



Inter-Rite Marriages

On 31 May 2016, in his apostolic letter given '*Motu Proprio*' *De Concordia inter codices* (harmonizing the codes), Pope Francis observed certain discrepancies between the norms found in the Code of Canon Law and those of the Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches regarding inter-rite marriages.

By this *Motu Proprio*, several changes were made to the Code of Canon Law in order to harmonize the two codes.

- Art. 6: c. 1108 will from now on contain a third paragraph with the following text:
§3. Only a priest validly assists at marriages between Eastern parties or between one Latin party and one Eastern party whether Catholic or non-Catholic.
- Art. 10: c. 1116 will from now on contain a third paragraph with the following text:
§3. In judging the cases, mentioned in §1, nn. 1 and 2, the local ordinary can give to any Catholic priest the faculty of blessing the marriage of the Christian faithful of an Eastern Church which does not have full communion with the Catholic Church if [those faithful] voluntarily ask for this, as long as nothing stands in the way of a valid and licit celebration [of the marriage]. The same priest, always with necessary prudence, is to inform the competent authority of the non-Catholic Church, who are concerned, of the fact.
- Art. 11: The first paragraph of c. 1127 is entirely replaced with the following text:
The prescripts of c. 1108 are to be observed for the form to be used in a mixed marriage. Nevertheless, if a Catholic party contracts marriage with a non-Catholic party of an Eastern rite, the canonical form of the celebration must be observed for liceity only; for validity, however, the presence of a priest is required and the other requirements of law are to be observed.

Therefore, only a priest validly assists at marriages between Eastern parties or between one Latin party and one Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic party (c. 1108 §3; cf. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, *Pastoral Notes*, CCCB, 2017, #17, p.6).

When interviewing prospective spouses, it is important to pay careful attention to the question of Rite. Members of an Eastern Rite Church, even if they are attending a Latin Rite Church, do not belong to the Latin Rite. Even Baptism in the Latin Rite does not necessarily mean the person belongs to the Latin Rite, if the parents are members of an Eastern Rite Church.

As a result, Eastern Rite Catholics cannot validly marry someone other than a Latin Rite Catholic before a Latin Rite priest without a special faculty to perform the wedding granted by the Eastern Rite Ordinary.

If both prospective spouses belong to an Eastern Rite (e.g., Ukrainian, Chaldean, Syro-Malabar, Greek-Melkite, Maronite), even if they are attending Latin Rite Churches, they must be married



in accordance with their own rite. If they wish to marry in the Latin Rite, then permission and proper delegation must first be obtained from their own ordinary.

At the time of the wedding, or during marriage, a spouse can decide to transfer to the Church of the other spouse (i.e., Eastern Rite to Latin Rite and vice versa). However, if the marriage has ended, the person can freely choose to remain in their new Rite or return to his/her own Church *sui iuris* (c. 112 §1 2°).

Children born of inter-rite unions can be baptized in the Latin Rite if both parents have chosen by mutual agreement to have their offspring baptized in the Latin Rite. If there is no mutual agreement, however, the child is enrolled in the Church to which the father belongs.

If only one of the parents is Catholic, the baptized child is ascribed to the Church to which the Catholic parent pertains.

Anyone seeking Baptism who has completed the fourteenth year of age can freely choose to be baptized in the Latin Rite or in an Eastern Catholic Rite; in this case, the person thereafter belongs to the Church which he or she has chosen (c. 111).

A number of Eastern Rite Churches *sui iuris* have a presence in Vancouver. The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster is located here. There are Syro-Malabar and Greek-Melkite parishes here which belong to their respective Canada-wide Dioceses. The Maronite community in Vancouver also has a Bishop for Canada to whom they look.

**Approved: Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch
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The following policy is hereby superseded:
Inter-Rite Marriages, issued on April 25, 1986.