Matt 19:10–μαθηταὶ [αὐτοῦ]. Although the combination of Ɱ B Θ it<sup>e</sup> cop<sup>sams</sup> in support of the shorter reading is noteworthy, the committee was impressed by the possibility that the presence of αὐτῷ before μαθηταὶ prompted some copyists to delete αὐτοῦ. It was thought best, therefore, to retain the word enclosed within square brackets, for the simple reason that it gives an emphasis

<sup>15</sup>Cf. P.F. PALMER, *Sacraments of Healing and Vocation*, 84. “The idea of adultery against a woman was foreign to the Jews as it is incompatible with all codes of law which allow polygamy. In such codes, the wife is the property of the man. Adultery is the violation of the husband’s rights over his wife or wives. To commit adultery against a woman implies that the wife has rights, which can be violated by her husband’s relations with another woman, whether the other woman is married or single. This principle is something absolutely new in Christianity and distinctive of it. It explains what, basically, is meant by the Christian emancipation of woman.”

<sup>16</sup>B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 38-39.

but does not change the meaning of the text. The same criterion is used in the following verse, which is the last in the examination of the text.<sup>17</sup>

Matt 19:11–τὸν λόγον [τοῦτον], on the one hand since the general tendency of scribes is to make the text more explicit, e.g. by adding the demonstrative pronoun, the shorter reading, supported by B<sup>f</sup> and several early versions, has a certain presumption in its favour. On the other hand, however, the ambiguity of the reference of τοῦτον, in the context – does it refer to the deduction made by the disciples (ver, 11), or to the preceding exposition of Jesus (v.v. 4-9)? – This uncertainty may have had prompted some scribes to delete the word. In order to reflect the balance of possibilities, the committee decided therefore, to retain the word enclosed within square brackets and the reading of Θ is obviously secondary.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.4 The Contexts of the Text

### 1.4.1 Immediate Context of Matt 19:1-12

Matt 19:3-12 is understood within the context of the ministry of Jesus in Judea and Jerusalem, which covers chapters 19-20.<sup>19</sup> This is usually referred as the journey to Jerusalem—leading to the day of resurrection, where we find the language of testing and justifying. The passage in question in this research presents to us different material from what has preceded in chapter 18. It is a beginning of something new in a different situation and has its geographical introduction taken from Mark, yet omitting some words, to fit the understanding and the situation of Matthew's community, which is a mixture of Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian background, as Johnson puts it:

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<sup>17</sup> B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. Chapters 19-20, is close to Mark, but there are 'Q' material and 'M' material especially Matthean parables about the Kingdom, in which Jesus sees his destiny as he moves to the Father.

“The struggle for self-definition was all the harder for the Matthean community, since it was caught in a tension between particularity and universality. In what way were they part of Judaism and in what way were they from among the gentiles?”<sup>20</sup>

This was for sure the situation of the community and the daily reality of Matthew’s Church.

The Matthean community embraced both Gentiles and Jews. Due to their belief in Christ they were misunderstood by traditional Jews, this led to condemnation and eventually excommunication from the temple. The Temple was destroyed and all Judeo-Sects were blamed. In this situation Matthew presents us the reaction of the community. The reactions we are speaking of begin in verse 3, but it is of some importance to refer to vv 1-2:

1Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους μετῆρεν ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου. 2 καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔθεράπευσεν αὐτοὺς ἐκεῖ (Matt19: 1-2)

These verses serve as an introduction to the text in question. For the better understanding of this portion, the researcher finds that the explanation of Schweizer gives a good analysis of these two verses, as a starting point, since it situates properly the pericope under discussion in the Gospel of Matthew.

“(1) The formula at the beginning here shows that Matthew understood chapter 18 as a unit: this clause always occurs as the conclusion of major discourses (cf. the discussion in chapter 7:28). He immediately returns to Mark by mentioning the location of the next episode, but omits the ‘and’ between ‘Judea’ and ‘on the other side of Jordan River,’ so that the reader might suppose there was a Judea beyond the Jordan, which there was not. The order of the two regions was already reversed in Mark, so that Matthew may have been intending to correct the text to read that Jesus went to Judea, and crossed the Jordan to get there. (2) Unlike Mark, Matthew does not just say that large crowds came together, but that they followed Jesus. He thus distinguishes between the people and the officials who rejected Jesus; not until 27:25 do the people take the side of their leaders. Finally, Matthew describes Jesus as healing rather than teaching; Jesus’ healing ministry is extremely important to him.”<sup>21</sup>

By this understanding given by Schweizer, we can see that Matthew takes us away from the former place of discussion and ministry of Jesus leading us to the beginning of a different scenario. Matthew presents Jesus the teacher, yet the one who fulfils the Torah and restores its originality, as Johnson comments: “Jesus’ most prominent activity in Matthew’s Gospel is teaching. As God’s

<sup>20</sup> L.T. JOHNSON, *The Writings of the New Testament. An Interpretation The Gospel of Matthew*, 204.

<sup>21</sup> E. SCHWEIZER, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 380-381.

Son, he knows the Father's will in a unique way, and he can reveal it to others and he affirms this by his healing ministry (11:25-30).<sup>22</sup>

### 1.4.2 Remote Context

This passage falls in the whole life struggle of the community, to establish the Kingdom of Heaven, which Jesus has already inaugurated. This idea covers the completely eschatological expectation of the Jewish people, though they are not aware of its fulfillment found in Jesus. The Jewish Christians want to be sure about the Law yet they feel and experience that Jesus is bringing in new things that are not in accord with what tradition says. In fact, this causes confrontation in the gospel of Matthew. It is a concern of the community. The opponents, Pharisees or scribes, are not necessarily people from the outside, but (probably) the members of Matthew's Christian community. They wished to follow the Mosaic Law, but there were new elements presented to them by Jesus. It was in this context that the community reflected and underwent a faith struggle, in order to find out where it stood, as a new community of Christ.<sup>23</sup> On this point Johnson points out in his commentary that:

“Matthew is the Gospel of the Church. Not only is it the only Gospel to use the term “church”, ἐκκλησία (16:18; 18:18), but both its contents and structure indicate an interest in providing clear and coherent guidance to a community of believers.”<sup>24</sup>

This of course is understood in the context of a people seeking identity, since this community of Matthew is made of different people, from various backgrounds, who made up Matthew's ecclesial community.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>L. T. JOHNSON, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 195.

<sup>23</sup>It is important to note that Matthew uses the term Church twice in the entire gospel, referring to this movement that is in Matt 16: 18 and 18:18, and not anywhere else in other gospels.

<sup>24</sup>L.T. JOHNSON, *The Writings of the new Testament*, 187.

<sup>25</sup>This community is composed of saints and sinners (cf. Matt 13:36-43). Those rejected from Judaism and those newly Converted from 'paganism' all searching how to live together and how to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

### 1.4.3 Literary Genre/Form

This section of the gospel falls under the general literary form of “teaching” within the journey to and ministry in Jerusalem,<sup>26</sup> as a number of scholars would see it. However, it is in the context of testing: a narrative mixed with dialogue that does not present self-defense but the restoration of the original plan of God. Matthew employs a polemical style that is coming from the rabbinic tradition yet with some kind of Greek way of rhetoric whereby Matthew shows Jesus who does not create answers for Pharisees but uses their own law to defeat them.<sup>27</sup> They present an argument from the school of Hillel,<sup>28</sup> (19:3), he makes them reflect on Gen 1:27, then Pharisees argue from Deut 24:1-4. Jesus concludes by saying do not pretend to say that Moses had more authority than God, he only did it because you were incapable of following the law in its original form.<sup>29</sup>

However, it is important to note that whatever literary form is applied in Matthew can only be understood from the literary genre behind the writing and that is “the good news”. Therefore, all the arguments in this text lead to one end to present the gospel to the people. For that reason we can conclude that Matthew is influenced by Greco–Roman and Jewish traditions, within a Christian context.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>R.E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 193-194.

<sup>27</sup>L.T. JOHNSON, *The Writings of the New Testament*. 198.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew*, SacraP 1, 275. “(even if the wife spoils a dish for him) and Rabbi Aqiba (even if he found another more beautiful than she is).

<sup>29</sup>Cf. HARRINGTON, 275. “Jesus’” own teaching on divorce seems to have been even stricter ( no divorce at all), perhaps in agreement with the Qumran Essenes.”

<sup>30</sup>J.P. MEIER, *Matthew’s Gospel. Literary Genre*, IV, 623.

