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2 MARITAL INSTABILITY, DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The marriage institution is common phenomenon found in every society. Defining the concept of marriage however it not a very easy task, given that there are numerous variations in the forms of marriage present in different societies.³ In view of this, sociologists have also provided various definitions of the concept of marriage. John E. Farley defines marriage as a socially approved arrangement, usually between a male and a female, that involves an economic and sexual relationship.⁴ According to John Beattie, marriage is a union between a man and a woman, such that their children are recognised as legitimate offspring of both partners.⁵ Ronald Smith and Frederick Preston conceptualised marriage to be an enduring socially approved sexual and economic relationship between at least two persons.⁶ What is common in Farley, Beattie and Preston is the tendency to perceive marriage as a union between a man and a woman in which children are produced as legitimate offspring of both the man and women.⁷ However, S.A. Okodudu asserts that the idea of marriage has changed in recent times. In a number of communities today, marriage is conceptualised as a union between two consenting adults.⁸

Amongst the various forms of marriage that exist are religious marriages (sanctified by a celebration in a mosque or church), civil marriages (performed by a civil officer) and traditional marriages (effected through traditional solemnisation). A marriage union can be solemnised by all three types of wedding, or by two, or by only one. Most marriage celebrations in Africa are either religious, traditional or both. This is partially accounted for by the high level of religiosity in the continent.

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- 3 Wimalasena NA. 2016. "An Analytical Study of the Definitions of the Term 'Marriage'", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 6(1):166-174.
- 4 Farley JE. 1994. *Sociology*. Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- 5 Beattie JHM. 1980. *Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- 6 Smith RW and Preston FW. 1982. *Sociology: An Introduction*. New York: Macmillan.
- 7 Jack, JTCB. 2015. "The Institution of the Family, Marriage, Kinship and Descent", in Abasi-Ekong E (ed). *Selected Topics in Nigeria Peoples and Culture*. Benin City: Dimaf Publishers.
- 8 Okodudu SA. 2010. *Fundamentals of Sociology*. Second Edition. Port Harcourt: Thompson and Thompson Nigeria Ltd.

The largest percentage of Africa's population are people of faith, and the majority of these are Christians, who belong to one or more than one Christian denomination in the continent. Many Christian denominations in Africa take pride in those who decide to marry following the church doctrines and desire that they establish homes guided by the denominational and biblical teachings.⁹ Some even view marriage as a measure of success and God's blessing. Amongst some Christians, however, the marriage institution has turned out to be a cause of regret and suffering, a fact that is reflected in high levels of marital instability and divorce and testimonies of people who have divorced or are seeking divorce.

The main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate, through the personal narrative of Angel, an ordained minister of the Anglican Church of Kenya, relayed later in this chapter, how some of the Church's ways of preparing people for marriage and some of its teachings about gender, sexuality and marriage may actually contribute to marital instabilities and divorce. The chapter draws from the theoretical perspective of interactionism. According to this theoretical perspective, an individual is not a merely passive object in the environment, but rather an active and conscious piece of the social-context system. Interactionism theory argues that individuals are shaped by their interaction with the society and social processes such as identity formation, cooperation, conflict, are interactive products of the individual and the society. In this sense, interactionism offers a framework for understanding the process by which the church's teachings on sex, gender and marriage and the process of preparing for marriage in the church setting contributes to marital success or failure. Thus, in order to understand Angel's narrative of marital ill-preparation, it is important to understand the prevailing patterns of marriage and marital instability in Kenya, including Kenyan churches.

MARITAL INSTABILITY AND DIVORCE IN KENYA

Numerous Christian families struggle and exist amidst great challenges that threaten their progress. The occurrence of marital instabilities, including those that eventually result into marriage dissolution, has led to divorce being widespread, such that the absolute commitment to permanent marriage has been lost.¹⁰ In Kenya, divorce is understood as the termination of a marriage or its dissolution. Physical divorce occurs when a marriage is legally terminated, usually by a court of law. However, many couples often resort to seeking legal advice and settling their divorce in private, away from the court, for various personal and religious reasons. Divorce can also be highly emotional, even in cases where husbands and wives no longer have any emotional attachment but where they still live together. Such couples continue to live together, despite a total breakdown of communication

9 Familusi OO. 2019. "Till Circumstances do us Part: A Socio-Ethical Analysis of Divorce among Christians in Nigeria", *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: A Arts & Humanities – Psychology* 19(5).

10 Olaniyi AA and State O. 2015. "Analytical Study of the Causal Factors of Divorce in African Homes", *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 5(14):18-30.

