

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**ANTÓNIO NATAL, M.C.C.J.**

**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY AMONG THE AKAMBAS**

Moderator

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment  
Of the Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

**NAIROBI, FEBRUARY 2003**

**To all the searching young men and women of Africa, who sincerely wish a committed and a long-lasting married life, within the contemporary society. In searching, may they discover the meaning of marriage and family, and may be fulfilled.**

## EPIGRAPH

“Let marriage be held in esteem among all and the bed undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.”

Heb 13:4

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to many persons; to all those who contributed to this work, especially to my Kamba friends, who generously shared with me about their culture. I could not have managed without their contributions.

I deep appreciate the kindness of Dr. Mary Getui, who tirelessness read and help me out with useful suggestions to make this work possible. Sincere gratitude goes to her, who bore patiently with me throughout the period of writing this paper.

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My work would not be possible without the support of many friends, especially the Comboni Missionaries who provided shelter and environment for a peaceful work.

My sincere thanks go also to my collaborators Maureen Adeg, Patricia Nzilani and Dominic Mwanzia. They were of great help availing themselves whenever I needed any information.

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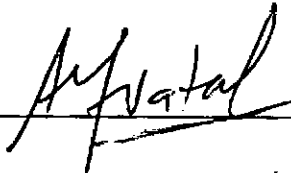
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## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, 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 fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

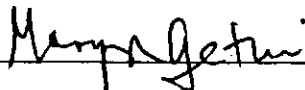


**Name of the Student:** ANTÓNIO NATAL, MCCJ

**Date:** 07<sup>th</sup> February 2003

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



**Name of the Supervisor:** DR. MARY GETUI

**Date:** 07<sup>th</sup> February 2003

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### **I. Focus of the Study**

I will focus this study on traditional marriage among the Akamba people, without, of course, ignoring their today's society. I will dwell more on the traditional customs, which are more typical to this group, which explains in a great deal their experience and concept of marriage. I chose Marriage, because it an institution that plays a central place among the Akamba, as well as in many other African societies. Unfortunately, many young people especially those who happened to live out of their traditional society find themselves in married life without a minimum of preparation for it, and at times with no idea of what marriage entails. Part of the reason maybe attributed to the breakdown of families, often caused by the social, economic and cultural pressures that contemporary life brings. I find this paper relevant to these situations, which are of common interest in our pastoral work.

I will try to highlight some aspects in this field, and try to see how the Church would be relevant to them. In the same line, I will stress the virtues and strengths of the traditional Akamba family.

I do believe that as I journey in this field, I will discover many other pertinent issues for pastoral concern. I will have a specific interest in the social factors underlying persistence of certain values, continuity and change, as they appear in contemporary times. I will try to present the values, attitudes, functions and significance attached to traditional Akamba marriage. As mentioned above, I chose the Akamba ethnic group, as one of groups that would help me to understand what an African marriage is; of course, with respect for all shades of the difference that exist within various African communities. I will not pretend to deal with all the issues concerning marriage and family; my aim is therefore to cover the subject within a relatively limited area.

Why Akamba? Because it is an ethnic group with whom I have shared and lived more than any other ethnic group in Kenya.

## **II. Background to the Study**

It is now three and half years that I have been here in Kenya and one thing that still draws my interest is to understand how binding marriage is today in Kenya. Having the privilege of sharing with and seeing many single mothers and fathers, I have come to doubt the binding force that marriage always implied to me. I always tried to understand why is that we have a considerable percentage of marital problems, and as result, we have single parents and family problems. In Kariobangi, where I do my apostolate, it seems uncommon or rare to find a couple living together. As a matter of fact, I have learnt not to ask about the father, especially, or the mother of the child that I happen to see. In other words, it is embarrassing to have to ask if someone, with

children, has a husband or wife. It is normal to hear that "my husband ran away", or even to hear that "my wife left me." It is not long ago that I happened to visit a family that I know and learnt that the husband had disappeared and was nowhere to be seen for two months. He went away and the wife does not know his whereabouts. All these example may sound as if they are merely separations, the root of which may be related to poverty, irresponsibility and lack of commitment; but it may also be that the notion of marriage has changed, where one no longer thinks of a long lasting commitment. Looking the more recent part, we notice that our own parents, in their traditional marriage, seemed more stable and their marriage was maybe more binding than what we do experience in our present society. What was it that kept many of our predecessors together till death, and which we do not find in today's marriages? I think that by trying to answer these questions, we have to go back and see what was there in traditional marriage that could contribute in different ways to today's concept of marriage. Of course, this is not to suggest going back completely to every detail of it, and so transfer it to the present society, but to understand its values and impact on people's life commitment that could be of help today. Traditions are still part of us. The person who is ignorant of his or her traditions is a rootless person, and may fall into an experience that could be overcome, if he or she had known. One, who is not identified with his or her own basic values, is like a fish out of the water. In actual fact, "we cannot learn other cultures except as an extension of our own"<sup>1</sup>.

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1 A SHORTER., *African culture*, 23.

### III. Justification

I will be indebted to my different teachers who taught me anthropology, in its various ramifications, for directly or indirectly challenging me as to whether or not I knew my own culture. In fact, I grew up despising my own culture and embracing a Portuguese culture, because it was only in that way that I would be considered *assimilado*, which basically meant civilized, and could enjoy some privileges such as studying and working.

As I travelled, especially when I began to interact with people from other African cultures in different countries, such as Uganda and Kenya, where I lived for five years, I came to realize that that was not the case. In these countries I got to know that our cultures are our identity; “culture is an aspect of what it means to be human”.<sup>2</sup> It was in these countries that I got to see how people would freely express themselves in their own languages, without shame, and lived out their cultural values. Because this, my dream was always to deepen my understanding at least some of aspects of African cultures, so as to know it in depth within the traditional setting, and thus to be more rooted in my own and African Culture in general. Thus, I become one of those who are looking for their roots, as someone once mentioned, “the generation of Africans will be looking for their roots”<sup>3</sup> So, I would know how things were done and how important they still can be in today’s society. How we can reconcile them to our modern world or borrow some positive elements that the tradition offers us today.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>3</sup> J. HEALEY - D.SYBERTZ, *Towards African narrative theology*, 99.

I do believe that this would help many others who are in the same situation as me, to know the past so as to understand the present.

#### **IV Objective of the Study**

In the society today, there are all sorts of distortions concern love and sex by different age groups and cultures. The distorted ideas reach the youth through various ways: mass media, entertainment, pornography, and licentious songs in public vehicles. This distortion is responsible for a whole range of undesirable attitudes towards love and sex. This brings along danger, which reduces sexuality to sex, of conceiving sexuality just in terms of biological organs and a mechanism of pleasure. Such an attitude destroys the ultimate goal of sexual intercourse as an expression of a loving commitment of a man and a wife, which has meaning only within a marriage covenant. A distort idea of sex degrades sexual intercourse and makes this "sacred" act, in which God cooperates with a married couple in procreation, a less human act. It becomes a valueless pleasure giving act in the context of fornication, adultery, procreation, etc. <sup>4</sup>

Distorted ideas of sex lead some young people to bring other undesirable elements into the human body and interfere with its natural processes. In pursuit of casual sex, the human body becomes subjected to contraceptives, as young people want to have irresponsible sexual pleasure without bearing in mind the future impact of their actions.

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<sup>4</sup> KIURA, J., *Sexuality and Fertility Awareness*, p.67 – 68.

One of the consequences of the contraceptive mentality is pleasure without responsibility or sexual intercourse without the expected fruit - the baby. The adolescent grows with an anti-life mentality and a kind of natural hatred for children. This kind of mentality leads to selfishness even in an eventual marriage.

Let me list some factors, which account for premarital sex. One of the strongest theories is a theory known as Pan - sexism.” This teaches that sexual activity is a human right to be enjoyed by all and that without the experience of sexual activity, humanity is diminished. In the light of this theory, “celibacy loses credibility, and sexual activity becomes an end in itself”.<sup>5</sup> In fact, while the traditional society was proud of virginity, which would be broken within the marriage context, the modern society sees virginity as unfashionable and considers it out of date. Casual sex is presented as the acceptable norm.

On the other hand, there is a lot of peer pressure, a lack of role models, and a lack of parental guidance. Also the philosophy of “if I want it, its O.K.,” or ideas such as, “the highest expression of showing one’s love is through sexual intercourse.” Some still hold true the myth, which believes that if a couple does not sleep together they may not be sexually suited to each other and the marriage may break up.

There are also many others minor reasons, but influential ones, such as, “because everybody does it;” “not to become sterile;” “to prove that one is not sterile;” “to show that one is a man,” etc. All these have led and still lead to a lot of premarital sex experimentation.

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<sup>5</sup> Shorter, A., *Celibacy and African Culture*, p. 29.

In fact, we have some known facts:

A study for rural areas of Kenya revealed that twenty five per cent of the interviewees had contracted some of sexually transmitted diseases in the previous year. Fifty of the women attending the Nairobi city council clinic for sexual transmitted diseases are adolescents, and thirty six per cent of the pregnant women, between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, seen at Kenyatta National Hospital, have sexually transmitted diseases. The statistics for school girl pregnancies are equal alarming, although better known.”<sup>6</sup>

So, is it really possible to wait until marriage before having sex?