## 1.5 The Parallels of Matt 19:1-12

### 1.5.1 Within Matthew's Gospel

The first time the author of Matthew's Gospel speaks about divorce is in the context of one of the important themes of Matthew, namely fulfillment of the Law (Matt 5:31-32). In this particular section, Jesus challenges the custom of Judaism, which focused so much on the external and rarely looked at the inner meaning of the practices thus breaking the covenant. In this kind of attitude, they got into forgetting the unceasing invitation of the prophets. The second presentation is in the context of the new justice. Jesus is journeying towards Jerusalem and poses a challenge to the holy city and the chosen people (Matt 19: 3-6). Matthew understood Jesus as the perfection of the Torah (Matt 19: 9). Furthermore it indicated that the caution given or presented to the members of the community about adultery in Matt 5: 27-28 is at the center of relationship in the Jewish mind. It is not only applied to human relationships but at a deeper level to the covenant relationship between God and Israel, as found in the prophetic literature leading into apocalyptic expectation. It has reference also to Deuteronomy 5:18 and Exodus 20:14. Matthew makes it a strong message to the New Israel,<sup>31</sup> and repeatedly teaches his community that it is not an old fashioned business of the law, but rather, it is an indispensable element in the fulfillment of the Law, through Jesus Christ who gives it a deeper and original meaning as willed by God. Actually, the debate on marriage, divorce and adultery in Matthew's Gospel cannot be properly understood unless one places it in the context of Matthew's new justice, which had come through Jesus Christ in order to accomplish not to abolish as others expected it, and bringing perfection to the old

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<sup>31</sup>This is how the first Christians of Matthew's community saw themselves, in relation to the People of God—the Jews, especially after the year 70 AD onwards.

interpretation of the Torah. This is one of the teachings of Jesus on the interiorization of the Torah:

The Law of YHWH, which according to Johnson was:

“ The central religious symbol of the Pharisaic tradition was Torah... it was the source of wisdom and the measure of righteousness, the reflection of the mind of God, the blueprint for creation the ideal frame for humanity. Though revealed through Moses on Sinai, Torah was eternal, though dwelling among humans it would live forever. Taking upon oneself the observation of Torah was to ‘take on the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.’”<sup>32</sup>

With this insight, we can understand why it was so much a concern of the Prophets. According to Matthew, this invitation or call of Jesus, goes beyond that of the Pharisees and scribes, who seem to be satisfied with external observances of the law, (Matt 5:17).

### 1.5.2 In Mark and Luke

As we have already indicated Matthew places the discussion of marriage and divorce in the whole idea of ministry in Judea and Jerusalem, moreover presenting them as gifts of God for the Kingdom. Due to the conclusion made by Jesus in Matt 19:12, it is clear that both are from God and to whomever it is granted ought to follow. For Mark this presentation is placed in the understanding of the way, —Jesus is moving towards Jerusalem. In addition, for Mark it is enough to speak about marriage and divorce. He does not bring up the issue of celibacy like Matthew. Nevertheless, both agree on not remarrying, therefore Palmer concludes:

“According to Christ’s teaching there is no reason which will justify a man in divorcing his wife and remarrying, no reason which will justify a woman in divorcing her husband and remarrying. To this extent, marriage is indissoluble; it cannot be dissolved by the contracting parties.”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore divorcing one’s wife, it is to commit adultery consequently going against the divine plan of God as ordained from the beginning of creation. That is what Jesus states to the Pharisees, asking them to go deeper into the law as God gives it, stated in the following statement. ὥστε οὐκ εἰσὶν δύο ἀλλὰ σὰρξ μία. ὃ οὖν ὁ θεὸς υνέζευξεν ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωριζέτω. In

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<sup>32</sup>L.T. JOHNSON, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 197.

<sup>33</sup>P.F. PALMER, *Sacrament of Healing and Vocation*, 86

Matt 19:6 and Mark 10:8-9, we find the whole discussion in Mark 10:1-12. Luke does not mention the term marriage rather, he presents the command, and there is no discussion as it is the case in Matthew and Mark. Luke is interested in presenting Jesus the lawgiver. He gives a conclusion without bothering about good or bad, he only points out the consequence of separating and marrying someone else, Luke 16:18, which is in accord with Mark 10:11-12, Matt 19: 9 though modified.

Actually, the entire passage in Matthew and Mark presents to us the controversy that was going on in the community of the believers; this seems to have been an issue that these churches were frequently engaged in its quarrel with Judaism.<sup>34</sup> That could be the reason why it is not of great importance for Luke who writes principally for gentiles, while on the other hand it is more of an issue for Matthew's church than that of Mark, since he repeats it twice and brings in new elements.

The phrase that they possess in common is "everyone who divorces his wife..." found in Mark 10:11-12 and Matt 19:9, 5:32. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus is presented with the Mosaic allowance of divorce as in Deut. 24:1-4, he responds with the order of creation in Gen 1-2. Mark includes the divorcing of husbands by their wives as well, which is shared by Luke.<sup>35</sup> When it comes to Matthew, Jesus is presented with the possibility of a man divorcing his wife, following Deuteronomy by allowing divorce for reasons of sexual immorality (πορνεία). This is in line with what Paul teaches in 1 Cor 5:1. There is considerable debate about what he really means by that, as we will see. Moreover, as we have said before it is not clear why and how Luke comes to his conclusion, as Johnson writes:

"Luke's prohibition has no rationalization. It forbids husbands divorcing and remarrying, as well as marrying a divorced. The real problem is determining how Luke sees this as a statement concerning

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<sup>34</sup>E. SCHWEIZER, *The Good News According to Mark*, 201.

<sup>35</sup>This indicates the influence of the Roman law and could be the customs of other nations, which Matthew was not aware or did not know.

the per durance of 'law.' Torah forbade adultery absolutely, Exod 20:13; Deut 5:18, but nowhere connected divorce to adultery.<sup>36</sup>

However, this puts us in a position of wondering why Luke would do something like that. The answer could be that Luke did not envisage or consider the issue as important for his community as it was for the other churches, but since they drew from some common source, he saw it would not be good to ignore the whole issue. Instead, he took what he judged to be important in following Jesus, the giver of the Christian law.

## 1.6 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have the preliminary work that brings us to a better understanding or ground for the following chapter. It has been a task of making decisions and looking into the text deeply, setting the limits of the text that is in question, namely Matt.19:1-12; demonstrating where to begin and end; and justifying the limits of text that we have chosen for this research.

In the section on textual criticism, we followed the proposals of Metzger. The first chapter then concludes with setting the text into its context: the immediate and remote context that includes the literary form of the text. After all of that the research ends with parallelism within the Gospel Matthew in comparison with Mark and Luke.

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<sup>36</sup>L. T. JOHNSON, *The Gospel of Luke*, 251.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **The Exegetical work and the Details of Our Text**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is dealing with the text itself. The researcher looks at the text and divides the passage into a structure that has three distinct parts and each stands on its own. First, the introduction that is Matt 19:1-2, then the two encounters between Jesus and Pharisees (3-9), then the disciples and Jesus (10-12). Nevertheless, the three are put together to make a unity of what it means to follow Jesus, as embraced in the whole idea of the Kingdom of Heaven. Secondly follows the detailed work on our text, which is dedicated to the exegesis and commentary, both from the researcher and also backed up with the authority of different writers. As much as possible the terms that are examined are presented in the original language.

#### **2.2 Structure of the Passage**

##### **2.2.1 The Three Parts of Matt 19:1-12**

###### **Part I:**

Matt 19:1-2 the introduction and setting of Matthew 19:3-12

###### **Part II:**

- 1) Matt 19:3-6, discussion on the possibility of divorce.
- 2) Matt 19:7-8, discussion on Moses' command to divorce.
- 3) Matt 19:9, The authority of Jesus on Marriage.

###### **Part III:**

- 1) Matt 19:10 reactions of the Apostles.
- 2) Matt 19:11 Jesus' Understanding of celibacy as

### 3) Matt 19:12 The categories of eunuchs:

- Eunuchs due to Natal effects
- Eunuchs due to surgical procedure (*operation*)
- Eunuchs out of self will, for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.

## 2.2.2 Situating Matt 19:1-2

Before we get into the detailed discussion of our passage, it is worth noting that even though we will not pay great attention to the first section (Matt 19:1-2), these verses are important. They bring our mind to the place where the author of the gospel wants us to place ourselves. For that reason, they play an important role as an introduction of our passage, as we have already said in the first chapter.

At this point Matthew picks up again on Mark's narrative, and typically of Matthew's methodology, indicates that the place has changed and new narrations are to take place. In v.1, Matthew tells us that Jesus had finished one thing and is to undertake another. He tells us that the following discussion is taking place in the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, as if there were two Judea[s] or as if Judea extended beyond the Jordan, which is not the case. What we can say is that, probably the "and" between Judea *and* Jordan dropped out. But what is clear is that Matthew makes Jesus avoid going through Samaria.<sup>37</sup> Matthew wanted to show Jesus who fulfils the Torah, and so the confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees takes place, not anywhere else but in Judea.

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<sup>37</sup> B.T. VIVIANO, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. 662.

## 2.3 Detailed Exegesis of Matthew 19:3-12

In this passage of the gospel, we deal with tensions in the Matthean presentation. This section is one of the many parts that deal with confrontations. In fact, it is correct to say that Matthew's gospel is characterized by statements of different views. It presents the radical view that subordinates the letter of the law to the authoritative teaching of Jesus. At the same time it illustrates that the gospel would not have been out of place in rabbinic tradition. As Donaldson presents it;

“We encounter the radical approach to the written Torah in the antitheses (Matt5:21-48, in pericopes dealing with the Sabbath (12:1-8,9-14, with purity (15:1-20), and with divorce (19:3-9), and in the studied disregard of the ritual requirements of the Torah in the gentile mission, even though these Gentile converts are to be subject to Jesus' authoritative interpretation of the law (28:18-20). But on the other hand in addition to 22:40 we have in 5:17-20 the strong denial that the law, even down to its smallest particulars, is not to be abolished (cf. 23:23) and 23:2-3 the statement of support for the teaching authority of the scribes and Pharisees. Which taken at face value, seems to acknowledge the binding nature of even the oral tradition.”<sup>38</sup>

In this kind of struggle, the community of Matthew lived, grew and defined itself. The tension is not created for its own sake: but to present the reality of this ecclesial status, between the two worldviews of Jewish religion and this new movement, Judeo-Christianity. This had to be lived within the influence of Judeo-Roman and Hellenistic-culture. It was in that situation that Matthew felt that the Christian response was necessary. Therefore following Christ would mean nothing if all that is to be done is simply to live according to the old understanding of the law.