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between them, but they decide not to physically divorce due to fear of the stigma associated with physical divorce.¹¹ The significantly increasing rate of divorce cases in Kenya in recent years, despite of their prohibitive legal costs, reflects the extent to which marriages and families are failing throughout the country.¹²

A number of issues have been cited as contributing factors to the surge of marital instability and divorce. One such factor is the conflict between gender roles amongst family members and economic realities. Traditional religious and cultural norms in African communities distribute the roles and responsibilities in a home amongst family members according to their gender identity and in line with gender stereotypes which are deeply rooted in the African religious and cultural beliefs. In this context, men are perceived as head of family, capable of fending for the family, providing protection to the other family members and being in charge of the labor-demanding work of the family. Women, on the other hand, are viewed as subjects to male leadership and dominion in the family whose basic role is to take care of the homes and children and they themselves together with the children depend on the men's sweat for survival.

When it comes to marriage, women are encouraged to look out for men who appear to be capable of providing for their financial needs. Consequently, some women marry their husbands for financial reasons or inducement, when money becomes scarce. In situations where the man is not able to provide for the financial needs of the home, some women become vulnerable to extent of engaging in transactional sex outside of wedlock in order to meet their financial needs and the needs of their families.¹³ Additionally, the economic reality of families in many African communities is different from that envisioned by the authors of patriarchy, who looked at men as the ones capable of providing for the family. In many families today, women--not men--end up performing the actual role of providing fending for their families. In some families, it is the women's ownership of income-generating projects that provides for the basic needs of other family members, including the men. At times, such women lack the time and energy to shoulder both fending for the family and performing the gender roles of taking care of the family and playing as subjects to the very males they are taking care of them.

Many men who cannot cope with this reality resort to violence as a means of exerting their dominion, and this causes marital instability, leading to divorce in many cases. Furthermore, in some families, there is tendency of men experience financial pressure when their spouse earns more than they do. When men who subscribe to the hegemonic patriarchal teachings that give impression that a real man should be richer than his wife so as to earn total respect and submission find themselves in a situation in which a woman earns more, they tend to feel insecure

11 Familusi, "Till Circumstances do us Part".

12 Olaniyi and State, "Analytical Study of the Causal Factors of Divorce in African Homes".

13 Familusi OO and Oke OP. 2011. "A Christian Dimension to Poverty Discourse in Nigeria", *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 43(2):75-94.

and fear that the woman will become financially independent and unruly. The financial incompatibility that results makes it hard to maintain peace and unity in the family.¹⁴

Incompatibility between the couple is another reason for marital instability and divorce. It can come about in cases of disability due to accidents or medical complication discovered after marriage. Instability can also come from a couple's experience of infertility.¹⁵ Those who identify themselves with the "revised" marital vows that provide no room for illness and others who may not be loving or patient enough to remember that they made the oath of holding unto one another in sickness and in health find their way out of the marriage once disabilities occur or medical complications are discovered. Academic incompatibility can also be a source of trouble, where the two partners differ widely in educational levels, for instance where a high school certificate holder marries a holder of a doctoral degree and the former takes no effort to develop himself or herself. Difference in social backgrounds of the two partners can also lead to incompatibility. In an actual sense, human beings cannot be absolutely compatible, but if the level of incompatibility is too high, to the extent of bringing about of disagreements between the spouses, it can lead to marital instability and divorce.¹⁶

Domestic and gender-based violence also threatens marital stability. Domestic abuse can be physical or psychological, including behaviours, ranging from rape and incest to verbal abuse. Violence against spouses can lead to their permanent disability or death. The violence is mostly by men against women; however, cases of women abusing men have also been seen in African communities.¹⁷ Sometimes, marital instability results from the interference of friends, in-laws, parents, and other people who intervene in the affairs of other families in the sense of monitoring their activities and offering advice. While this concern by others for the state of the marriage is not always bad, depending on the extent and motivations of the interference, it can end up harming the family.

Ultimately, marriage has no formula, and what works in one family may not work in another family.¹⁸ Marital instabilities and divorce are undesirable, psychologically traumatic and socially disruptive. They are associated with disunity, grief, stigma and pain, and they are a threat to people's integrity. They are, however, a result of

14 Olaniyi and State, "Analytical Study of the Causal Factors of Divorce in African Homes".

15 Kalmijn M, Vanassche S and Matthijs K. 2011. "Divorce and Social Class During the Early Stages of the Divorce Revolution: Evidence From Flanders and the Netherlands", *Journal of Family History*. Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0363199011398436>

16 Scott SB, Stanley SM and Allen ES. 2014. "Intervention: Implications for Improving Relationship Education", *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice* 2(2):131-145.