That depends on you - it really does. It depends, with the grace of God, on what you really want. It remains a fact, abstaining from sex before marriage has no harmful effects and does not cause frustration. It helps a person to maintain self-control and, therefore, self-dignity. It is true even today that the average man still prefer to marry a virgin.<sup>7</sup> Still, “the statistics and the research show that premarital chastity is associated with greater sexual satisfaction in marriage and a lower incidence of separation and divorce”.<sup>8</sup>

As a model, where we can get a concrete answer to our questions, I chose to tackle married life by presenting a traditional marriage life and the family, taking into account today's marriage, as to help us understand what marriage is and what is meant for.

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6 Ibid., p. 32

7 Cf. WACHIRA, R., *Searching for self knowledge*, p. 39.

8 Cf. MALONEY, M., *Teenagers Sex and Love*, P. 78

## **V. Methodology**

I interviewed different persons who belong to the Akamba community. I also shared my personal experience with Akambas. Thus, I will, as far as possible, use the first-hand sources, mainly through people who have experienced events personally, eyewitnesses; I interviewed about ten couples, including four single ones as well, from Machakos and Kitui district acknowledging their contributions as well. I will try as well to become an eyewitness and first-hand source through observation and participation in the marriage preparations and ceremonies. This, I took into account the changes that took place in the society. I also used questionnaires with six people so to help me understand the people's perception on this matter. I also, at times, used the type recorder to gather information.

Although most information gathered would be oral, I will not, for this reason, ignore written material. Many people have studied and researched on this topic, though not necessarily from my specific viewpoint. I also did library investigations and study to have access on what is already written. I will use various African texts (Literature), written works on this culture, and other African Cultures, since there are some common elements among them.

## **VI. Organization of the Chapters**

The chapters are structured as follows: the first part is comprised of a general introduction that gives a general worldview of Akamba community.

Chapter one underlines briefly the worldview of the Akambas. In fact, it is the shortest chapter. I start by introducing the Akamba people, their origin, the community's geographical situation; their religion, traditions beliefs and practices, and their social political organization.

Chapter two will be dedicated to marriage and Family. This will be the longest chapter; hence it contains all the important descriptions of the concept of marriage in the Akamba community, starting from the first step, preparation for marriage to the concept of family. Both the first and the second chapters are more geared to the social, anthropological, political and cultural analysis. They describe the reality and the beliefs involved in marriage.

The third chapter will be a theological reflection on marriage and family. In this Chapter, I present the theological foundation of marriage, starting from God, as the origin, and show how Jesus taught about it. In this chapter, I will also try to correlate the experience and belief; and illustrate how the Bible, magisterium and theology explain marriage, from a Christian perspective.

The fourth and the last chapter will deal with the pastoral reflection. It will focus more on the religious truth, of marriage of the people and on my own experience, and maybe some possible applications to the present situation.

## VII. Limitation

Machakos is far from my own Religious community and my Institution of study. This would imply a lot of movements, which would not be all that easy, for it is time involving and it proves costly to make regular visits. Nevertheless, I had to take advantage of my long holidays-three years in different stages-to visit this community, and thus become a part of it as it were. I also had to go to different libraries, since I could not get all that I needed from our college library.

One of the limitations was language: the area of research is of a different ethnical group from mine. The only *kikamba* that I knew was not enough to make sentences. I felt handicapped, since I always wished to speak the language and understand, as to make sure that the communication does not break down. Nevertheless, I had always someone to translate from *Kikamba* to English.

I had always to ask for permission to take photos, which was not always granted. At times, I also realised that some were not cooperative.

At times, I felt less free and comfortable to take part and be observer of any marriage celebration, since I often took part in them without an official invitation.

# CHAPTER I

## THE AKAMBA COMMUNITY

### 1.0 Introduction

The following chapter is intended to illustrate the worldview of the Akamba. If we wish to understand the cultural practices of this ethnic group, we have to know who the Akambas are and where they come from. Hence, we will have to focus more on social, anthropological, political and cultural analysis. A highlight of the traditional beliefs and practices will be of a great help, for it is there where we find explanation for their worldview, since it reflects the uniqueness of the Akamba society. Thus, the chapter will also describe the reality and the beliefs involved in marriage.

### 1.1 Who are the Akamba?

The Akamba are a Bantu group occupying Machakos, Mwingi, Makueni and Kitui districts of Eastern Province. "They are Kenya's fourth largest ethnic group who are about 2.5 million".<sup>9</sup> The people are known as Akamba; one person is a *mukamba*. *Kikamba* is their language, and their country is called *Ukambani* (or *Ukamba*).

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. See Spectrum · *Guide to Kenya on the Akamba People*, 76

As almost all ethnic groups have creation myths or myths of origin, the Kambas have their own myth concerning the origin and the creation of human beings. They generally acknowledge that God is the origin of human beings. The Kambas have two stories on the origin of humanity. In the first one, they believe that the first man and woman came from a rock in the western central part of their country, which has a hole supposed to be the one through which God brought them out. "This is the creation myth on the two people who were tossed from heaven by Mulungu (Creator)."<sup>10</sup> The second story: This is also a creation from God who lowered the first pair or two of humankind from the cloud to earth. They brought with them cattle, sheep and goats; the human pairs reproduced so that their children intermarried and formed humankind on earth.<sup>11</sup> Humans were originally made to live forever, but it is believed that the chameleon, which Mulungu sent to announce this news, lingered on the way and stammered in delivering the message. Temporarily, Mulungu sent a weaver bird, which flew swiftly and told the people that they would henceforth die like the root of an aloe tree. Thus the people began to die, but the death is not the master of Humankind, since he reproduces and thus counteracts the effects of death.<sup>12</sup>

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10 J. HEALEY- D.SYBERTZ, *Towards African narrative theology*, 99

11 Cf. J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stories*, 14-15.

12 Ibidem.

## 1.2 The Akamba Community and Its Geographical Location

Ukambani lies in the Eastern region of Kenya, stretching south wards from the equator towards the Kenya – Tanzania border, and from the western ward from near the shores of the Indian ocean towards the Kenya hinterland. The country covers an area of about 25,000 squares miles, i.e. approximately a quarter the size of Britain or twice the size of Holland (but with much less water!). The highlands which lie in the northwest rise above 6, 000 feet, and there are other scattered hills and mountains, as well as the vast Yatta Plateau.<sup>13</sup> The Kamba community are spread across a large area of land which stretches on either side of the Athi-Sabaki River, much of their region is prone to drought - particularly the areas around Kitui in the eastern half of the territory.

Unlike today, during the British colonial administration, Ukambani was divided into Kitui and Machakos districts, in the east and the west respectively. Each district was subdivided into smaller administrative “locations” and “sub - locations”, under chiefs and their assistants.

The Kambas are also known as skilled hunters, marvellous woodcarvers and, in modern times, exemplary soldiers and police officers. The Kamba speak a language similar to Kikuyu. Historically, it appears that they settled in their present homelands in the last 500 years, swiftly establishing a thriving trade with their neighegbours - some of whom, like them, were newly arrived. Thus was the communities established at the heartland of present-day Kenya.

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13 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 3.

Traditionally, Kamba males could easily be identified by the sharpened points of the incisor teeth, which were filled down in the upper jaw at the time of circumcision. On the other hand, the women would easily be identified with cicatrisation over their body and tattoos on their cheeks.

The Kamba both boys and girls undergo a ritual initiation when very young, around the age of four to five, experiencing actual circumcision at puberty.

### 1.3 Religion, Traditional Beliefs and Practices

The Akamba have no single view about God, which consequently makes it difficult to present it in a simple and strength forward doctrinal perspective. In fact, Mbiti<sup>14</sup> argues that to speak of the Akamba religion is misleading, since religious beliefs and practice are interwoven in the whole of the life and do not constitute a department of their own.

The existence of God is taken for granted, and as children grow up, they incorporate this truth into their vocabulary and knowledge of the world. A *mukamba* simply knows and acknowledges the existence of God who is known as Mulungu.

Traditionally speaking, we would say that the Akamba society is religious and not secular. We can easily see that in their daily life, just by observing how assiduously the ancestors are invoked and asked for assistance and blessings.

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14 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 14.

It is hard to draw a clear line between the secular and sacred, in fact, as any African traditional society, there is no separation between the two. Each *Mukamba* seems to know and acknowledge the existence of *Mulungu*, God, known as *Ngai* in Christian circles. The Akamba recognise *Mulungu* as God, the creator (*Mumbi*) and preserver of all things. He, in fact, gives them good things – children, land, and rain to all humankind; but nobody knows where and how he lives. There is a rare communication between them and God except in times of need, as such a prolonged drought, in times of epidemics, or in sudden danger.

Christianity was brought about the year 1896 and 1900. Since then, “Christianity has spread rapidly among the Akamba, and about one quarter of the people have embraced the new faith or have come under its direct influence (through schools or the numerous churches all over the country)”<sup>15</sup> Still, Christianity has to penetrate in all spheres of lives of people and seriously challenge some beliefs and fears that many Akamba Christians still hold, such as, witchcraft. Among many Christians in Ukambani the influence of witchcraft is often greater than the influence of Christian values. “There is on going dualism in many Africans religious beliefs. They keep one foot in the beliefs of their African Traditional Religion and one foot in Christianity.”<sup>16</sup> Or as Emeka states it: “ Most Africans tend to uphold the two faiths – they maintain the Christian faith when life is gay and happy, but hold to the indigenous faith when the fundamentals

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15 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 19.