### 2.3.1 Discussion on the Possibility of Divorce

The discussion is between Jesus and the Pharisees, the situation is that of tempting expressed by *πειράζοντες αὐτὸν καὶ λέγοντες*. They do not come to Jesus empty, rather they have prejudiced ideas already. The Pharisees want to trap him. That is the reason why the

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<sup>38</sup> T.L. DONALDSON, *The Law that Hangs* (Matthew 22:40): *Rabbinic Foundation and Matthean Social World*, CBQ, 57, (October 1995), 696-697.

question in Matthew is rephrased by adding, “For any cause”: for sure, at this point in chapter 19 Matthew wants to show that the opponents of Jesus have already experienced how free and liberal Jesus seems when it comes to the law. Some are not happy and so they look for a way to catch him. The discussion on divorce is one of the possibilities. There was a dispute already between two schools of thought: the rabbinical school of Hillel which permitted divorce,<sup>39</sup> “for any cause”, while that of Shammai, which permitted it only on the case of adultery.<sup>40</sup> In whatever case both schools accept divorce.

“The master’s critics approach him as a rabbi asking him to decide the question: ‘Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife *for any cause*’ (emphasis added), a provocative reference to the teaching of the school of Hillel. Instead of deciding the point of Mosaic Law disputed by the schools of Hillel and Shammai, Jesus avoids the trap set for him by transcending the question. He does not take sides in the dispute, but appeals to another text in the scripture.”<sup>41</sup>

Matthew has transposed Mark 10:4-5, so that he may bring to light Jesus the convinced and wise teacher of the law. This is well illustrated by the following quotation of the rabbinic law: “Have you not read...?” Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε. The text goes back to the Pharisees on their interpretation of the law: are you so ignorant that you do not know your law? Jesus appeals to Gen1:27, which discuss the relationship between Adam and Eve. “...in the case of Adam and Eve divorce was not only inadvisable, it was not only wrong, but it was completely impossible and out of the question, for the very fact that there was no one else whom either could possibly marry.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Jesus is not giving a new law, but he states the fundamental principle that

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<sup>39</sup>Cf. W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 198. “Interpreted this *matter of indecency* in the widest possible way. They said that it meant that a man could divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner, if she spun, or went with unbound hair, or spoke to men in the streets, if she spoke disrespectfully of his parents in his presence, if she was a brawling woman whose voice could be heard in the next house.”

<sup>40</sup>Cf. W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 198. “The Shammai were quite clear that a *matter of indecency* meant fornication and fornication alone and that for no other cause could a wife be put away. Let the woman be as mischievous as Jezebel, so long as she did not commit adultery she could not be put away.”

<sup>41</sup>P.F. PALMER, *Sacraments of Healing and Vocation*, 83.

<sup>42</sup>W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 200. This idea is so consistent that in the story of the first parents, God did not give this possibility of divorcing, not to a man nor to a woman. It does not appear in God’s plan. One would expect that after the fall in Genesis 3, Adam would divorce his wife after having caused him a separation from God. But interestingly, the more challenges they get into the more they have

any kind of divorce is wrong, and so he was stating the permanent state of marriage. He then proclaims the authority given in this instituted union of marriage, that any authority cannot divide it, neither intrinsic, meaning the two partners, nor extrinsic, signifying external human authority, whether religious or civil, because the two are one. What is already made one in flesh and shared at a psychological level cannot be reversed. This is an appeal of Jesus to the law, again in Gen 2:24, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.” Paul had already emphasised this in 1Cor 6:16, “Do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute become one body with her? For the two it is said, “...will become one flesh.” For sure, this is a challenge that transcends not just an external moral action but goes further and beyond the empirical conception of mind,<sup>43</sup> as Macquarrie expresses it:

“These constitute a moral bond between them. Any moral bond when explored in depths is found to have ontological foundations. The solemn obligations undertaken by the marriage partners cannot fail to affect them in the very depths of their being, and I think they usually do, even if they break down at a later time. The obligations are certainly not of the kind that can be undertaken lightly if one thinks about them at all.”<sup>44</sup>

Jesus’ response stands at the very beginning of the Old Testament law, which remains in effect. In fact, the authoritative teaching of Jesus shows his obedience to the law in its original state, in opposition to human interpretations. Now, for Christians, the Torah must be understood as interpreted by Jesus, since those who have gone before him have changed it due to the conditions of the human heart, (Luke 16:15). Therefore, the authority on marriage is with God only. ὁ οὖν ὁ θεὸς συνέζευξεν ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωριζέτω. Jesus shows that this union is part of creation and formally stated in the law. It is the work of God, which no human

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to be together. Clearly God tells Eve, you will now desire Adam that ever. So supportively Adam takes the responsibility of being there for her despite all the hard tasks that he has to take on.

<sup>43</sup> From this point view, we can say that the relationship between God and human beings or the whole idea of religion is not reasonable from the fact that it is beyond reason. That is why Christian marriage and celibate life depend on faith in order to take their daily challenges.

<sup>44</sup>J. MACQUARRIE, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, 221.

being should tamper with. In fact, to act otherwise from what was intended from the beginning is a matter of interfering with the laws of creation. Jesus goes beyond scholarly interpretations and views, by referring to creation: he gives an argument that does not please the tempters, but they can hardly contest it. This is because what Jesus said is true, not from the fact that he says it, but rather because the creator ordained it that way. What Jesus says is not new, since it was at the center of the Jewish law on marriage.

“The Jewish term for marriage was *Kiddushin*. *Kiddushin* meant Sanctification or Consecration. It was used to describe something, which was dedicated to God as his exclusive and peculiar possession. Any thing totally surrendered to God was *Kiddushin*. This meant that in marriage the husband was consecrated to the wife, and the wife to the husband.”<sup>45</sup>

However, this also has to be understood from the point of view that by that time there were all sorts of confusion in understanding the law, as interpreted by different schools of thought. Deming testifies this reality when he writes:

“It was taught in the school of R. Ishmael; ‘You shall not commit adultery (לֹא תִאָּדוּן)’ means there shall be in you no adultery (תִּיאָּדוּן), neither with the hand nor with the foot. Our master taught, ‘the proselytes and those who play with children delay the messiah.’ Granted ‘proselytes’, as is the opinion of R. Helbo, for R. Helbo said: ‘Proselytes are as hard for Israel as a sore,’ but ‘those who play with children,’ what does it mean? If we say homosexuality—they were punished by stoning (Lev.20: 13), if we say sexual activity involving the limbs—they were punished by the flood. Thus, we must say, those who marry young girls who have not yet reached the age of childbearing. These are those of whom R. Jose said, ‘The son of David does not come until the completion of all the souls which are in the region of the unborn...’”<sup>46</sup>

Since everyone came up with a definition of what the law meant, that caused confusion as to what really was the main route of obeying the Lord. Some of the questions that people put to Jesus illustrate this, for instance: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” cf. Matt 22:36ff. This kind of misunderstanding was vividly present in Matthew’s community.

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<sup>45</sup>W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 202

<sup>46</sup>W. DEMING, *Mark 9:42-10:12, Matthew 5:27-32 and B. Nid. 13b: A First Century Discussion of Male Sexuality*, NTS 36, (January 1990) 133.

### 2.3.2 The Discussion on Moses' Command to Divorce

However, for the Pharisees there was still a possibility of putting forward their argument. They appeal to the authority of the prophet. By quoting the Torah, the Pharisees put into question the authority of Moses: Τί οὖν Μωϋσῆς ἐνετείλατο. They blame Moses, and still they want to prove Jesus ignorant of the law. "Why then did Moses command...?" of course, they were, recalling Deuteronomy 24:1-4

"When a man after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her *something indecent*, and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house: if on leaving his house she goes and becomes the wife of another man, and the second husband, too comes to dislike her and dismisses her from his house by handing her a written bill of divorce; or if this second man who has married her, dies; then her former husband, who dismissed her may not again take her as his wife after she had become defiled. That would be abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring such guilt upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you as a heritage."

The interpretation of what it means by something indecent, gave the way for scholarly exchanges in the School of Hillel and School of Shammai, as pointed out before, since the law shows some provision for divorce.<sup>47</sup> There is too much obsession on divorcing a wife but nothing about the man as far as Matthew is concerned. This is from the fact that, freeborn women in Israel (and ancient Near East) were expected to guard their chastity, both before and during marriage. On the other hand, freeborn men were granted the license to pursue their sexual pleasure through a variety of outlets. Their partners were most often of the lower class like slaves or freedwomen.<sup>48</sup> However, this is not in accordance to the standard of God's new people. Nonetheless, Jesus takes them back to the original law, Gen 1:27-28. He does not reject the commandment nor degrade the authority of Moses, but terms it nothing more than permission. That is not in fact how it was understood instead. It was taken, as Bockmuehl states it here:

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 198. "Rabbi Akiba even went the length of saying that the phrase *if she finds no favour in his eyes*, meant that a man could divorce his wife if he found a woman whom he liked better and considered more beautiful."

<sup>48</sup>J. H. WEBER, *The Images of Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25:31-46*, CBQ, 59, 665.