17 Familusi OO. 2010. "An Ethicist's Perspective of the Problems of Gender, Violence and Stigmatization of People Living with HIV and AIDS", *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, 42(2):122-150.

18 Abioye MA. 2007. *Codes for Blissful Marriage*. Abuja: Living Faith Church.

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the various challenges that affect the marriage institution and the family unit, as described below.¹⁹

CONSEQUENCES OF MARITAL INSTABILITY AND DIVORCE

Dissolution of marriage creates further effects, as the once loving relationship becomes hostile, facilitating discrimination and absence of cordiality. Many of the couples who end up in court for dissolution of their marriage remain enemies after the incident. The breakdown of marriage results in numerous devastations to family members. Family crisis and failures also signal danger and insecurity in the wider society.

Adults suffer from the loss of an intimate relationship that may have been a source of support and security, in addition to the loss of hope, family dreams and goals. Incidents of marital dissolution also result in feelings of failure, loneliness, low self-esteem, fear, anxiety and guilt.²⁰ Divorce causes particularly dramatic change in the women's standard of living, and this is worse in the non-developed countries than in the developed countries. This is partly due to the fact that in most cases, it is the women who retain the custody of the children when a marriage breaks down and take on the responsibility of providing for most, if not all, of the associated costs, such as medical bills, school fees and other expenses. In many Christian communities, remarrying is not always easy for a divorced people, especially where it is emphasised that a divorced woman cannot remarry until her divorced husband dies, because remarrying while her divorced husband is alive is equivalent to adultery, as stated in Romans 7:23.²¹

Failed marriage and broken families have significant negative impacts on the children. The resulting absence of a family that is meant to serve as the primary agent of socialisation makes nurturing of children difficult. In some cases, children shuttle between both parent's homes, which is undesirable. Dissolution of a marriage can cause children often drop out of school and become hawkers, so as to assist their parents and younger siblings.²² The failure marriage results in mistrust and discourages those who have been affected by it from seeing marriage as something worthwhile. Many children from broken homes are hardly enthusiastic about marriage, since they would not wish to experience what their parents went through.

The breakdown of marriage creates enormous psychological effects, not only for the spouses, but also their children, parents and other members of the community.

19 Mooney A, Oliver C and Smith, M. 2009 "Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Well-Being: Evidence Review", Research Report DCSF-RR113. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

20 Amato PR. 2000. "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children", *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62(4):1269-1287.

21 Kaberia IK. 2011. "Divorce and Marriage: An Ethical Challenge to The Contemporary Methodist Church in Kenya", *International Journal of Current Research* 3(12):377-384.

22 Ojo TO. 2006. *The Acts of an Ideal Home*. Ibadan: The Apostle Ministry.

Victims may be emotionally distressed to the extent of experiencing a decline in their productivity at work. Marital instabilities can traumatise some people to the level of ending their own lives. People who divorce may also experience psychiatric disorders.²³ Some resort to drug abuse, sexual immorality and drunkenness in order to cope with their marital instabilities. Some of the wounds that result from marital dissolution are so severe that the victims feel nothing can ever heal them. Even when they are healed, the scar that remains can last for a lifetime with negative consequences on the victim's attitudes and behaviour.

MARRIAGE IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA

The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) is one of the major Christian denominations in Kenya. Its history dates back to 1844, when the first missionaries from the Church Missionary Society first arrived in Kenya.²⁴ There are a number of groups within the ACK and one of these is the Awakened Revival Movement, commonly called the Tukutendereza group.²⁵ In the ACK, marriage is understood as a divine arrangement in which a man (husband) and a woman (wife) give themselves totally to each other in their masculinity and femininity in a sexual union capable of cooperating with God in the procreation of new human life. Marriage is perceived as the foundation of the family and the basic unit of society through which human challenges such as egoism, self-absorption and pursuit of selfish desires can be overcome.

In the ACK, the celebration of marriage usually takes place during a worship service in which the spouses mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of matrimony by expressing their consent in the presence of a religious officiant. The religious leader presiding over this function must be ordained and in possession of a valid license that authorises him or her to officiate over a marriage ceremony. The holy matrimony joins the two spouses into one where they embrace each other's entire life, such that they continuously grow communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marital promise of total self-giving. It is a human communion confined, purified and completed by communion in Jesus Christ.