16 J. HEALEY- D.SYBERTZ, *Towards African narrative theology*, 294.

of life are at stake”<sup>17</sup> or still another way of describing the same dualism that says: *Rosary in the Morning and witchcraft in the afternoon.*<sup>18</sup>

The traditional beliefs and practices are deep rooted into Akamba culture. “Belief in witchcraft and magic is very prevalent.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, “Witchcraft is expressed with many meanings. It can signify superstition, fortune - telling and sorcery. It can also include the secret forces that are called the occult, that is, those powers that are simply natural that can be used for good or a bad purpose like any other natural force”<sup>20</sup> Everything that harms a person is attributed to some form of magic, and another person is blamed for it. Such a power is either acquired through inheritance – from parent to child, or learnt from another person or even bought. There are different ways of using the magic power: “One can send magical powers through the air to another person to be injured, or one can place these powers on the path or at the gate through which the other person is to pass. Direct poisoning of one’s food is feared; it is also believed that a witch can harm a person by bewitching his possessions (e.g. nails, hair, hoe, etc.).”<sup>21</sup> But magic is not used for harmful purposes only: it has its beneficial uses as well. The useful magic is used to counteract the effect of harmful witchcraft, such as, diseases. Hence, to protect oneself from harmful powers of magic, people wear fetishes and

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17 E. ONWURAH, “*The African Christian Theology*”, 6.

18 Ibidem.

19 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 12.

20 Cf. C. HAULE, “*Witchcraft*” and *Christian morality*”

21 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 12.

amulets. We do also find some charms that are used to bring success in life, such as, in hunting, making love, in undertaking a journey, or in examinations.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, as one of the guides informs us,<sup>23</sup> the Akambas do also practice superstitions, for many centuries they were renowned for the powers of their witch doctors. Today the Akamba herbalists are widely respected for their skills with traditional medicines. In some instances, patients travel hundreds of miles in search of a cure for a debilitating disease or infertility.

The traditional African world includes a complex interaction between God, mysterious powers, the Spirit world and the ancestors.<sup>24</sup>

#### 1.4 Socio-Political Organization of the Akambas

The Akambas are divided into districts and their districts are run by the council of elders who are selected partly by age grade and partly by payment. Though there were no traditionally clan heads or rulers, elders from each clan would get together to deal with matters involving people of the same clan. In recent years attempts have been made to turn clans into associations, with chairmen, secretaries.

In the past, the social political organization was strongly influenced by Kingship<sup>25</sup>. The political power was laid in the hands of older married men (*atumia*), who came together for discussion and action, based on clan and locality, depending on

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22 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 13.

23 Cf. See Spectrum - *Guide to Kenya on the Akamba People*, 77-80

24 J. HEALEY- D.SYBERTZ, *Towards African narrative theology*, 99.

25 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 7

the nature of the matter. There were also men and women's club, the membership of which was determined by age, marriage, and the fulfilment of the club conditions.

The Akambas were constituted by clans, known as *mivia* – a group of related families. In turn, there were about forty clans spread throughout *ukambani* that together constitute the Akamba nation. The number of the members of each clan varies; some clans have as many as 50,000 members or more. Politics and other social activities were formerly not often distinguished but merged into one another.<sup>26</sup>

Politics and other social activities were formal not often distinguish but merged into one another.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.5 Conclusion

The Akambas, as any other African ethnic group, have their own explanation to life. "They had that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as members of the society" (Edward Tylor). This was illustrated throughout this chapter, especially in their practices and beliefs.

In their concept of marriage all seem aimed to a solid stability and unity. This may well explain the reason why the Kamba were very particular in whom to marry. In fact, they were not only satisfied with the good reputation of the other partner but also involved the family and, above all, the ancestors to guarantee marriage stability.

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<sup>26</sup> J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stories*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*

Today, the Kamba are not only found in *Ukambani*, where they come from, but also have spread across the country. Many do live in Nairobi, looking for better jobs opportunities and better economic facilities. The emigration also brought in different ways of viewing the same reality. As in any cross-cultural encounter, the Kambas got to share and to acquire new values, customs, beliefs, art. As human, we have to acquire new values to cope with life. “In towns, traditional cultures are modified by mutual contact and by demands of modernization”<sup>28</sup> Some of them are married with a different tribe partner, though without compromising all their values by embracing all new, nor imposing in their culture, but exchange the values and drop the counter values. The same can be said of the other practices such as witchcrafts. In fact, the time, place and the exchange of values enrich one’s culture. Still, we have to be critical in acquiring new values, for not all is the good news, as not all is roses in our own cultures, there is always something to prune.

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28 A.SHORTER, *African culture*, 34

## CHAPTER II

### THE AKAMBA CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

#### 2.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the Akamba people, with their main characteristic, were described. It is with that worldview of Akamba people that we can go further into marriage itself, and see how they understand it.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe every detailed customs related to marriage and family among the Akamba. It just gives some idea of the main paths on how marriage was conducted and which values were involved that helped the spouses to hold together as couples for a long-lasting period of time.

Marriage is of a great importance to the Akamba. "It is a focus of existence"<sup>29</sup> That explains the reason why the Akamba take it seriously. Akambas marriage presupposed careful and extensive arrangements. Initiation was the practical tool used to open the gates to marriage and family. The marriage rites started with the preparation to marriage, through initiation, where one would be introduced to married life. When the initiation was over, one would then get married. The initiation was a gate through to

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<sup>29</sup> J.S. MBITI, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 133.

having legal access to all that led to marriage, such as choosing a partner, being betrothed and courtship.

Family life is one of the important traits among the Akamba. As the children grow up they learn how they are related to other people with whom they live.

## 2.1 Preparation for Marriage

Preparation for marriage is a lifelong process. Preparation for marriage starts long before the actual marriage takes place. Right from an early stage, “through traditional preparations in stages and rites young people used to be prepared and introduced into the martial stage with minds and hearts disposed”<sup>30</sup>

The initiation rites are the foundation of marriage; just we would say, as Christians, Baptism is the gateway to all other sacraments including matrimony, initiation rites are the gateway to any further adult incorporation.

“Akamba rites of passage were extremely important in traditional society, and regulated the total life of the community.<sup>31</sup> The Initiation rites incorporate the young into the full life of the community or society. Hence, “Only after initiation that the person is born into fully manhood or womanhood with all its secrets, responsibilities, privileges and expectations.<sup>32</sup>

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30 C. MCGARRY-al., *What happened in Africa Synod*, 68.

31 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 4.

32 J.S. MBITI, *African religion and philosophy*, 134 – 135.

Mbiti goes further by saying that since one of the purposes for initiation rites is to introduce the young people to matters of sex, procreation and family life, one could say that initiation is a ritual sanctification and preparation for marriage, and only when it is over young people may get married. Since the whole community participates in the initiation rites, it is therefore the entire corporate body of society, which prepares the young people for marriage and family life.<sup>33</sup> The community plays a great role in the preparation of its members. Whenever there is such an event taking place, the community sees it as a common goal to be achieved. We are told that “in early childhood among the Akamba of Kenya, for example, the grandmother calls her grandson my husband and you find deep affection between the two. A similar situation exists between the grandfather and the granddaughter...or the grandmother may tease the grand son and tell him “you will be the husband of this or that girl” Though this might no longer be the case, some hints are given on how one was formally, through the rites of passage, or informally, through the family set up, introduced into Marriage life.

## 2.2 Choice of Spouse

There are three methods of choosing a marriage partner: arranged marriage the parents of the boy propose to the parents of the girl. In this case, neither the boy nor the girl is asked their views concerning this marriage. The choice is made for the young people by their relatives. The second method is when a choice is made partly by the partners and partly by the parents. The third is the partners’ free choice – the marriage

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

candidate makes the choice of the partner and then informs their parents and relatives who now start making betrothal and marriage negotiations or arrangements. "The opportunities for them to do this are provided by social gatherings, dances and communal work, and by knowing other people in the neighbourhood."<sup>34</sup>

As I focus mainly in the traditional marriage, I will dwell more on the first method used in Akamba traditional society.

The criterion for choosing the girl to marry was not only based on her outward looks, but mainly how hard a worker she was. "The beauty of the woman is highly esteemed; a good wife should also be clean, industrious, generous, hospitable, sociable, not a witch, and able to look after the family properly."<sup>35</sup> In choosing, one had known whom to marry.<sup>36</sup>

In the Akamba society, the chores of girls extended beyond the normal household duties. It was the girl's dutie to fetch water, fire wood and even graze the domestic animals (the sheep, coats and cows). When the girl went to carry out her chores outside the home, she would be watched by the boys' father from a distance. He would do that for a while, so he would have a strong basis for his deductions on the girl.

The girl would not be aware that she was being watched, as she would be in a group of other girls. If the boy's father was not satisfied he would move on to the next

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34 See J.S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 107

35 J.S. MBITI, *Akamba Stores*, 5.

36 People know who is a close relative and whom they cannot marry. Most often people of one's own clan, or relatives of one's mother or father. It was believed that, if one would marry a

prospective girl who had come of age. On the other hand, if he was satisfied, he would arrange to meet with the girl's father.