“A more promising track would appear to be followed by those who refer to rabbinic injunctions prescribing divorce in case of infidelity. An adulterous wife must be divorced and is forbidden to her husband; t. Sot 5:9 even considers it a commandment (מצוה) to divorce a wife who bathed with the men (cf. b. Git 90a-b). This idea of a required divorce, which also occurs in Gentile law, (*Lex Julia de adulteries of 18 B.C*) has in its favour a considerable amount of rabbinic evidence, and it finds probable support in Prov18: 22a LXX, (‘he who holds on an adulteress is foolish and godless (ἀσεβής) as well as in Matt1:19, ‘Joseph being righteous wanted to divorce her (ἀπολύσαι), N.B. cf. 5:32, 19:9.”<sup>49</sup>

However, it is stated, that it was granted because of hardening of the human heart, meaning it was not the original plan of God. In fact in Mark, Jesus opponents twice ask him what is “permitted” and in return he asks them what is “commanded”; on the contrary here the opponents ragingly cite the commandment of Moses but Jesus evaluates it as a mere “permission,” a concession, thus devaluing it. Therefore, Jesus argues back as to say; do not keep on blaming and pointing fingers at others, the problem is within you. Well, the obvious question would be how do you know that? τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν: due to “the hardness of your hearts”, this is a similar accusation against Israel, which is actually found in 1 Samuel 10:17-19.<sup>50</sup> In this passage, God blames the behaviour of his people, who forget all that he has done for them through the ages and demand for a king. Due to temptations, they want to be like other nations. This is hardening their hearts, consequently rejecting God, “but today you have *rejected your God* who delivered you from all your evils and calamities by saying to him, not so but you must appoint a king over us. Now therefore take your stand before the Lord according to tribes and families...”

Just before the Pharisees could get a chance to ask him, how do you know that? He added, ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς δὲ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως, “from the beginning it was not so.” Jesus points out to them the deviation from the original institution. For that fundamental reason, he appeals to the creation Story in Gen 1:27-28. This implies a radical attack on the presupposition about

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<sup>49</sup>M. N. A. BOCKMUEHL, *Matt 5: 32,19:9 in Light of Pre-Rabbinic Halakhah*, *New Testament Studies*, 35, 292.

<sup>50</sup>B. T. VIVIANO, *The Gospel According To Matthew*, 662

divorce. In a real sense Jesus was right when he asked the previous question, have you not read the law? Since, “the Jewish laws of marriage and purity aimed very high. Ideally, divorce was hated. God had said ‘I hate divorce’ (Malachi 2:16). It was said that the very altar wept tears when a man divorced the wife of his youth.”<sup>51</sup> Instead of the Pharisees accepting the principle as presented to them by Jesus, on the contrary, they counter him with a different passage from the Scripture. On this point, Jesus does not allow further discussion, so he terms it a mere concession. Matthew added this concession of divorce and by this Jesus restored the law to its original force.<sup>52</sup>

### 2.3.3 The Authority of Jesus on Marriage

It is worth noting the difference in Mark 10:11-12, for he does not present to his community what Matthew told his assembly. This presents us clear differences in dealing with issues between these churches from which the synoptic gospels grew. Therefore, Barclay makes a point when he tells us:

“There is the comparatively small difficulty that Mark implies that a woman can divorce her husband, a process which, as we have seen, was not possible under Jewish law. But the exception is that Jesus must have well known that under Gentiles law a woman could divorce her husband and in that particular clause he was looking beyond the Jewish world. The great difficulty is that both Mark and Luke make the prohibition of divorce absolute; with them there are no exceptions whatsoever.”<sup>53</sup>

At this point, Jesus speaks with authority to his opponents, λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν “I say to you whoever divorces his wife except for immorality (πορνεία)<sup>54</sup> and marries another-one commits adultery, (μοιχευθῆναι)...” Therefore, in Matthew’s view, divorce can be permitted on the ground of adultery but not on the evidence of immorality. This is the same idea which is expressed in Matt 5:32, but it is not found in other forms of divorce prohibition (Luke 16:18,

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<sup>51</sup> W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 196

<sup>52</sup> J.L. MCKENZIE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 96.

<sup>53</sup> W. BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 201.

<sup>54</sup> Another possible translation of the original Greek word is “unchastity” it is not certain however what fornication or unchastity means in this context it may mean premarital fornication or unlawful marriage.

Mark 10:11, 1 Cor 5:1). However, what Jesus states now removes the Pharisees from the focus and puts the disciples on the scene. This kind of teaching and all the obligations that are entailed in the marriage bond do not seem to be accepted as Good News, to both the Pharisees and the disciples of Jesus as well. They all retort though in different ways. The Pharisees go away sad, like the rich young man (Matt19:21). While the disciples are taken up by perplexities, this is because the term πορνεία, covers a wide range of immorality, thus to allow divorce for any kind of πορνεία would seem to nullify the force of the prohibition that Jesus presented and thus give a sure support to the school of Hillel. In addition, from the reactions of the two groups we can guess without doubt that it is not right to interpret πορνεία as adultery since the term to commit adultery is expressed by μοιχευθῆναι, therefore the proper word is μοιχεία, (μοιχεύω) adultery, and therefore μοιχός is an adulterous male.<sup>55</sup> This could be the reason why both Pharisees and the disciples did not take note or pay any interest in the exception given, since it does not lessen the demand that had already been stated. The most likely interpretation of πορνεία would find a reference to marriages within what the Jews regarded as forbidden degrees of kindred. We could ask, what is the point for Matthew adding this exception in his account?

“There is little doubt that here we have Jesus laying down the *principle*—mark again, not, the *law*—that the ideal of marriage is union which cannot be broken. There is much more to be said—but here the *ideal*, as God meant it, is laid down, and Matthew’s saving clause is a later interpretation inserted in the light of the practice of the Church when he wrote.”<sup>56</sup>

Possibly, he inserted this to insist on the fact that such as Jesus’ prohibitions on divorce did not apply to marriages contracted by Gentiles who had come to believe in Christ. In support of those marriages that can be dissolved as if had never occurred, in fact in Acts 15:20, we find four items, which are prohibited, to Christian–Gentiles; since the other, three echo the

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<sup>55</sup> J. H. THAYER, *Μοιχεία*, –ας, ἡ, 417

<sup>56</sup> BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 202

prohibitions in Lev 17, it leads most people to propose that the fourth could be πορνεία thus referring to intercourse with closer kindred as described in Lev 18 for example the outrageous πορνεία condemned by Paul in 1Cor 5:1 where a man was living with his stepmother. Due to the meaning of the terms used in this teaching, the reaction of the disciples follows. They propose the end of the marriage institution; they see it being impossible to live in such a unity.<sup>57</sup> According to Macquarrie, the disciples make a point by their reaction, which is valid for us to think about.

“It is not to be undertaken ‘unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly. Marriage is just as demanding and just as impossible as ordination, and in Christian communions where one has to make a choice between these two because there is a rule of celibacy for clergy, I think it should be made clear that the one ‘state of life’ is not more sacrificial than the other, and that both are acceptable to God and both are mindful of each one’s obligation to his or her fellow human being.”<sup>58</sup>

J. Macquarrie expresses what had not been clear for the disciples, though it can be attributed to Matthew. That is the reason why the disciples suggest a quick solution to Jesus’ teaching on marriage. Nevertheless Jesus the good teacher does not simply accept or fall into their trap. Instead, he leads them to the understanding that neither marriage nor celibacy is meant for all, but rather each person takes what befits him or her.

### 2.3.4 Reaction of the Apostles

Εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία. Such is the reaction of the disciples, “if such is the case...” between husband and wife, it is better not to marry at all. Interestingly, the disciples do not pay attention to the exception. Instead their naïve reaction is that the single state is a preferable *alternative* to indissoluble marriage. Like Soren Kierkegaard, the apostles perceived clearly that it is impossible to commit oneself to such conditions of marriage. A century ago, Soren Kierkegaard was complaining about the lack of life long commitments in friendship, marriage

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<sup>57</sup> R. E. BROWN, *An Introduction to The New Testament*, 193-194.

<sup>58</sup> J. MACQUARRIE, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, 226.

and vocation, especially to Christian ministry. Both in his time and further more, the time of the apostles, such long-term commitments were not easy. In fact the obligations in such commitments are quite frightening and it is not surprising that people shrink from them.<sup>59</sup> Jesus affirms what they say but he adds that indeed celibacy is a grace as marriage is, but not for many or rather for every person.

### 2.3.5 Jesus' Understanding of Celibacy

Jesus teaches that, like marriage, celibacy is a grace from God, which implies that if it is not one's given grace in life, it is impossible to practice it. As it is said but only to those to whom that is granted ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται. At this point the naïve proposal of the disciples counterbalanced by the reply of Jesus raised the possibility about being εὐνοῦχος, the total abstinence from marriage for a reason, which is the Kingdom of Heaven. Like the condition already put on marriage, without the possibility of divorce, such celibacy points to the eschatological value. That is what is prophetically spoken by the prophet Isaiah when he says, "...Nor let the eunuchs say 'I am a dry tree' for thus says the Lord: 'To the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name. Better than sons and daughters an eternal, imperishable name will I give them'" (Isaiah 56:3b-5). As it stands, both marriage and celibacy impose demands that this world regards as impossible. Accordingly, the demands we find in this particular passage (Matt 19:1-12) fall in the same category of what it means to be a follower of Christ. That is why it has been said in the first chapter that there can never be a Christian Commitment without Christ.

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<sup>59</sup>MACQUARRIE, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, 222.

