In Christian marriage, spouses model the love and self-gift of Christ. By giving of themselves and serving one another, their family, and community, they help one another live out Christ’s call to discipleship, love, and service. Marriage provides a foundation for a family committed to community, solidarity, and Jesus’ mission in the world.

The love between spouses in marriage reflects the love of Christ for the Church.

The mutual love of spouses reflects God’s own love for humanity (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 1604). In Scripture, God’s “communion of love” with his people is seen in the covenant he forms with them, as well as in Jesus’ self-offering on the Cross. The covenant of love into which spouses enter in marriage reflects the love of Christ for the Church and his self-gift on behalf of humanity (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church [Compendium], no. 219).

Marriage frees us for sacrifice and self-gift.

During the exchange of vows, the couple promises to give of themselves to each other and to love and support each other despite their shortcomings and failings. Spouses help each other “overcome self-absorption, egoism, [and] pursuit of one’s own pleasure” so that they can serve others in imitation of Christ (CCC, no. 1609; Compendium, no. 219). With Christ’s help, spouses are able to love, forgive, and serve (CCC, no. 1642). The Nuptial Blessing especially highlights how the couple is called to care not only for each another but also for children, family, and the wider community.

Marriage reflects the communion and union of the Trinity.

During the Rite of Marriage, the couple exchanges rings as a sign of love and fidelity in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Like the members of the Trinity, the united couple also becomes a “community of persons.” Just as the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in “pure relationality,” mutual love, and self-gift (Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate [Charity in Truth], no. 54), Christian spouses are called to give of themselves to one another (Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio [On the Family], no. 19).

Marriage strengthens us for service in the world.

The love between spouses helps them to be signs of Christ’s love in the world (Compendium, no. 220). Their love for one another is realized in “the common work of watching over creation” (CCC, no. 1604). They help each other live their vocation as lay people, seeking God’s Kingdom in their daily lives by working for justice, peace, and respect for the life and dignity of all (Compendium, no. 220; Familiaris Consortio, no. 47). Christian spouses, the Compendium notes, are to be “witnesses to a new social consciousness inspired by the Gospel and the Paschal Mystery” (no. 220).
As a spouse or family member, how can you imitate the love of Christ and communion of the Holy Trinity in your own relationships?

What can you do in your family to provide a strong foundation for faith, peace, solidarity with the global human family, and a commitment to the life and dignity of the human person?

Learn about the other sacraments! Visit “Resources and Tools” at www.usccb.org/jphd.