He would go to the girl's home and engage the girl's father in talk. They would talk outside the house where the fire had been lit. The mother of both the boy and the girl were never to be present because it was never their place to make any negotiations in the marriage of their children. The two elderly men agreed on whether or not their children were to be married and the amount of bride wealth that was to be paid. Thus, they would also agree on when the girl's father would start paying for the bride wealth, which was usually done immediately. After the agreement was made none of the children (the boy or the girl) to be married had the right to dispute. So, the choice was imposed on them.<sup>37</sup>

Traditionally speaking, one would still find values in such ways of choosing a partner. As Mbiti well put it, "this method shows the socially importance of marriage, especially as it concerns the families and relatives of the couple. It also saves the children the unnecessary worry of having to make the decision for themselves. But this method has the disadvantage that the partners have little or no say in the matter, and to accept whatever is put before them. Yet this arranged marriages can and do succeed, fulfilling the purpose for which they are intended in the light of what marriage means for that particular society."<sup>38</sup> It is important that, even though the significance of

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close relative a would befall him or her, perhaps in the death of the couple or their children, or even their relatives and community.

37 In some cases, either side would accept or reject the request. For instance, if one came from a family which practice witchcraft and other social evils could not be married.

38 J.S. MBITI, *Love and marriage in conflict Africa*, 50.

involving others, the final decision should as much as possible be a reflection of the two intending to marry. In fact, "the development of a cash economy has given prospective marriage partners considerable more freedom of choice than it was possible in subsistence economy".<sup>39</sup>

### 2.3 Betrothal and Courtship

When both parents reached an agreement for their children to marry, arrangements for the actual marriage began. It was known in the village that the two were going to marry. It should be underlined that, at this stage both bride and bridegroom were not supposed to engage themselves in sexual activities. The girl was not supposed to go to her groom's house before the bride-wealth (*ngasya*) was given out. As we shall see when talking of the bride-wealth, there were few rites performed during the courtship period, which set the stage of the process of presenting out the bride-wealth to the girl's parents.

Occasionally, the boy's parents were supposed to visit the parents of the girl and interact. The bride-wealth was given out in procedure.

### 2.4 Alliance through Bride-Wealth

The Bride-wealth is sometimes called dowry, bride price, or simply gifts. We have to note that some of these terms are quite biased, and are a misinterpretation of the practice. Words such as dowry or bride price seem to suggest that a wife is bought.

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<sup>39</sup> M. PEIL - O. OYENEYE, *Consensus and Change*, 101.

Instead, "The exchange of betrothal and marriage goods and services is not an act of purchase, and most African words for this custom are different from words used for buying and selling goods."<sup>40</sup> Traditionally speaking, these practices have a meaning or value. "They are symbol of marriage covenant"<sup>41</sup> The bride-wealth made, "...the relative of the husband and of the wife to establish a close relationship through the exchange of visits and gifts"<sup>42</sup> In fact, "sometimes the bride wealth is so small that it could not represent the real value of a woman" The bride-wealth was a sign of gratitude on the groom's relatives to those of the bride for taking care of their daughter.

Bride wealth is paid before a couple is allowed to marry among the Akamba. The gifts are given to the family and relatives of the girl. The Akamba have two stages of the bride wealth ceremony. The first stage of the bride wealth took place when the father of the boy took the first goats (*mbui sya ntheo*) to the girl's home. The number of goats varies from place to place.

The first stage, known by the name "*ntheo*" - mini dowry, consisted of 6 goats. Before the gifts are taken, one goat was slaughtered and the blood was poured (*kwitia nthakame*) not only as sacrifice to the spirits of the family of the girl and a sign of gratitude, and a mark off the official close relationship between the two families, but it also meant that all children to be born would belong to the boy's clan. If the wife would be proved barren, the family still would provide with another partner. Apart from the goats, there was one big calabash of local beer, maize, and honey – representing the

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40S. MBITI, *Love and marriage in Africa*, 63

41 Ibidem, 63.

42 J.S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 100.

women, some materials - piece of cloth to be given to the mother, father and the grandparents of the girl.

The second stage of the bride-wealth was done after a certain time - two years, that the first bride-wealth has been paid, the *wazee*, from the side of the girl, would send somebody to the house of the fiancé to tell them of their next visit. This would imply that the time to pay the second bride-wealth - *ngasya* - had reached. As the family to the boy is aware of what that implies, they prepare what is missing to be given, that is, 8 cows, 13 goats. The cows are classified, that is, they have to be in pairs – four bulls and four cows. Besides that there will be one cow more that will be slaughtered for the celebration; five calabash of local beer – to drink during the celebration - and sugar cane. This was done as symbol of friendship, communion, oneness and acceptability...”<sup>43</sup>

One would ask, what about if one would not afford it, what would happen? If you would not have the number of the cows and the goats required, the family members could help. Once this is done, the woman is now considered a wife, legally speaking. She now belongs to her new family, and in case of death, she has to be buried in her new home. Even if she happens to die in her parents' house, that is, where she was born, she has to be taken back to her new house, her husband's. Now the woman is fully recognised in the new family, as well as the husband. The woman becomes a wife and the man becomes the husband- legally and traditionally speaking. Even if there will be a separation, unless she marries someone else, she is still considered as a wife to the first

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43 J.S. MBITI, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 138

husband. If the husband decides to marry somebody else, he has to make sure that the wife is married to somebody else, and he is the one to pay the bride-wealth to the second husband. If she does not marry, she will be taken as a wife to her former husband, though she lives in her parent's house. Still, in case of death she will be taken back to be buried in her former husband's house. This can be explained from the point of view of that bond or promise pronounced on their wedding day, "the slaughtered goat and the consumption of its blood symbolised no return."<sup>44</sup>

Apart from what I have mentioned, a fully paid bride-wealth gives the woman a voice in her new house. "She can now send the sister in law to feed the cows," or saying, on referring the belongings of the house, as "ours"- unlike before that she had to ask permission to use or get something.

As a couple, they would be given, by the father of the boy, a share of the part of wealth, such as field and cows. That was given so that they would be self reliant, though they would still have the food from the parents if they would have no food in their field. Whatever would be harvested from that field would be always offered to the father in law as a sign of gratitude.

Later, there were more gifts offered to the new married couple. This was done after having two children. The gifts consisted of one cow where they could get milk. The same gesture would be shown from the family of the wife. They also could offer, if they wished, a cow or any other gift that could be helpful to this new married couple, in beginning their new life.

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44 Mrs. TERESIA

## 2.5 The Wedding Ceremony

The traditional wedding ceremony among the Akambas is identified with taking the bride to the groom's home. This can be done when part or full bride-wealth has been given. If only a part is given, the rest of it is forwarded later. The third way is when the girl asks the groom to take her home, without the permission of her parents and before the bride-wealth is paid. This is done when the father to the girl refuses to grant the boy the permission to marry her before all the bride-wealth is paid. This, however, did not happen often. But whenever it happened, the man always sends one of his male relatives to inform the bride's parents about her whereabouts.

The bride-wealth gives the bridegroom the right to his bride. When the bride-wealth has been given, the bride can then be taken to her new home. As such, the claim over the bride is done when the parents of the bridegroom brew beer called *uki wa kwitya mwitu* (the beer for claiming the bride.)<sup>45</sup>

The wedding ceremony starts when two women relatives, along with a few friends of the groom accompany him to the girl's home. As a sign of blessing, for both the bride and the groom, the father of the young man sends some beer to the father of the girl. While the elders are drinking the beer, the girl walks unnoticed and is taken away by her groom. The two women relatives who had come with the bride walk ahead of the bride and the groom. The bride usually pretends that she does not want to go, and the groom has to beg her to go with him. As she goes with her groom at her new home,

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45 J.B.BAHEMUKA, *Our Religious Heritages*, 92.

she is expected to cry. This is done for various reasons. The first reason is related to her leaving her own family and being incorporated into new one, thus cutting herself from her people and belong to another family. The second reason is because her freedom and the joys of maidenhood are now considered dead and gone forever. She just cannot help crying.

The similar event is done by friends of the bride as a final ceremony to mark the transition from maidenhood to the married state. The ceremony was called *maio* (the weeping)<sup>46</sup>, which consisted of a mixture of joy and sorrow, mainly in the songs of sorrow and regret of having lost a companion. She will from then on, not join them in the dances, in communal work and the other activities that they have shared together. The main purpose of the ceremony was to bring gifts to the girl and to bid her goodbye.

The two women who accompanied her are the first to arrive at the bridegroom to break the news that the bride is coming home. The mother of the groom then prepares some ghee to welcome the bride home. As soon as the groom and the bride arrive, the mother comes out from the hut carrying some ghee and smears it on the bride's neck. This is a sign that the bride is very precious and that she is now accepted as a member of that family. The bride then proceeds to her husband's hut, to begin their new life. On the first night there was no sexual intercourse until the second night.

Relatives and friends from the both sides continued to make visits to new couple. They presented gifts as a sign of wishing them well in their marriage.

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46 Ibidem, 95.