### 2.3.6 The Categories of Eunuchs

There are two ways to become εὐνοῦχοι: Those made eunuchs through imposition of nature or society, as it is in the case of ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως those who live without marriage by reason of natal defects or εὐνουχίσθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων by surgery cases, to both ways, the state of celibacy is not one's own choice but some sort of influence.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, in both cases, celibacy is inflicted on the person. However, Jesus points out to them that there are some people who renounce marriage and live a celibate life, not for any other reason apart from being for the sake of Kingdom of Heaven and the good news, εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν Βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, and this is what Jesus terms as matter of being a grace which for sure also it remains a choice to be made by individual persons. Though we come to this conclusion, the text does not specifically give the reasons for such a renunciation of marriage. Nevertheless, it fits in with the demands of following Jesus for the sake of the gospel. (cf. for instance Matt 19:29), “and everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life”. Yet unlike others, it is not meant for all, only those to whom it is given, and then one accepts it. As a conclusion, Jesus poses an obligation on the person who is granted this call, ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρεῖτω, as to say let him/her take the challenge, whoever can accept this teaching ought to accept it. Moreover, this kind of ending illustrates the permanent nature of the state of celibacy like that of marriage, unlike the one practiced at the Qumran community, which is not easy to judge,<sup>61</sup> while witnesses speak of a life of

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<sup>60</sup>There could be some occasions where one could voluntarily request for surgical treatment due to a certain problem in life, therefore it is by choice. Also could be deduced from one's understanding of the Scripture like Origen. But for Jesus all of those types do not qualify for the Kingdom of God, since one mutilates his/her body.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. J.J. COLLINS, *Essenes*, II, 623-624. “Abstention from marriage and sexuality was one of the hallmarks of the Essenes according to Philo, Josephus and even Pliny. While Philo says flatly that ‘no Essene marries’

celibacy at the same time giving evidence of having children and women within the community. Furthermore, there is evidence also of a strong sense of obeying the commandment of multiplying and filling the earth.<sup>62</sup> The celibacy of the Old Testament cannot inspire what Jesus explains, since celibate life was never appreciated. It was mostly imposed on women, mostly connected to unfaithfulness in marriage,<sup>63</sup> whereby celibacy was not so much valued, neither encouraged in Israel–society as Barclay writes:

“No nation has ever had higher view of marriage than the Jews. Marriage was a sacred duty. To remain unmarried after the age of twenty, except in order to concentrate upon the study of the Law, was to break a positive commandment to ‘be fruitful and multiply.’ He who had no children ‘slew his own posterity,’ and ‘lessened the image of God upon the earth.’ ‘When husband and wife are worthy, the glory of is with them.’”<sup>64</sup>

It was always temporary and often imposed as a form of corporal purification. Actually, in the Roman world the unmarried person was denied his civil rights and was given menial tasks.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, in the mind of Christ, once it is given then it becomes a task and a choice for the particular person who takes it as a lifestyle. In Christ, marriage receives a sacramental status while celibacy is divinized for the service of the Kingdom of Heaven.

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(*Hypothetical* 11.14), Josephus adds, in epilogue to his account, that there is a second order of Essenes which differs in this regard (JW2.8.13, 160-61) and says that even celibates do not condemn marriage in principle (2.8.2, 121)...Dionysios bar Salibi points out that the Essenes did not approach their wives again after they had become pregnant, is evidence is based on a misunderstanding of Josephus. The scrolls never mention a prohibition of marriage, but IQS does not mention the subject at all and makes no provision for women in the community. In contrast, the rule for the camps in CD assumes marriage and family life; and the ‘Rule for the Ends of Days’ ( the so-called ‘ annex to the community Rule’ IQsa provides for sexual relations when a man has reached 20 years of age.....”

<sup>62</sup>J. A. FITZMYER, *Qumran Community*, XII, 34.

<sup>63</sup>P. DELHAYE, *History of the Practice of Celibacy*, III, 369.

<sup>64</sup>BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, II, 196

<sup>65</sup>P. DELHAYE, *History of the Practice of Celibacy*, 369.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Through this chapter the concern has been the meaning implied in the text. We have examined the text and commented on most statements. We have looked closely at almost every action or move and concluded what that means or could communicate to the believers. As it was the case of the first chapter to lay a foundation for this chapter, the exegetical work on the text gives us the light into the theological interpretations, since that will be the task of the coming chapter. In fact, this work is the mother of the following theological and pastoral concerns with their applications to both married life and celibate people, since both are called to live in a state of chastity.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **The Theological Meaning of the Text and the Pastoral Concerns**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theological message of the text, which is the concretization of the understanding that has been investigated in the previous two chapters. Here we look into the historical meaning of the text and give some applications. Moreover, we pay special attention to the pastoral issue for both commitments in the life of the Church. Marriage and celibacy are treated separately for the sake of emphasis. Thereafter, we look into some limitations of both married life and religious life and make some proposals from the researcher's point of view.

#### **3.2 The Message and Theological Application of Matt 19:1-12**

##### **3.2.1 The Message of our Text**

Matthew 19:1-12 presents a challenge to the Christian community that marriage and celibate life are both granted by God.<sup>66</sup> Stress is placed on the fact that they are not human creative capacities or initiatives but of God's origin, since they are willed and granted to us by Divine God. The aim of both is not competition but rather 'complementarity,' as it is anthropologically defined in the case of male and female relationship in Gen 2:18, 20-24.

Since God grants marriage and celibacy to the ecclesial community, the same God empowers and gives the ability to individual human beings to fulfill those tasks. For that simple reason, both marriage and celibate life cannot be brought to their intended perfection

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<sup>66</sup>It is an ability to live in Marriage or Celibate or single life in the light of grace. The emphasis is laid on the fact that the two aspects of life are a given chance or charism for fulfilling human sexuality, aiming at the same goal but from different perspectives.

through human efforts or will. Although determination is necessary, it is not enough. One requires the capacity to carry out this style of life, and that is what Jesus told the disciples: unless it is granted. Therefore, to both without preference or distinction of any kind, God must be the central focus of each person, whether in married life or celibate life. Marriage and celibacy are to be understood as meant for the service of the Kingdom of Heaven. Christian marriage and celibacy are not just from natural instinct and whoever participates in them cannot live according to the standards of this world, but rather of another realm which Jesus presents. Through God's operations, human beings have capacity to accept the challenges that both marriage and celibacy present. And so those who accept the challenge, in return demonstrate a co-penetration into the prophetic message and eschatological reality, which is not completely unveiled and in fact not yet properly grasped. In fact, both marriage and celibacy require a leap of faith<sup>67</sup> otherwise humanly speaking they are impossible, (Matt 17: 20). Somebody who is given one of these graces needs to trust in God, and allow the power of God to work through her/him, so that she/he may bring to fulfillment the mission given. In fact, those who identify their grace, have a responsibility and an opportunity at the same time, to allow God to let the impossible become possible.<sup>68</sup> This is nothing new in our history of faith. We have Abraham's example and we have an obvious example in Mary mother of Jesus as we read in Luke 1:38. "...may it be done to me according to your word." or in the most perfect example of Jesus, "...my father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, but as you will," Matt 26:38 and "...Father if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done" (Matt 26:42). To live a married life or a celibate life cannot be taken or be

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<sup>67</sup>Cf. K.P. DONFRIEND, *Faith*, 298. In a theological-biblical language, faith means looking beyond one's power, "... a total trust or reliance on God who is himself trustworthy..."

<sup>68</sup>Cf. R. P. MCBRIEN, *Grace*, 577. Marriage and celibacy, like any other gifts from God, they are: "God's free and forgiving self-communication that enables humans to share in the Trinitarian relationship of love..." and so marriage and celibacy are intrinsically means of communication to God and amongst the human beings. Therefore of greater value for they make us be partakers and sharers in the life of God.

expected to be a garden of roses, it has never been in any life of faith. It takes a cost of self-emptying and trusting in God, to let him bring to completion what he has begun in any one of us. This requires support of the ecclesial presence.

### 3.2.2 Historical Meaning of our Text

The normal understanding of synoptic relationships is that Matthew uses Mark as his primary source, adapting Mark to suit his needs. Our passage has a parallel in Mark 10:1-16. Matthew places this passage 19:1-12, after the fourth major discourse. It sets the scene for Jesus as a teacher. In his account, Matthew reshaped the teaching of Jesus on marriage and divorce, in a way that gives birth to the third item of discussion, namely celibacy. Matthew uses an argumentative device, thus leading to a coherent and proper situation in the context of Judaism. In order to set a trap, the Pharisees ask Jesus a question that needs him to take a stand, so that they could accuse him in whatever way they desired. This had already been an argument between the two Jewish Rabbinic schools and Matthew now places Jesus at the middle of the debate. In fact, the opponents presumed that necessarily Jesus would prefer one of the schools. By this kind of device, Matthew makes Jesus, a first-century Jew who understands the Torah, enter the debate on the proper grounds for divorce. He brings in Mosaic juridical argument as a proper excuse for divorce. This is all meant to bring to light the Jesus who does not just possess good knowledge of the Law but also the wisdom of God, as it was prophesied, "all your sons shall be taught by the Lord."<sup>69</sup> Matthew shows that he is concerned with Jewish Law coming to dialogue with Jesus' teaching. In addition, as we have said before, this was a struggle in Matthew's community, as they define the two questions,

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<sup>69</sup>Cf. Isa. 54:13

“who is Jesus” and “who are we in relation to him and to our ancestral expectations?” This was the faith journey of Matthew’s Christian community.