The marriage institution occupies a pivotal place in the church and in every congregation. There are fellowships for married couples within the church, and couples can only be a member of such fellowships after providing proof that they are legally married in the church. These fellowships include the mothers union for women and the fathers union for men. Part of their mandate is to provide mentorship to those who intent to get married, offer accompaniment to the newly married and also address the various issues faced by the married couples. The entire Christian community, along with church pastors, plays an indispensable

23 Bilampoa G and Bruno S. 2012. Effects of marital breakdown on women's living conditions in Burkina Faso.

24 Anglican Church of Kenya. n.d. "Our History". Online at: ackenya.org/mission-of-the-church/about-mission [Accessed 10 December 2021].

25 Ward K and Wild-Wood E. 2012. *The East African Revival: History and Legacies*. London: Routledge.

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role in preparing people for marriage. The church has an established system of preparing couples intending to get married that involves marital counseling sessions where men and women are taught about their roles and responsibilities and what is expected of them once they get married.²⁶ However, in this chapter, through the lived experience of the Anglican pastor, Angel, we demonstrate that the church's investment in preparing its devotees for marriage is lacking and in dire need of revival.

ANGEL'S NARRATIVE: A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

In addition to the interactionism theory that considers subjects' interaction with their environment, this chapter employs the narrative research methodology for hearing and analysing Angel's story. As one narrative theorist and practitioner has observed, "Narrative inquiry is a means by which people's stories can be systematically gathered, analysed, and represented as told by them."²⁷ As other narrative theorists have noted, "Narrative is inherently multidisciplinary, and is an extension of the interpretive approaches in social sciences. Narrative lends itself to a qualitative enquiry in order to capture the rich data within stories."²⁸ There are various forms of narrative analysis; some focus on the content of the story, other on the meaning and some on both meaning and content. When narratives are viewed as a "window onto a knowable reality", they can be analysed using concepts derived from theory (thematic analysis), or concepts derived from the data (grounded theory).²⁹ However, stories can also be viewed as "socially situated knowledge constructions" in a way that that "values messiness, differences, depth and texture of experienced life".³⁰ This last method is narrative analysis.

The chapter employs a narrative analysis of Angel's real-life experience as narrated by herself. Angel is a female ordained minister of the Anglican church of Kenya and the authors' first encounter with her was during a religious leader's conference on sexual and gender-based violence in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2017. During this conference, Angel shared her experiences of growing up as a Christian devoted to her church's teachings on sex, gender and marriage, as well as to how the church prepared her for marriage and what she experienced in marriage. Permission to use Angel's story in this chapter was initially sought from the organisation that

26 Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Article 7: The Sacrament of Matrimony". Online at: <https://bit.ly/3ElHkSm>

27 Etherington K. n.d. "Narrative Approaches to Case Studies". Online at: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/facnatsci/schpsych/documents/counselling/conference/5thannual/NarrativeApproachestoCaseStudies.pdf> [Accessed 12 December 2021].

28 Ellis C and Bochner AP. 2000. "Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject", in Denzin NK and Lincoln YS (eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

29 Etherington, "Narrative Approaches to Case Studies".

30 Etherington, "Narrative Approaches to Case Studies" (citing Polkinghorne DE. 1995. "Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis", *Qualitative Studies in Education* 8(1):5-23).

convened the religious leader's conference on sexual and gender-based violence in Nairobi, Kenya in 2017. With the help of the organisation, we connected with Angel to whom they we expressed our intention to study her study. Having received a thorough explanation of details about the study, Angel voluntarily consented to the use of her story in this chapter, as long as her real name and was not disclosed. She also accepted an invitation to narrate the story again to the present researchers in an in-depth interview held in March 2020. The interview was recorded using a mobile phone. The recording was transcribed and analysed using the narrative analysis method. In this chapter, Angel's story is represented in a way that preserves her integrity and is analysed as a source of knowledge which not only constitutes her social reality, but also conveys a sense of her experience in its depth, messiness, richness and texture. This is done by writing the narrative using the actual words that she actual spoke during the interview.³¹

ANGEL'S STORY: A KENYAN WOMAN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE TEACHINGS

"I was born to a born-again mother, a member of the Eastern Africa revival movement, and a staunch Christian of the Anglican church of Kenya. As I learnt to speak, I also learnt to say *Tukutedereza* (praise the Lord), a phrase used by the members of the Eastern Africa Revival when greeting fellow brethren. I accepted the Lord as my personal Lord and Savior at the age of 12 as a primary school girl and from that time, I began to witness to the pupils in my school as a born-again child.