Part of the wedding ceremony is the exchange of the consent. This was done mainly at the bride wealth ceremony. During the celebration, there will be a session of questions from the *wazees* representing both sides and the consent from the boy and the girl. By this moment, the girl is not supposed to take the beer before she makes sure that she had accepted the man and promised to be faithful as the grandmother or her own mother were faithful to their husband. And so then, she could join them in taking beer. She had to confirm that she would be obedient, good and welcoming. She had to promise to be faithful and ready to fulfill what is demanded as good wife – respect, service, obedience, and faithfulness. Similar questions were asked to the young man. He also would promise, respect and faithfulness. He had to make sure that he would not physically abuse her. As a matter of fact, whenever the husband would physically abuses, or beat the wife, he would be advised or scolded by the *wazee*.

## **2.6 The Family and Procreation**

When one speaks of marriage in Africa, it incorporates family life. It is like, as it were, the two side of the same coin. It is from the family that one comes and it is a family that one thinks when thinking of marriage life. I would agree with Mbiti, when he says: “In African life, we cannot speak of marriage alone: It is always in the context of marriage and family life. One gets married within the context of family life, and gets

married in order to enlarge that family life...the idea of individual in relation to marriage and family life is deeply rooted in African thinking.<sup>47</sup>

The Akamba family consists of parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, and often other relatives. Akamba know how they are related to each other through blood kinship and married relationships. Everyone knows how he or she is related to other people in the clan and in the neighbourhood. In their relationships, they know that each has duties and responsibilities towards one another. The family line among the Akamba does not only embrace the living but also extends vertically to link up the departed ones, since “they are the roots on whom the living stand”<sup>48</sup>

It is also important when talking about the family, to have in mind procreation, for it is a basis on which traditional African family is built. It was also the centre of the family. Without children there can never be an African family. Every marriage calls for having children, and therefore this becomes a religious duty which binds every individual who enters into marriage.<sup>49</sup> In fact, it is a fruit of marriage. Procreation stands as one of the chief reasons of marriage in African societies. As Mbiti says, “the supreme purpose of marriage according to African peoples is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life, and to hand down the living torch of human existence”<sup>50</sup> Marriage provides a new social relationship to be established between the families and relatives involved.

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47 See MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 115

48 Ibidem, 104.

49 J.B. BAHEMUKA, *Our Religious Heritages*, 101 -103.

50 See MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 110

## 2.7 Polygamy and Inheritance

Polygamy, among the Akamba, as in many African cultures, is a socially accepted and legally recognized form of permanent marriage in which a husband may have more than one wife at the same time. "Polygamy was, and is, an accepted and respectable institution, serving many useful purposes in the society".<sup>51</sup> Bahemuka mentions some concrete purposes of polygamous marriage.<sup>52</sup> Still, the main reasons were not more than to ensure that nobody is left out of marriage and that children are produced for each family concerned-

As in many others societies in the world: for example, in most of Islamic world. among the Akamba polygamy was also an accepted trend. The Akambas had, borrowing the words of Hillman, a "simultaneous polygamy"<sup>53</sup>, marrying more than one spouse at the same time. A man could marry even up to old age. It was believed that the more wives one had the wealthier the man was thought to be.

Both male and female children were accepted. A male child depicted manhood while a female child was an asset since they brought bride wealth.

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51 J.S. MBITI, *Akambas stores*, 5.

52 See J.B. BAHEMUKA, *Our Religious Heritages*, 103: The reasons were to have more children, since children were considered to be wealth; to help an old couple by bringing in a young woman to take care of the family wealth; to help out the childless couple by bringing in another woman to give them children; to help widows and their children not to feel outcasts; to help poor families who had daughters by paying bride wealth for the daughters.

53 Expression used by Hillman to identify variety of forms of Polygamy. Plural of marriage is found throughout the world in a variety of forms that are cultural determined. The familiar form among the western people is consecutive polygamy: one spouse after another in a sequence involving divorce and remarriage (one spouse engaged consecutively in discrete monogamous unions. Else where in the world Plural marriage means simultaneous Polygamy: more than one spouse at the same time. See E. Hillman, *Polygamy reconsidered*, p.10.

In case a husband died, a woman would chose to remain in the husband's home and fend for herself or she could get married again. Whoever married her would accept her with her children. Wife inheritance never existed.

The woman who got married a second time with children was even more valued. Apart from paying bride wealth for the woman, the man marrying her was required to pay some small bride wealth for each child she came along with.

The Akamba community only the man was head of the home. All the wives were equal and answerable to him irrespective of whether she was the first or the last wife. "The polygamy does not endanger the place of the first wife"<sup>54</sup>

Though the Akamba are polygamous, they view their marriage as a real one, since, using the words of Malinowski, it was based on an individual legal contract between one man and one human.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.8 Divorce and Separation

In Africa, a good number of ethnic communities know the separation of "bed and table". Nevertheless, a total separation which would be equal to proper divorce is rare.<sup>56</sup>

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54 B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of the Community*, 97.

55 B. MALINOWSKI, "Parenthood", 195.

56 B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of the Community*, 97.

This holds also true among the Gikuyu,<sup>57</sup> as in the Akamba community. In my research, I find out that most people, I mean, those who lived within the traditional setting, seemed not to know about divorce, since it was almost inexistent. As Mbiti also agrees, "When a marriage is established, divorce is virtually non-existent. In the traditional marriage, among the Akamba, divorce is almost unknown."<sup>58</sup> This was something that one knew already in the preparation for marriage. One would walk into marriage knowing that it was forever. The consolidation of the marriage contract is a process lasting from the time of betrothal to several years after the wedding.

I still believe that the concept of indissolubility, though not as it is interpreted today, was very much present among the Akamba. Maybe this would be the reason why also a bride cried when going to the groom's house, because she knew that was it, and never would she be back again, "until death would make them apart". The marriage made her a part of her husband and his family. Though polygamy is an accepted practice among the Kambas, "it is important to note that this form of plural marriage, unlike consecutive polygamy, does not always and necessarily imply divorce and remarriage."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> J. KENYATTA, *Facing Mountain Kenya*, 183

<sup>58</sup> J.S. MBITI, *Akambas Stories*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> E. HILLMAN, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, p.10.

## 2.10 Conclusion

The Akamba traditional culture was rich in diverse values, beliefs customs and rites. All these were incorporated in marriage, giving it a deep cultural meaning. Life remains precious for them. Some of these practices have been dropped considering the wave of change in Africa. The current way of doing things, in my opinion is still founded on the traditional marriage. The force is two-dimensional. On one hand, some of the traditional practices have been abandoned by the modern society (e.g. clitoridectomy). Other immorality like pre-marital sex has taken root. Abortion which is self induced is a common matter today. Adultery is very much practiced. Thus the outlook of marriage today is in contrast to the traditional one.

The ethical values in today's marriages are tied to a western mentality hence the issue becomes a personal affair.

I would recommend that, the study of the Kamba traditional culture is peculiar. To study it, one has to put off the present psychological feelings of the society. This will be a useful tool to help understand why some things were done by the Kambas community as pertains marriage and family. It would be essential to be patient before passing any judgement to the Kamba traditional marriage customs and concepts. Most of the practices had some symbolic meaning, for nothing was taken for granted. It has to be remarked that religion played an important role in the Traditional Kamba marriage.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The chapter is meant to reflect the theological meaning of marriage and family. It is based mainly on scripture, the magisterium and theology. The first part will deal with the divine origin of marriage and family: God is the author of marriage, which was created from the beginning of creation; man and woman were created for one another.

The second part of the chapter is intended to illustrate the union and the fidelity of a matrimonial union compared to Christ's with his Church. The same view is shared in the fifth part as a Christian understanding of marriage.

The third part describes the teaching on marriage and, is followed by the teaching of the unity and permanent of marriage. It concludes with a brief description on the family, as willed by God and fruit of mutual love of the spouses.

### 3.1 Marriage as a Divine Institution

Marriage and family are both institutions that are founded in God and have to be in harmony with the divine plan. Marriage was instituted from the beginning of creation. This is well illustrated in the scripture when God declared, "It is not good for a man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him."<sup>60</sup> The scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another. God not only created man and woman in his likeness, but He also called to existence *through love*, and he called them at the same time *for love*.<sup>61</sup> Coincidentally, may be it was not by chance that the Akamba myth and many other African myths of creation of man agree that human life started with husband and wife,<sup>62</sup> that God himself established. This myth seems to match with Genesis creation story in that marriage life starts with the first couple, man and woman, meaning that God intended that they become spouses, so that they continue with the work of God, as a co-creator.<sup>63</sup> We read in the scripture, that when God created the livestock, birds of the air and beasts of the fields, "no suitable helper was found" among them, so God created woman from a man's rib and God brought her to man". The man indeed recognised that was now bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. She shall be called woman", for she was taken out of man."<sup>64</sup>

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60 Cf. Gen. 2:18.