Matthew introduces something new in the Judeo-Christian concept of religion. He followed Mark’s narration but after Mark10:12, before getting into the issue of blessing children verse 13, Matthew inserts the idea of celibacy, (Matt 19:10-12). This notion of celibacy has the same demands and status as marriage.<sup>70</sup> The underlying teaching is that both are from God and they are offered to different people. Matthew faces the difficulties that emerged in his community about faithfulness in marriage, and at the same time, he defended those who seem strange to the community, due to their discernment of a different call, the celibate vocation.<sup>71</sup> This is a disturbing issue in the community, taking into account that every Jewish man was expected to marry at the age of twenty; celibacy is not known in the ancient world except virginity which was imposed on women, who were dedicated to deities.<sup>72</sup> This attitude is also an attack on Jesus, who at thirty-three years had not married and to make it worse, Jesus died without children. Therefore, Matthew makes a point to defend both Jesus and his followers.

1) **On Jesus:** a) Jesus did not marry in order to proclaim the Kingdom, which relatively speaking is greater than learning the Torah. b) The notion of marriage in the Jewish mind was mostly to give opportunity for the birth of a messiah. Now the messiah being Jesus himself, there was no need for him to marry, (Matt 22: 30).

2) **On the followers of Jesus:** a) Those who follow Jesus on the road, have to make a choice that nobody expects them to take for the sake of spreading the gospel. Not temporarily as was the custom, where one could delay his marriage for the sake of learning the Torah, but making a choice that touches the fundamental orientation of a life

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<sup>70</sup>R.E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 194.

<sup>71</sup>D. J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 274-275.

<sup>72</sup>P. DELHAYE, *Celibacy*, 366-374

long commitment. b) At the same time it is a memorial of what Jesus did while in their midst.

### 3.2.3 The Application to Marriage

A number of people, both among the believers and non-believers think that the Church is too harsh on people who are married, for teaching that: “the essential properties of Christian marriage are unity and indissolubility”, as Canon Law states.<sup>73</sup> In fact, as we have seen in our previous chapters, the canon does not create something new but obeys the principle of Christ as it is presented in Matthew’s gospel, deduced from Genesis, not as a commandment but rather a norm for this kind of life, to those who ought to take it.

Now by its nature and norm, a ratified and consummated Christian marriage cannot be dissolved.<sup>74</sup> This norm is deduced from the fact that, marriage was instituted and willed by the Creator, from the beginning.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, it is contracted between two mature people who are expected to be equally responsible and at the same time aware of the joys and consequences of the contract. That then, brings in a fundamental task of making sure that the two are well informed and educated, and at the same time to see to it that they are capable of what they are about to get into, before they get married.<sup>76</sup> Christian Marriage calls for self-giving to one

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<sup>73</sup>Cf. G. SHEEHY – *al.*, *The Canon Law Letter and Spirit. A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law*, 574. “The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage obtain a special firmness in virtue of the Sacrament” Can 1056.

<sup>74</sup>Cf. G. SHEEHY, *al.*, *The Canon Law Letter and Spirit. A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law*, 642. The Church’s teaching on Marriage is: “A marriage which is ratified and consummated cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause other than death” Can. 1141.1. “Since the two conditions are the efficient causes of marriage. This is understood that the consent of the two parties makes marriage, the consummation by sexual intercourse in a human manner makes marriage indissoluble...” cf. the commentary on the canon.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. C.H. CROCK, *Matrimony*, 247. “Adam rejoiced over what he saw before him. But he was found all alone, distinct from all other creatures. And the enjoyment of created things can be more fully appreciated when man can share his joy with others. Realizing this God said: ‘It is not good for a man to be alone: let Us make him a helper like unto himself...’”

<sup>76</sup> This fact of education needs to be taken seriously. It is not enough to concentrate on the bride-price, ring wearing, external celebrations and the rush into consummating the marriage, while paying little attention: actually neglecting the education of the spouses does not do anything good to the institution of marriage. If a seminarian and celibate religious take more than seven years for preparation, what makes us believe that for marriage few months are more than enough? Education and sufficient time in marriage discernment

another, which involves not just external gesture but also the dying to self for the other. It requires faithfulness, without conditions, no matter what and this cannot be understood in isolation, except in the light of the gospel virtues of forgiving (Matt 18:21-22) and love of neighbour and more crudely put, love of the enemy, (Matt 5:44-46).<sup>77</sup> Hence, the Christian marriage means more than what is thought of by many people. The problem is that we have many marriages in the Catholic Church, which probably are not real Christian marriage by their essence, as we consider below.

The husband in the Christian marriage becomes a visible sign of Christ to the wife while the wife in the other hand is a visible sign of the church to the husband. In addition, the couple becomes a sacramental sign of the relationship that exists between God and his people (Ezek 37:27b, Rev 21:3b) and the letter to Ephesians refers to this reality as a mystery between Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32b). The question then is, how many times Christ would have to divorce the Church if he concentrated on her sinfulness and unfaithfulness.

Therefore, the love of the husband to the wife is supposed to be similar to that of Christ for the Church and the obedience of the wife to her husband likewise, is to imitate that of the Church to Christ (cf. Eph.5:32-33). It is by following this understanding which covers the elements of loving and forgiving as in Matt 6:12, that our human customs can be converted. The natural tendency of divorcing wives according to our human traditions cannot be tolerated by the gospel's demands. As Jesus challenged the Jewish traditions on marriage likewise the same challenge is to the African customs, which are not so distinct.<sup>78</sup>

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could bring understanding and consequently life-long commitment. In addition, there is no proportion in age fact, for someone to become a priest needs to be at the age of 25, Can.1031.1, but for marriage one is required to be 16 for the boy and 14 on the case of the girl. Can. 1083.1

<sup>77</sup>It is clear that if Jesus asked Peter in chapter 18, to forgive not seven times but seventy times seven and he had already taught that his followers have to forgive their enemy, it logically follows that a wife or husband who has become one flesh, deserves forgiveness under any circumstance.

<sup>78</sup>On this point the African traditions need to be converted by the teaching of Jesus. Since for an African to marry means to beget children, if no childbearing the union is broken. On this factor it is not a matter of giving laws to Africans but understanding the psychology behind the concept of marriage.

At this point we can ask the question, what makes marriage so special a reality in Christian life? It is a very simple concept, but fundamental when grasped. Every animal by instinct has a drive to sex, every human being feels a drive to sex, and all get a partner to fulfill that urge, and in the long run beget children. But how many really are for the permanence or selfless commitment to another? Animals do not, and many human beings would choose to take such a commitment only with conditions. Therefore, it is only those who fully follow Christ, and who learn a life-long commitment from Jesus, who can live according to the demands that marriage presses on those who take it, as willed by the creator. For that reason, the Christians who are the salt of the earth, under the grace of God can be able to take up the challenge and live according to God's will: one man to one woman for life,<sup>79</sup> the unconditional love. 'I love you for the whole of my life.'

Marriage, though natural, in its sacramental reality, does not belong to the human domain only, but is also of the divine realm. It is divine from the beginning (Gen 1:27-28), therefore its permanence has its foundation in God's plan. We have to recognize that human beings are sharing and participating in that good which God willed. For that reason, married-Christians are mutual companions to each other. They become co-creators with God as they multiply and practice their responsibility as they carry out the commandment of subduing the earth<sup>80</sup> (Gen 1:27-29). In a Christian marriage, husband and wife are challenged by Christ to be a symbol of greater things and that is the love of Christ and the Church. For that reason, a Christian marriage cannot be dissolved. It is a covenant between man and woman, until

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<sup>79</sup>Cf. G. SHEEHLY – *al.*, *The Canon Law Letter and Spirit. A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law*, 639. "... from a valid marriage there arises between the spouses a bond which of its own nature is permanent and exclusive. Moreover, in Christian marriage the spouses are by a special sacrament strengthened and as it were consecrated for the duties and the dignity of their state." Can. 1134.

<sup>80</sup> This notion of subduing, does not mean dominating the universe but bringing into the world God's intelligence, in a sense that they bring order in to the world. From the marriage point of view that includes bringing up and educating the children.

death,<sup>81</sup> as Christ loved the Church up to the point of dying on the cross and continuously loves her until he brings her into the Kingdom of Heaven (Eph 5: 25-27). The Christian marriage is therefore, understood as fundamentally established and confirmed by God not by humans. Consequently, no human being can claim authority to dissolve it.

### 3.2.4 The Application to Celibate Life

Celibacy is, in the first place, a grace of God to the person who can live it. It is a gift to be accepted and lived in gratitude, not for its own sake but for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is an invitation to live in communion with God and with one another, not particularizing people such as husband or wife and children, but open to all people as Jesus was, going everywhere doing good, (Matt 9:35). It is to be seen and taken as an invitation of God to witness to his operations as he saves and redeems his people, leading them to his Kingdom. Celibate life is a chance and a moment of witnessing the unseen not at the time when the Kingdom is fully realized but here and now among God's people. It is in this way, that they lead other members of the Church and humanity as a whole, to that state of joy. It is the joy of participating in the *already* and *not yet* experience. Celibacy is meant to be a self-giving in joy, taking it as a burden, shows that it is not granted to that person. We always have to remember that "it is not for many," but only those to whom it is granted. This norm sets a limitation, that not everybody can live celibate life as stated in 1 Cor 7:7. For that reason, one has to discern this grace within his/her existential-being.<sup>82</sup> Otherwise, anyone who becomes a celibate for any

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<sup>81</sup> Even if this notion has never been thought about, I think it should, for an African who believes in the life hereafter with our ancestors, and convinced of the communion with the living dead, the marriage cannot be separated by death. Physically it does but not spiritually, since the living dead become closer to us than ever. So a husband or wife who loses his partner can never say, since she is dead it is all finished. If any African believes that death brings marriage, totally, to end of relationship that really is a contradiction and the whole concept of relation with ancestors and living dead need to be dropped.