"In the Eastern Africa Revival fellowships, we were indeed taught to pursue righteousness and walk the journey of salvation with repentance. We were always encouraged to publically confess our sins to fellow born again Christians as a way of testifying about our journey with the Lord. Right from childhood, we were taught that boy-girl relationships amongst young people were ungodly and would lead Christians to fall into sin. Actually, having a boyfriend or girlfriend was a great sin on its own. We were always told that boys are fire and girls are petrol and that they must stay away from each other, otherwise there will be an explosion. ... [E]ven when we went for conferences, fellowships and other meetings, boys would be separated from girls in their sitting arrangements. Like all boys would seat at one side and girls at the other side without mixing.

"For high school, I went to a girl's only school where every morning during the school parade, our born-again school headmistress made us to recite that girls are delicate commodities and men are hyenas. This created in me and other faithful ones an awareness that a girl cannot be safe around a boy. We were always argued to keep our virginities till marriage and that would please God and entice Him into blessing us with successful marriages. These teachings from the Christian school

31 Etherington K. 2000. *Narrative approaches to working with adult male survivors of childhood sexual abuse*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

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and from the revival helped me to keep a safe distance from boys and men, shun men and commit to preserving my virginity till marriage.

“As we grew in the revival, we were taught that when the right time to marry comes, God would send the right partner with whom we would enter holy matrimony and establish a godly family. I clung unto this teaching and waited for the right time and for God to bring that right person meant for me to marry. When I finished university, I began feeling like I was ready for marriage, and I wanted to get married. However, I could not mingle with men, because I never wanted to sin.

“During this time, I took the first man who approached me for a relationship to be the right one sent by God. At the time I met with this man, I was a church minister pastor, and he was also a pastor. When we began dating, the only thing we looked up to was us getting married. We dated for a short time, but during that short period of dating, there was no single moment when we ever agreed on anything. In our arguments, we were never on the same side. In fact, every date we had ended in a disagreement and whenever we met, we would begin by apologising for the mess that happened in the previous date but still disperse after breaking up again.

“Throughout the dating period, I yearned to have someone help me know how to handle the disagreements we always had, but this desire was never met. The guy had a lot of characteristics that I never liked, but I was so convinced that since he [was] my soulmate, I would change him into the kind of person I wanted, as we went along in marriage.

“We managed to wed and began living together as husband and wife. When we decided to get married, we informed our church leaders including our bishop. There was no such attention given to us, but a few days before the wedding date, one of our pastors met with us and he had a list of items he wanted to make sure were in place before the wedding. In the meeting, he checked whether the wedding attire was ready, whether the bridesmaids had their clothes sorted, whether there were transport means for the parents, amongst others.

“After the wedding, the guy and I began living together, but life was not easy at all. The marriage was full of life-threatening violence, abuse and disrespect. Time passed and we could not tolerate each other at all. We separated and finally divorced. When I look back to those days, I actually realise that my church valued married so much and made us grow dreaming about the day we would get married, but it did not adequately prepare us for this marriage thing. The only thing they emphasised was staying pure till marriage, but even after doing that, God did not bless me with a successful marriage, as I was taught.”

INTERROGATING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION INADEQUACIES

Angel’s narrative invites us to interrogate the inadequacies in the way churches and Christian communities prepare people for marriage. In the story, Angel, like many women in her situation, was groomed to attach value to marriage and to perceive

the marriage institution as a standard for God's blessing. Angel was groomed to treat virginity as a marital gift to her partner after the wedding. Her commitment to the teachings she received, representing boys and men as creatures as fierce and dangerous as hyenas, denied her the opportunity to fully socialise and learn how to relate with members of the opposite sex.

Such teachings, which equate women to objects or commodities that can be owned by others, fuel negative gender stereotypes that entrench the idea of viewing women as weaker and lesser human beings as compared to men, and they also increase the vulnerability of women to abuse and exploitation. Besides emphasising virginity, the only other contribution the church made in preparing Angel for marriage was in ensuring that the necessities of the wedding were in place. There was no guidance offered to her during the period of dating, such that even when she needed help to help her management the disagreements that happened between her and her prospective husband, there was no one to help.

Angel was taught that when time is right for her to marry, God would bring to her the right partner but she was not given the skills and knowledge to aid her in knowing what this right time would look like, and neither was she given the skill and knowledge to help her identify the right person from all others who wanted to establish an intimate relation with her. The teachings left her hanging in space, waiting for a right time whose demarcations she did not have and for the right person whose distinguishing features she did not know.