61 J. JOHN, *The family in the Modern world*, 19.

62 J.S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 104.

63 Cf. Gen. 1:28; see also.1: 31.

64 Cf. Gen. 2:23.

Thus, marriage is God's plan and wish, instituted from the beginning of creation. As such, God not only created man and woman but planned, arranged and officiated at the first marriage.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, marriage was not a human invention but God's. Marriage is a fruit of a divine plan, God's idea and plan to human beings. He did not only wish it but he did also ordain it. This may justify the main reason why the churches officially marry a man and his wife, is because this is God's command and God is very pleased with marriage. He is the originator or the author of marriage.<sup>66</sup> God is the designer of marriage.<sup>67</sup> Briefly, we can conclude with the most basic teaching on marriage both in old and new testaments. In the Old Testament, we read, "for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."<sup>68</sup>

### **3.2. Jesus as a Bridegroom**

The most extensive text that we find in the scripture is found in the New Testament. Paul, in the New Testament, elevates Christian marriage (marriage) by comparing Christ's relationship with the Church to the relationship of the husband to his wife<sup>69</sup> God's relationship with his people is illustrated through marriage. It is in this

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65 TAG, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage*, 48.

66 cf. GS 48 § 1.

67 J.N. SOMBA, *Marriage Kenya Style*, 14

68 cf. Gen. 2:24.

69 TAG, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage*, p.50.

picture that the fidelity of a wife and husband is founded. In fact, "God has the right to (ask) question their loyalty and fidelity if they are unfaithful to him."<sup>70</sup>

The image of the Lord as bridegroom grew out of the Old Testament analogy of the Lord betrothing Israel for his own bride<sup>71</sup> Marriage is no longer limited to the love of a partner and to procreation, "but experienced as communication of salvation"<sup>72</sup> The same author goes on explaining that in marriage the partner becomes the sacrament of God who gives himself totally to people and to whom people give themselves totally. God's covenant with people, makes the covenant between the spouses possible, and in so far as each of the partners tries to express God's love in his or her own love for the other, their marriage becomes an effective sign of grace, of God's covenant love. People are not free to reject this call when they marry, because the married partner is, in God's purposes, a vehicle and expression of God's love itself. Everything, then, is meant to be an expression of the totality and fidelity of God's love<sup>73</sup>

Marriage was a sacred sign of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Since "God created man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and un failing love with which God loves humanity."<sup>74</sup> The catechism goes on saying that Christ, as the son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving his life, has united himself, in a certain way to all humankind saved by him<sup>75</sup>

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70 Ibidem.

71 See Is 62:5, Jer 3:6-25; Ezek 16:1-62, Hos 1-3.

72 B.KISEMBO-AL, *African Christian Marriage*, 42.

73 Ibidem.

74 *Catechism of Catholic Church*, no 1604.

75 *Catechism of Catholic Church*, , no 1612.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her - the union and the fidelity of a matrimonial union is compared to and is in reference to Christ and the church. Therefore as Christ is faithful bridegroom to the church, Christian marriage, in its turn becomes, an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the church<sup>76</sup>

God's covenant with Israel in the image of extensive and faithful married love becomes a model of Christian marriage.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.3. Christ's Teaching on Marriage and Family

Christ is the centre of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all the bonds familiar or social<sup>78</sup>

Jesus himself, in his public life shows interest in marriage. At Cana, at his mother's request, during a wedding feast,<sup>79</sup> Jesus takes part and participates as an active member. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding in Cana. In this gesture, the Church sees it as a confirmation of goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence<sup>80</sup> Christ taught the original meaning of marriage.

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76 Ibidem 397.

77 Cf. Hos 1-3; Is 54; 62; Jer 2-3; 31; Ezek 16; 23; Mal 2:13-17

78 Cf. Luke 14:26, Mk 10:28-31.

79 Cf. Jon 2:1-11.

80 *Catechism of Catholic Church*, no 1639.

He stressed the point of permanence in marriage contrary to Moses, who because of the hardness of hearts of man, he gave in to divorce.<sup>81</sup> The matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble, God himself has determined it: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder"<sup>82</sup>

He (Christ) is also aware that the restoration of the original meaning of marriage is only possible with his help.<sup>83</sup> The spouses express the marriage covenant through a free expression of their consent, which is indispensable that makes the marriage.<sup>84</sup> It is through the consent that the partners give themselves to each other and "become one flesh."<sup>85</sup>

### **3.4 Teaching of the Unity and Permanence of Marriage**

The passage of scripture most used to illustrate the permanence of marriage is Genesis,<sup>86</sup> "therefore together shall man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife". The permanence is stressed by the words "leaving" and "cleaving".

This is made clearer in Matthew Gospel, "therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."<sup>87</sup> Reading above passages, we note, "it is absolutely

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81 Deut 24:1, Matt 19:13.

82 cf. Matt 19:6.

83 cf. Matt:11.

84 Code of canon Law, canon 1057 § 1.

85 Gen. 2:24, Matt 10:8.

86 Gen 2:24.

87 cf. Mark 10:1-12; Matt 19: 1-12.

certain from the teaching of New Testament and the continual witness of the church that it is for the nature of marriage to be a lifelong union. . ."<sup>88</sup>

As we read in the catechism, "the Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble."<sup>89</sup> The position of Jesus seems to be uncompromising, then one would ask why divorce? Maybe Moses would be in position to answer that question better. The institution of divorce is explained as a concession to human hardness of heart, meaning disobedience to God's law. The basis of the rejection of divorce, or if you wish, the permanence of marriage, on interpretation of God's plan, "at the beginning God made them male and female, for this reason the two shall become one. They are no longer two but one flesh."<sup>90</sup> This was a statement from the Lord, Christ himself, to the Pharisees, concerning divorce. Jesus, again, refers to the order of creation. God joined one man and one woman together. The woman came forth from the being of one man; only one come forth, not two women<sup>91</sup> Thus, it is obvious that man and woman were put together for life a time. They were not meant to be separated either themselves or others, though a weak state of human nature finds separation as apparently necessary. "Whereby oneness is truly reached, there cannot be a separation which corresponds with the will of God."<sup>92</sup> When man takes a second wife

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88 A. HASTINGS, *Christian marriage in Africa*, 79.

89 *Catechism of Catholic Church*, no 2382.

90 Mark 10: 6-8.

91 A. BRYSON, *Theology of Sexuality and Marriage*, 153

92 *Ibidem*.

he has betrayed the special unity with the first wife with whom he is one flesh. "None of these texts is there any mention of exception."<sup>93</sup>

This is only applicable to those who get married, and if not, they have not in reality divorced, not even have those who take a second wife.

### 3.5 Christian Understanding of Marriage

The Christian understanding of marriage is based on the symbol of the love between Christ, and his church. Christ is the bridegroom to his bride, the church. There is a parallel drawn between Christian marriage and the union of Christ and the church. Thus, to imitate Christ, who had unbreakable union with his church, Christian marriage is seen as a life-long union. The authentic married love is caught up into divine love.<sup>94</sup> Unlike among Akambas, where polygamy is socially accepted, the only type of marriage accepted in Christianity is monogamy. Polygamy is considered sinful union and is not accepted by the Church. Polygamy is contrary to conjugal love, which is undivided and exclusive.<sup>95</sup> In fact, though the Christian community still accept the polygamous couples, in their Christian communities, the polygamous couples are not allowed to participate at the table of Lord, receiving the Eucharistic communion, nor exercise certain responsibilities.<sup>96</sup> The Church cannot recognise the new union as valid, if the first marriage was. In the Catholic Church, marriage is not just a union between

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93 E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage Human reality*, 142.

94 GS, 48 § 2.

95 FC 19.

96 *Catechism of Catholic Church*, no 1650.

husband and wife, it is a sacrament<sup>97</sup>, sign of something spiritual and real, a spiritual bond that cannot be destroyed - or broken - that is why the church does not accept divorce.

The scripture shows in the importance of marriage, Thus it is shown by the fact that Christ himself took part at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee<sup>98</sup> "the importance of marriage is the fact that Christ's first miracle" took place at Cana in Galilee<sup>99</sup>

By doing so, Christ gives value to marriage, as a state that should be looked on with respect. He (Christ) as well gave the spiritual meaning of marriage. Humankind is not simply physical,<sup>100</sup> but also spiritual. In the Christian understanding, marriage is a sacrament with physical dimensions, which symbolises and coves spiritual grace and blessing. Christ sanctified it and gave it a true meaning. Thus marriage sanctifies the spouses and gives them the graces necessary for their state.<sup>101</sup>

The Christian marriage covenant is ordered by its very nature, for the good of the couple as well as to the generation and education of children. Marriage symbolises God's faithful, focused and intense for humanity.

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97 Code of canon Law, canon 1055 §1; Cf. GS 48 § 1.

98 Jo 2, 1-9.

99 Jo 2, 1-9.

100 Cf. Rev 21:1-4, It is picture of marriage between God and his people.

101 Gs 48, cf. PIUS XI, *Casti Connubii*, 1930, ND 1832: Gs 48

### 3.5.1 The Family

The family founded on marriage is the basic truth that goes back to creation itself. It is as old as marriage institution. It corresponds to the creator's plan from the beginning.<sup>102</sup> The book of Genesis states the inner meaning of marriage to include both married love –“ they become one flesh”, in the Semitic and anthropological sense of the word and founding of the family – “increase and multiply”.<sup>103</sup> The family, as the document of the Pope<sup>104</sup> well expresses, comes from God who willed, as fruit of the spouses. It is the marriage bond, with its original public dimension, gives foundation of the family. The family is the original cell of solid life. It is a natural society in which the husband and wife are called to give themselves in love.