<sup>82</sup> The discernment takes place at three levels, as a grace comes from God who confirms it in an individual and that is why a person had to keep the ontological relationship. Secondly, it is at the level of an individual

other reason or motive may live and die as a *consecrated bitter lemon*,<sup>83</sup> whereby, he/she does not contain what he/she pretends to signify.

Celibate life is not an alternative way of life to marriage, as the disciples seem to propose (Matt 19:10), but it is a different gift, that complements marriage, in the life of the Church. One cannot take it unless it is granted from above, as the same norm applies as to marriage: it is not for everyone. Therefore, they are not to be considered as optional alternatives.<sup>84</sup> This notion, calls for a proper discernment by anyone who thinks that he/she has this call or grace of God, for the service of the gospel. As a result, there is no room for imitating each other, rather each call plays its respective role for the spreading the Kingdom of heaven on earth.

There has to be a clear distinction in our approach to celibate life. It cannot be taken as a mere career or job. If so, then the whole ideal of the consecration is betrayed. Celibate life does not consist in doing but instead in daily existential witness to what one is. Then what one does affirms his/her being-in-the-Church. This is what characterizes this kind of life and that is what one ought to share with humanity. One has to find his or her psychological and spiritual stability in celibate commitment, not sitting on the fence, which means to live in a religious house while one's attitude of life suggests preference for married life.<sup>85</sup> If celibate life is just an imitation of married life, and it is clouded up by complaints, this leads to sadness.

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who experiences the call to marriage or to celibacy, in this case he/she daily responds to that call of God, through the small 'yes' of every moment. Lastly it is at the level of the ecclesia, since it is in the milieu of the community that all gifts are properly lived and expressed. Therefore the ecclesial element is important in supporting the individual to say yes to the Lord.

<sup>83</sup>One can bless or consecrate the lemon and whoever sees it and he/she is told that it was consecrated will believe but if one cut it and squeezes it despite the fact that it was consecrated the taste will still be bitter, as the old saying goes: 'the habit does not make a monk.'

<sup>84</sup>Cf. T.P. RAUSCH, *The College Student's Introduction to Theology*, 156. "Both marriage and [celibate life], holy orders are sacraments which express the importance of self-sacrificial love, fidelity, and service in the Church."

<sup>85</sup>The same norm applies to the married man and woman. They need to mature in their married life commitment. One cannot live in marriage fully if the only thing she or he admires is to have been a celibate person. In our Christian commitments, one has to blossom there where he/she is.

Consequently the person lacks that joy of being at the banquet and therefore fails to share it with others. From what Jesus says in Matt 22:11-12, the Kingdom of Heaven is characterized by the attitude of the joy of being at the banquet. A celibate person is given that opportunity to give a foretaste of what is to come. At this point, the complementarity between married people and celibate people becomes clear among the members of the ecclesial community as they witness to each other (Matt 5:13).<sup>86</sup> Failing to do this, the Church cannot be seen as the symbol of that what she signifies and contains. There are many things to be considered. If one, whether married or celibate, does not recognize his/her life as a grace and thus depend on the help of God to fulfill it, it is impossible to remain faithful especially in moments of tribulation.<sup>87</sup> Instead, it becomes a burden on him/her and that is not what is intended. That can lead to the punishment because one does not possess the right attitudes of being at the banquet (Matt 22:13).

### 3.2.5 Limitations, which Need to Be Challenged

Both marriage and celibacy have to be proclaimed and recognized by Christians, as different perspectives but equal capacities of life in the Church. The ideal of witness, which both calls signify should be upheld more than rules and customs that surround marriage and celibacy. Moreover, more attention should be paid to the life of the gospel than to constitutions and law, which at time seem to be taking a Pharisaic face. In fact, it is clear that the Pharisaic attitude seals and hides the real meaning of religion. Therefore, being fully aware of that tendency, whatever is done should be to enhance celibate life and marriage and not to

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<sup>86</sup>Cf. J PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata, A Simplified Text*, 25. This is what the Church thirsts for in our time, as the Pope says: "If the Church is to be able to show her true meaning and reality to today's world, she needs communities of true communion, which by their very existence contribute to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, because they show in a concrete way the faithfulness of his new commandment of love."

<sup>87</sup>It is always good to remember that the reasons that one to join celibate life or marry someone are not the same reasons that make someone stay there. Growth and development of understanding change thus give new reasons better compared to the initial ones.

frustrate them. In fact, the task for many Christian communities is to distinguish the explanation and attitudes about what we do and who we are. Since who we are actually influences what we do, eventually the same factors influence the manner in which we do things, whether communally or personally. For instance, if one understands himself /herself as a witness of Christ's love to the Church or Church's obedience to Christ, the family life would consequently be different. And so if one identifies herself or himself as a witness of the eschatological life, where God reigns, the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven accompanies him/her to the respective ministry so that one becomes a consolation to the persons whom one meets and serves.<sup>88</sup>

In the instructions for marriage and the formation of young celibates, there should be a stress, which is more Christ oriented,<sup>89</sup> than congregational cultures or traditions and charism oriented. It should not just be the point of leading people to enter marriage or be celibates, but mostly lead them to understand the joys, responsibility and consequences that are involved in each call that a Christian follows. The aim of both is to manifest the seen reality and the unseen reality to each other and to the whole human community. It should not be the case of getting members and rejoicing in great numbers of celibates and marriages, but leading them to be lovers of God and humanity. A conversion is needed from looking at celibate life as a way to pursue authority, a job/career to a life of service and witness to the values God's Kingdom

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<sup>88</sup>Cf. J. PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, 46. "The new evangelization requires a consecrated life which is continuously open to challenge by the gospel, the tradition, and the signs of the times. It calls for strong personalities who have a thorough awareness of the significance of the challenges of our time and what they signify for the work of evangelization along with the gift of communal discernment, with a view to renewing the mission.

<sup>89</sup>As the rule of the Friars Minor denotes: "The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: To live and observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in Obedience, without anything of their own and in chastity.... *Regula Bullata*, 1223, (cf. *Our Plan of Living*, Chapter 1, 2, The English Edition, 1988). As one can see Francis does not say: the charism of the friars is to be poor, help the poor or any of those limited statements we call "our charisms" but rather to live according to the holy gospel. He was a Christ Centred Founder.

amongst human beings.<sup>90</sup> Neither marriage nor celibate life can be taken as ends in themselves, but rather symbols of greater things, the aim being instrumental to the service of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Christ who inaugurated it brings it to its *Parousia*, thus entering into the new heavens and new earth.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The main points in this chapter have been the applied message of Matt 19:1-12 and application of that message, to the life of the Church. Separating the two items, marriage and celibacy, we have looked at each one of them and brought out the meaning they give to the Church. We have pointed out the idea in which these graces benefit the people and we gave the suggestions that the life one leads in the Church is given to him/ her in order to be offered to other people. Then we drew conclusions from both, facing more the issue of how to accept and live them better, in order to bring that important dimension of complementarity and the proclamation of what is to come. We then concluded that both, marriage and celibacy are symbols presenting to humanity what they in turn signify in themselves, in that way giving a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven.

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<sup>90</sup>A celibate person has to be different from others. The motivations of doing what a celibate person does are different from other people. The action may be the same and the way of doing the same but the behaviour ought to be different due to the motivation, [e.g. a Religious teacher or priest in a primary/secondary school cannot be the same like the other teachers. He/she has to carry her/his celibate way of life to the classroom. A Religious Doctor in our African context should not be like other doctors, but a light that shines in darkness].

#### 4. GENERAL CONCLUSION

The greatest gift that God has given us is to allow us to share in his creation and his redemptive work. It is through this knowledge that we stand before him, discerning what could be our role in the church. As I conclude this work that has taken a long time to manifest itself, I hope that whoever reads this essay will be drawn to search as I have done.

It is important to remember that I did not, nor I would not pretend to say that I have said it all. But I have made an attempt to answer a big question, especially in our time, when we find that permanent commitment is becoming harder and harder. So, I believe this is an important question for us and we cannot turn our intellect and will away from it. For example one issue that needs more investigation is the whole issue of the breaking of Christian marriages. One finds some marriages break down due to the fact that, even though at the time of marriage consent the two spouses were Christians and Catholic, in the long run one of them decides to leave the Catholic faith. He or she may adopt another religion or fall back into African witchcraft, though she/he may still come to the Catholic Church. What do you do in such cases? I did not look into this but it is a real pastoral issue in Africa today.

Talking to different religious, male and female, as I carried out my research work; I learnt that many religious are not happy people. They seem happy, but deep in themselves are full of complaints. It could be an interesting study to find out the reasons and compare them to the fact that many religious and priests abandon their commitment today. Is it that they do not find a home in religious houses? And when it comes to the point that those who are quitting are of advanced age or have been even superiors, could it be that the initial discernment was not proper or that the system of formation is not in accord with the signs of the times? Could it be that there is a need to look into the community relationships, taking the person holistically?

As my desire was to study more about the two ways of our life as an ecclesial community, I have come to the conclusion that we cannot view one way of life as more important than the other. As I said there is neither superior vocation nor inferior call, both marriage and celibacy are important to the life of the Church. This means that Christian married life and Religious celibate life are essentially meant for the spread of the Kingdom of God and the good of humanity. They can only be lived properly if they are granted to us and are taken in a spirit of faith and discernment, not only celibacy but marriage as well.