Consequently, Angel ended up marrying a man with whom she was incompatible, trusting that she would be able to transform him as they walk together in marriage. She was taught to desire a successful marriage, but she was never taught what constitutes a successful marriage besides being promised that God would bless her with one if she married as a virgin. There was no coaching given to Angel on how to address the different challenges that can be faced in a marriage with the potential of causing marital instability and breakdown. As she grew up, the images used to describe the relationship between men and women were ones that would create a sense of insecurity, fear and negativity amongst the women towards the men they were expected to marry. There were no counter-teachings given to her in adulthood to help her transform the negative image she had against men even as she entered into marriage where she would end up getting too close that which she grew up avoiding.

The way that Angel was prepared for marriage disempowered her and played a key role in the breakdown of her marriage. Many aspects of Angels' experience are still being witnessed in several churches and Christian communities in Africa today. When talking about the marriage institution and related issues, such as sex and reproductive health, many church leaders' emphasis is on encouraging young people to remain sexually pure until marriage. However, Angel's experience reveals to us that virginity has nothing to do with a good marriage. Angel heeded to the call to keep her virginity till marriage, but her premarital chastity did not make her marriage a success and did not save her marriage from instabilities and

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divorce. This suggests that as much as it is necessary to prevent premarital sexual encounters amongst young people, teachings aimed at achieving this should not be tied to marriage success and failure. Instead, young people should be taught to be sexually pure for God and for their own good, not for their marital partners or as a sacrifice to secure successful marriage.

Another aspect of Angel's experience that is common in the way the church prepares people for marriage today is the tendency to invest time, resources and efforts in preparing for a successful wedding ceremony. Angel's pastor engaged with the couple towards their wedding day to ensure that everything needed for a successful event was in place. This is a common culture in many African Christian churches and communities whereby after intending couples disclose their intention to make matrimonial vows, their religious leaders and concerned members only come together to assist in the wedding preparations. In some churches, the process involves sessions of marital counselling where the couple is taught about marital life, what to expect from their spouse, what the church and society expect from them, their roles and responsibilities and the significance of the marriage institution.

The challenge here is that the process begins late, when people have already decided to get married and have disclosed their intent to the church. If preparation for marriage only when people express their desire to be wed, it becomes an event that is incapable of comprehensively addressing all of the relevant marital issues. Consequently, church devotees end up tying the knot with the wrong people and for the wrong reasons, only to discover this later in life when their marriage is on the rocks and divorce appears to be the only solution. Marriage preparation is a noble task that must begin from Sunday school-going age, instilling Christian values and character construction based on integrity and faithfulness to the divine laws of love for God and love for neighbor. Truth about sexuality, marriage and family life with realistic examination of the marriage institution coupled with messages of hope and encouragement should be socially integrated in the church community in such a way that it can educate and benefit Christians of all age groups.

As young people journey through adolescence, the church should maximise this time to tune their attitudes in a way that makes them grow as individuals whose characters will enable their marriages succeed. Adolescence is a time when people start envisioning the future in terms of relationships, families, career, housing, and related matters. Proper Christian accompaniment throughout this time is essential.³² The church needs to empower the adolescents and young people with skills to help them relate with others in a manner that is healthy and does not make them vulnerable or compromise Christian values. This can be effected by giving

³² See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Children, Catechesis within the Family". Online at: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/index.cfm> [Accessed 30 March 2020]; Izebuno DI. 2015. "Challenges facing Christian family: Communicating the vision of God to youths in Africa". Paper presented to the 26th Theology Week Conference, Theme: Theology of the Family in African Context at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

suitable and timely instructions to young people about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise. With these instructions alongside values of chastity, the young Christians, at an appropriate age, will engage in honourable courtship and enter marriages they can sustain.³³

CONCLUSION

The marriage institution is very significant in the life of the Anglican Church of Kenya and in many Christian communities in Africa. The success of the marriage institution greatly depends on the way people are prepared for it. Inadequate preparation and exposure to teachings that disempower people of the skills and knowledge needed to make accurately informed marital decisions contributes enormously to the widespread marital instabilities and increase cases of divorce. To revive the marriage institution, there is need to stop treating marriage preparation as an event only for couples who have expressed intention to marry and rather consider it as part and parcel of the whole process of nurturing people in the Christian faith from infancy. This calls for a social integration of the truth about sexuality, marriage and family life in all church programmes and Christian communities.

33 Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Article 7: The Sacrament of Matrimony".