Authority, stability and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundation for freedom, security and fraternity within society.<sup>105</sup> The Catechism goes further saying that the family derives its strength from the definitive covenant of love whereby a man and woman give themselves to another, mutually and together become God's co-operator in the self of life<sup>106</sup>

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102 Matt 19:4.

103 Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage Human reality*, 46.

104 Pope J. PAUL II, *family, marriage and "de facto" union*, 5

105 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no 2207

106 J PAUL, *Allacution During the general Audience of 1 December*, 1999

### 3.6 Conclusion

The marriage and family is a fruit of the divine plan exclusively shared by both man and his wife, as co – creators. God is the origin or author of these two realities. As He officiated the first marriage, he continues doing the same whenever man and woman join together in marriage.

Christ is the model of all marriages. He is the perfect symbol of marriage relationship, as he is a sign of stability, love and fidelity to his Church. It is through Christ that one finds meaning in marriage, which is a covenant between the spouses. As Christ's fidelity, a Christian is bound to keep his or her marriage vows till death do them apart, as an expression of total fidelity of God's love. The spouses are invited to approach this institution with this view of a lifelong relationship shared between them.

It is only with this understanding of marriage that we have stable families, a fruit of a marriage bond. The family as the basis of every human society, the church is called announce to each of its members as they grow up.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PASTORAL REFLECTIONS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

No doubt that as a pastor, or pastoral agents, we will often find ourselves in our ministries accepting and guiding people who intend to marry, or those who are already in some sort of “marriage” relationship, or still those have become separated.

Much has been described as to what marriage is, both traditional and Christian marriage, and in both we have seen that marriage is a life commitment and the product of God’s order of creation.

This chapter is intended to share some pastoral applications, or rather, some suggestions, without pretending to be exhaustive and or be a solution of today’s problem, but just as a reflection that can be taken into account for further considerations.

I will start this chapter by describing today’s marriage, and thus we shall see how the church has a role to play in marriage life, and how can we approach marriage in our present situation; what can we treasure of the traditional and what can we replace

and eventually see the possibilities of inculturation or integrations of values seen both in traditional and Christian marriage.

#### 4.1 Courtship and Marriage Today

Like many other communities in Africa, the Akamba have adopted some modern ways of courtship and marriage.

Among the Akamba today, courtship begins with a young identifying a girl he thinks likes. Once this girl has been identified and decided on, he makes a commitment to her by offering her an engagement ring

The criterion used for picking out a marriage partner today varies a lot, such as ethnic group, education, family background, and religion.

**Ethnic group:** Though among the African communities today there is a lot of inter-marriage, there are still those who strongly believe in marriage only among those of the same tribe. The Akamba people are no exception.

**Education:** Many young men among the Akamba like any other community in Africa marry a woman who is not more educated woman than them, so as to keep their status as the head of family.

**Family background;** It is very important for both the parties courting to know each other's background. The kind of families they each come from, their beliefs and cultures (if it is an inter-tribal marriage) and genetic diseases.

**Religion:** Religion is another factor that is usually considered. In most cases it does not pose a threat unless in extremes cases.

The engagement of the two young couple is announced to both their parents. The girl is first required to visit the boy's home so that the boy's parents can get to know her.

In Kamba community today, the disapproval of a spouse by either or both parents bears no weight to the young couple, usually; they put their own feelings about each other first.

Once the girl has visited the boy, she informs her parents of her intentions of getting married. Her parents would set a date when the boy could come to the home to negotiate and pay the bride-wealth.

During these negotiations, the bride's mother would be present but she has to be a passive participant. She is allowed though to make her requests about how much she thought the bridal price should be. This request is made known to her husband.

On the day of the bride-wealth negotiations, the groom would visit the bride's home together with his father and uncles, aunts and cousins. They are required to bring along blankets which would be presented to the mother, five goats (one of which had to be male) and ropes to tie the goats. The groom is then required to slaughter the he-goat with the help of his uncles. He should then roast the liver and offer it to the girl's parents with the help of the bride to be. The rest of the goat is cooked by the aunts and female cousins (they should be older than the groom) of the groom and served for everyone to eat.

Negotiations of the bridal wealth would then begin. At the initial stages of negotiations, both the boy and the girl would not be present. The parents from both

sides would introduce themselves and get to know each other. The groom would then be called and asked questions about the girl establish how well he knew the girl.

Once this was done, the girl would also be called. She would be asked whether she knew the visitors and exactly who they were to her (i.e. what relationship she had with them). The girls and boys are sent out from their room and the father or the uncle speaks and then negotiations begin. Whenever the bride price is set, the boy and his cousin comes next time to pay the bride-wealth. Unlike the traditional society, where the parents had to pay, the boy pays the bride wealth.

#### **4.2 The Goal of the Mission**

We have noted in the previous chapter, Christianity had a high regard for marriage, but today, we still do experience many problems facing this important institution of life, unlike the traditional society, where the individual was prepared for marriage over a long period of time, that is, from the childhood through infancy, adolescence to adulthood, each person knew that he or she was been already prepared for marriage and parenthood. Such preparation has been lacking in the church. The goal of the church is not only to point to the original meaning of the marriage and its purpose, but also to make sure that some necessary steps are taken to ensure the stability of the marriage. Many pastoral agents would agree that the challenge set before it, looks greater than ever. We have some common experiences today that are at the root of failure of marriage, which should be tackled as we prepare young people for marriage. One attitude that needs to be addressed is individualism. This attitude is at the root of

the marriage problem, since it is opposite to life in common, or better, to oneness in flesh. Individuality, as fulfilment, which excludes anybody else from in equation, is opposite to marriage that requires a service to others. Next to individuality is the dominance, which is an act against the bonding of marriage. Given that, neither a male nor female is complete in himself or herself but only in union, a domineering attitude is highly destructive to human beings.

As pastoral agents, we may be of a great help though catechises, seminars and conferences, together with people concerned, to find ways of overcoming that. Maybe one proposal would be the stress of unconditional love or a sacrificial love. It is only when one loves unconditionally or when love is above our own needs that one surpasses the individuality tendency. One has to go beyond the ego to reach the other. We have to die to self, that is, self-denial. As such a love relationship with spouse demands the death of the self. Husbands have to love their wives as Christ loved the church, which died sacrificially for it. The love of the spouse demands that we give up self-love and truly love them.

### **4.3. Looking into the Motivations**

The reasons that lead one to marriage may determine the fate of his or her future marriage life. If the focus of marriage is not genuine, one may likely end up into

separation. Marriage has been attached to the secondary intentions, such as *economic*, whereby the resources are brought together to the advantage of both, [or one]<sup>107</sup>

*Status* – engaging oneself to meet the society expectations, since the opposite would make one abnormal and regarded as cursed in the community. *Sexual* – marriage becomes as a green card to continual satisfaction of the need for sexual intercourse.

We could have gone and on with the list, such as, companionship, intimacy, and Love. It is obvious looking at these reasons, we can, as Dyson put it, categorise them, except the last one, love, under the term *marriage of convenience*, as it matters to be settled. Marriage for convenience goes against the real meaning of marriage as such. People get married because of the marriage force,<sup>108</sup> a reality that arises from within essential human nature and nowhere else.

The basis of marriage is an essential aspect of human nature; it is, therefore, within men and women and not outside of them, in some other object. The ultimate answer tells to the origin of marriage and as to why people get married, is that God created us so.<sup>109</sup> Other reasons will remain such as a need to live together, in a temporal arrangement.

In our permissive world everything becomes permissible and acceptable. All is justified under the name of modernity, or “dot com age”, or still under the name “signs of the time,” where values have been reduced to relativism. The freedom of the autonomous individual makes one to think that one can do what he or she likes, even

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107 A. BRYSON, *Theology of Sexuality and Marriage*, 32.

108 A. BRYSON, 34.

109 A. BRYSON, 35.

having freedom with their body. In fact, marriage has been affected greatly; it has been reduced to simply sexual attraction, which results in production of unwanted children who end up in the streets. Many partners are just consumed with self-love that they find it hard to give any real commitment to another.

#### 4.4. Values for Inculturation

The traditional marriage could contribute a lot especially through restoring community dimension of marriage: “ Africa marriage does not only affect two people, but also affects the entire family and even the clan community of both marriage partners<sup>110</sup> Marriage is not an individual matter; rather it is a community affair and everybody in the community works for its success. In fact, because marriage is the responsibility of the community, there is a great sense of belonging and family living, which is opposite to individualism. The church may be a right channel to bring this fact to the society. In fact, thanks to many pastoral agents, Christianity has had a great influence on the community institution, especially in regard to values.

The community bound all members together such as divorce, premarital sex, prostitution, and single parenthood were unthinkable. Any irregularity was easily and quickly checked because of the strong family bond. Also in cases of the extreme cruelty by the husband, the family interceded and sought ways of prevention. Such structures provided stability and security in marriage. Marriage was permanent, reliable,

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110 B.BUJO, *The ethical Dimension of Community*, 94.

sustaining and satisfying and ensured the good future generations to come. Thus, marriage was considered as obligation of the community, so everything has to be done to safeguard it.<sup>111</sup> It is also true, that the times have changed and require different answers, and the youth, in the modern society, “ need to break free from the ways of their parents and indeed the ways that we call establishment,<sup>112</sup> but still, one would not justify a total abandonment of such values that can also still do in the present society, expressing it in their suitable terms. of course, I am not advocating the return to good old fashion family values.