One very important point is to recognize also the responsibility of the members of the community that accompanies the member who has identified his/her call as a married person or a celibate member. It is always easier to frustrate God's ways than keep them. So the duty of the community is to help each member live or answer the call generously. As each one of us needs help of the other, in return we should offer it freely to others.

This study has led me to believe that there is not an easier call, neither marriage nor celibacy. They both present enjoyment and challenges. Therefore it does not do any good to any member of the church and the church as a whole, if the only thing we ever achieve is to let our bodies live in marriage while our hearts are in convents. Equally unacceptable is to inhabit convents or religious houses while our souls are fantasizing what great husbands or wives we would have been. The deepest desire for all should be to blossom where we are planted and in that way to offer the best we are to the Church and to God.

## **Appendix 1: Rite of Marriage**

**Priest:** N. and N. You have come together in this church so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions.

**Priest:** N. and N. I shall now ask you if you freely undertake the obligation of marriage, and to state that there is no legal impediment to your marriage.

Are you ready, freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

**I am**

Are you ready to love and honour each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

**I am**

Are you ready to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

**I am**

**I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I....., may not be joined in matrimony to.....**

Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, declare your consent before God and his Church.

**I.....will take you.....as my lawful wife/husband, according to the rite of our holy Mother the Church.**

**I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, .....do take you..... to be my lawful wedding wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for rich for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish, till death do us part.**

**Priest:** You have declared your consent before the Church. May the Lord in his goodness strengthened your consent and fill you both with his blessings. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

**Amen.**

**Priest:** May the Lord bless these rings, which bless + in your name. Grant that those who wear them may always have a deep faith in each other. May they do your will and always live together in peace, good will and love. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**N.....take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**



## Appendix 2: Rite of Profession

**TO THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF THE HOLY TRINITY.**

**I, BROTHER/SISTER.....MOVED BY DIVINE INSPIRATION TO FOLLOW MORE CLOSELY THE GOSPEL AND FOOTSTEPS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,**

**IN THE PRESENCE OF MY BROTHERS/SISTERS HERE PRESENT, AND INTO YOUR HANDS BROTHER/SISTER.....WITH FIRM FAITH AND CONVICTION,**

**I VOW TO GOD, OUR HOLY AND ALMIGHTY FATHER, TO LIVE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE,**

**IN OBEDIENCE, WITHOUT ANYTHING OF MY OWN, AND IN CHASTITY, AND AT THE SAME TIME, I PROMISE TO OBSERVE FAITHFULLY THE LIFE AND THE RULE OF THE. ....(FRIARS MINOR) CONFIRMED BY POPE HONORIUS III ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS OF.....(THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR).**

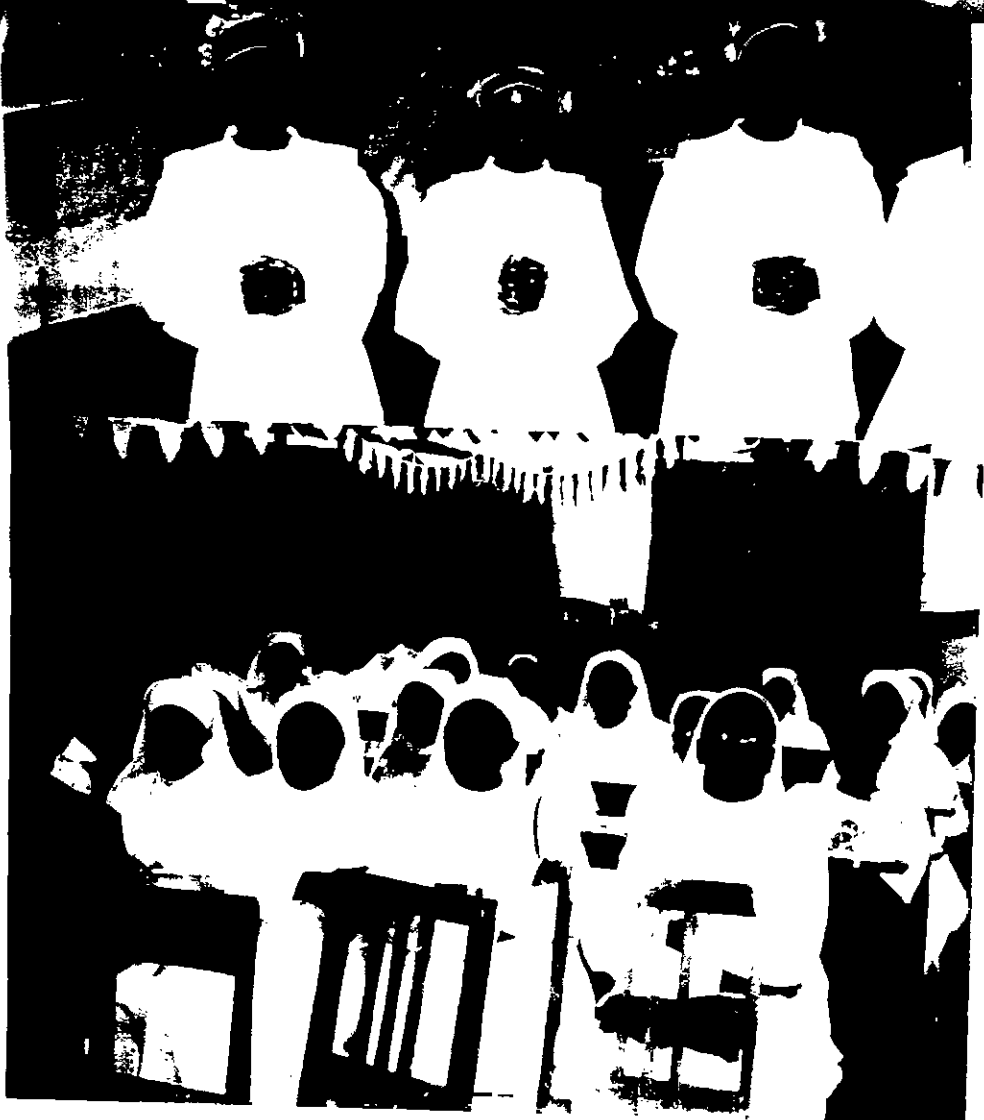
**WITH ALL MY HEART, I GIVE MYSELF TO THIS FRATERNITY/SISTERHOOD, SO THAT, BY ACTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF MARY IMMACULATE,**

**THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF OUR FATHER FRANCIS AND OUR MOTHER CLARE, AND ALL THE SAINTS,**

**AND WITH THE HELP OF THE BROTHERS/SISTERS**

**I CAN SEEK PERFECT CHARITY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD, THE CHURCH, AND ALL PEOPLE.**

**THE BROTHER/SISTER.....  
CELEBRANT.....  
WITNESS 1.....  
WITNESS 2.....  
DATE AND PLACE.....**



### **Appendix 3: Commitment to Celibacy**

**Bishop: By your own free choice you seek to enter the order of deacons. You shall exercise this ministry in the celibate state: for celibacy is both a sign and a motive of pastoral charity, and a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world. By living in this state with total dedication, moved by a sincere love for Christ the Lord, you are consecrated to him in a new and special way. By this consecration you will adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart; you will be more freely at the service of God and mankind, and you will be more untrammelled in the ministry of Christian conversion and rebirth. By your life and character you will give witness to your brothers and sisters in faith that God must be loved above all else, and that it is he whom you serve in others.**

**Therefore, I ask you:**

**In the presence of God and the Church, are you resolved, as a sign of your interior dedication to Christ, to remain celibate for the sake of the kingdom and in lifelong service to God and humankind?**

**Candidate: I am.**

**Bishop adds: May the Lord help you to persevere in this commitment.**

**All: Amen.**

"Bwana ndiye Mchungaji wangu.  
Sitapungukisa na kitu"  
(Zab. 23:1)



Padre  
Mutasingwa



TWAEM

MLE WOTE

Maximilian Rwakaturu

"Dominus regit me.  
Et nihil mihi deerit"  
(Ps. 23:1)



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## APPENDIX 5: Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>al.</i>	<i>alii</i> —other persons
ANE	Ancient near East
Can.	Canon Law
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
Cor	Corinthians
Cf.	<i>Confer</i> ; compare
Deut	Deuteronomy
DB	Dictionary of the Bible, J. McKenzie
ed.	edited by
Eph	Ephesians
Ezek	Ezekiel
FMM	Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
Fr.	Father; priest
GELN	<i>Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
Gen	Genesis
HBD	Harper's Bible Dictionary
Isa.	Isaiah
JBC	Jerome Biblical Commentary
Lev	Leviticus
Matt	Matthew
M	Materials Specific to Matthew.
NAB	The New American Bible
NCE	New Catholic Encyclopedia
NDCE	A New Dictionary of the Catholic Ethics
NJBC	The New Jerome Biblical Commentary
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
OFM	<i>Ordo Fratrum Minorum</i>
OP	Order of Preachers
OT	Old Testament
Q	<i>Quelle</i> ; Source
Rev	Revelation
SacP	<i>Sacra Pagina</i>
SDB	Society of Don Bosco
SFO	Secular Franciscan Order
SPS	Society of St. Patrick
Sr.	Sister
Trans.	Translated
v.	Verse
vv.	Verses
YHWH	Sacred Name of God of Israel

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