The stress should be given to the young ones, especially regarding marriage concept. Their concept should go beyond their sexual urge, which in the words of Bryson, are strong, so much so that it dominates much of their conscience. To be complete and satisfied they must live in intimate relationship, which we call marriage.<sup>113</sup>

The misconception of freedom views marriage as a prison. Thus, many young people opt for free love. Such type of love, as the document, “Marriage and “de facto” union states, constitute a fact that breaks down and destroys marriage because it lacks the constitutive element on the conjugal love which is based on personal and irrevocable consent whereby the spouses give and receive one another mutually, giving rise to a juridical bond and unity sealed by a public dimension of justice.

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111 A. BRYSON, 42.

112 A. BRYSON, 22.

113 Ibidem.

The marriage relationship has to be build on trust where one, if one loves the spouse, sets him free, in that she or he does not dominate the other, and continually return to each other through free choice. In this way the great value and relationship is preserved.

It is also true that today's marriage among the Akambas, whether civil, Christian or traditional has the same value, though as it is evident, some practices have dropped. There is a weakness surrounding the marriage, because the modern marriage law accepts divorce. All these affect marriage but nevertheless, the institution of marriage is most valued and respected. On the other hand, we see such a powerful influence from other cultures of the world. Modern African marriage is influenced by the west, and it is a reality, which has created a gap between the traditional African marriage and Christian marriage. We have already described marriage as most essentially life commitment. Most couples who live together, apart from marriage, want to be free to separate and find another, when the novelty wears off or when they no longer find each other desired.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

We are invited to have a realistic reading of the situation today, to recognize the fragility of moral motivations. We have to admit that a premarital relation is a fact. On the other hand, we also have to be aware of the reactions that the modern mentality, especially that of young people, produces against the presentation of the Christian moral

norm in this matter. This reaction is not rooted in the bad will of the individuals; it finds nourishment in the social cultural situation in which the young live their love story today. As we have seen, we are living in the “ permissive” type of society where free behaviour is passively accepted. It is only in being aware of these situations that we can come up with a pastoral plan which is able to clarify the motivation on which the moral norm is based. We could mention many, but let me mention three, which I think to be relevant to what I am tackling now. These are anthropological, theological and procreative dimensions. In *anthropological conception*, the stress is put on the respect of all human values, the sexual relation is affirmed as the expression of a communion between two persons, willed and chosen as complete and definitive. For this, it must be set in that situation of complete and definitive belonging, which is realized in marriage. This is not just a question of giving juridical guarantees of the seriousness of the commitment, but also, and far more essentially, of ensuring an ontological proportion between the significance of the sexual act and the life of the two partners. The sexual relation is an “act” which expresses mutual self – giving so complete as to make two one being. It will therefore be a “true” act, that is, proportionate to the existential realities of the two partners, only when it expresses the fact of total commitment on their part, with regard to every dimension of their being.

The *theological dimension* approaches it in the light of faith. Here the love of married people is compared to that love which Christ has for the Church. “Everyone is called to a love that binds persons together in the ways that reflect the person

communion of divine love.”<sup>114</sup> For the two baptized persons, therefore the sexual relation takes on a special meaningfulness. It is by its very nature an expression of the complete and definitive gift that each of the two has made of himself to the other.

*The procreation dimension* of the sexual intercourse confirms what the above mentioned dimensions. Human love needs to open itself to a “third,” to protect itself from this intersubjective relationship. When two persons really love each other, they cannot but desire to “remain one besides the other forever in life which will bear their somatic features, their biology, their style and their name”<sup>115</sup>

In *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II explains clearly the reason why the Church condemns extramarital intercourse as serious immorality. When referring to “God’s plan” for marriage and the family, he emphasizes that the human meaning of sexual activity is not merely biological, nor it is aimed at mere pursuit of pleasure. It “concerns the innermost being of the human person as such” Sexual intercourse is realized in a truly human way “only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.” Sexual intercourse should be a sign and fruit of total and generous self-giving, which is only possible within the marriage. For marriage is the covenant of conjugal love by which man and woman freely unite their lives into “An intimate community of life and love willed by God himself.” The Pope concludes his analysis saying that the limitation of sexual

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114 RONALD, L.- al., *Catholic Sexual Ethics*, p. 176.

115 S PAOLO, *Premarital relations and the moral norm*, 92.

activity to marriage is not unreasonable or arbitrary imposition on people's freedom but  
“ an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love” 116

Many people may say, what an unrealistic thing! It sounds so, but it “is possible for people to chose to do difficult things if they can see the real good to be achieved by the difficult choice. And God is ready to give his saving grace.”<sup>117</sup> Creating the human race in his own image, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility of love and communion.

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116 PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11.

117 RONALD, I.- al., *Catholic Sexual Ethics*, 184.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Sex is good and was created by God, with purpose. It is ultimately for marriage and there should be a proper preparation before one engaged in it. In other words, God's order of sex in reproduction (Procreation) must be followed if people are to derive full benefit from it and live with it in harmony.

The one concerned has to be mature if he or she wishes to be co – creators with God, by engaging in sexual relationship. This total maturity must include the physical, social, mental, emotional, social and spiritual parts of us. One has eventually, with God's blessing, find a close friend with whom to share one's life by entering into the permanent union of marriage.

From the experience of other people, some of them my own friends, it was clear that a sexual relationship before marriage, instead of enriching friendship, in most cases destroys it.

The fact that those who engaged in premarital sexual relationships are not willing to become really involved with one another and only wish to share a common bed for a few hours inhibits from sharing a common destiny. They just to satisfy their sexual drive (sexual instinct) for that moment. In fact, sometimes young adults can

sustain this view for a while, but eventually if they are honest enough they have to admit that the pressures and pain and anxiety of having sex “casually” wears them out and deep down is very lonely and depressing.

The natural thing is for the married couple to get involved, through their body, soul and mind with one another, becoming “one flesh” which means giving one’s personality. Therefore, the effort of not getting involved frustrates the two people. The experience becomes disappointing and sometimes disgusting. Because to enter into sexual act by giving one’s body, without getting involved, is to make the act just a common place action, like shaking hands with somebody without even looking at the other person and in fact think of something else.

In most cases, the circumstances in which one experiences a pre – marital sex are inappropriate, and this may lead to dissatisfaction. This lack of fulfillment may compel the person to seek other sexual partners in an effort to get satisfaction. In the end he or she may become disillusioned and even give up the marriage.

A person who has had multiple sexual partners before marriage will bring these experiences into marriage, and he or she may then compare his or her spouse with previous partners. Proper sexual adjustment may never be attained in such cases. This is an example how premarital practice does not make one perfect. The sexual act or intercourse is not to be used to find out who one is, but it should be the other way round, that is a means of expressing to another who one is and who the other person is. It is therefore important that intercourse between two mature people should be an act of

love by which a man and woman commit themselves to one another, and may be open to life.<sup>118</sup>

The natural attraction that the boys and girls feel for one another should lead one day to that permanent commitment that a man and woman make to one another for the sake of shared love, companionship and transmission of new life.

It is a Christian conviction that God created man and woman, that sex is a part of God's creation and that sex therefore is good. God made sex for the unity and enjoyment of two people in a life long commitment and relationship that is made public through the sacrament of marriage.

If the two people marrying have done their best to build a commitment on unselfish love and on friendship, then with the grace of God, they will remain true for each other for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in healthy. But if there experience before marriage have been sexual encounters based on physical attraction and good looks, where love is sought for personal satisfaction and the fulfillment of one's need, then despite the words of commitment of the wedding ceremony, the chance of a lasting and happy marriage is slim.

The sign that binds us most is the sexual union because we are not just giving hand, but our whole body. In sexual union we give ourselves totally. Therefore, to go through sexual act in trivial way empties the act of its real meaning. It can never be a trivial acts since it signifies the complete self-giving of two persons to each other. This explains the reason why sexual union is well done when accomplished in love.

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. M. MALONEY, *Teenagers Sex and Love*, 42.

The union of the bodies is good since it allows the partners to be even closer to each other. This union is not mainly for the pleasure it gives, but to show love. If sexual union does not spring from love, then its value is diminished. Sexual union must signify total union of the two beings.

Sexual union, to be of value, implies love, but above all implies the will to stay always together in order to build the life together. “Genuine love implies commitment and the exercise of wisdom”<sup>119</sup> The person who truly loves does so because of a decision to love. This person has made a commitment to love whether or not the loving feeling is present. If it is, so much the better; but if it isn’t, the commitment to love, the will to love, still stand and is still exercised.

From what has been describing we may conclude, with the following definition:

Marriage is more than an agreement between man and woman to live together; more than a mutual exchange of promises of support and comfort; more than an agreement to observe the civil and the ecclesiastical laws of marriage; more than a promise to help each other to achieve union with God. A marriage may involve all of these intermingled agreements, but none of them define marriage. Only two seeking to become perfectly one flesh with each other to do that<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> M. PECK, *Road less traveled*, 117 - 118

<sup>120</sup> C.P. KINDREGAN, *Theology of Marriage*, 18

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