

CONJUGAL LOVE

Christ Our Lord has abundantly blessed this love, which is rich in its various features, coming as it does from the spring of Divine Love and modeled on Christ's own union with the Church. (*GS*, #48)

Authentic married love is caught up into Divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church, with the result that the spouses are effectively led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty role as mothers and fathers. (*GS*, #48)

This love is an eminently human one since it is directed from one person to another through an affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity, ennobling these expressions as special ingredients and signs of the friendship distinctive of marriage. This love God has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting and exalting gifts of grace and of charity. Such love, merging the human with the divine, leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves, a gift providing itself by gentle affection and by deed, such love pervades the whole of their lives: indeed by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater. Therefore it far excels mere erotic inclination, which, selfishly pursued, soon enough fades wretchedly away. (*GS*, #49)

Authentic conjugal love will be more highly prized, and wholesome public opinion created about it if Christian couples give outstanding witness to faithfulness and harmony in their love, and to their concern for educating their children also, if they do their part in bringing about the needed cultural, psychological and social renewal on behalf of marriage and the family. (*GS*, #49)

Hence the acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude. (*GS*, #49)

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. (*GS*, #50)

[W]hile not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Savior. Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day. (*GS*, #50)

[Conjugal] love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows

of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment. (*HV*, #9)

It is a love which is total—that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself. (*HV*, #9)

Married love is also faithful and exclusive of all other, and this until death. This is how husband and wife understood it on the day on which, fully aware of what they were doing, they freely vowed themselves to one another in marriage. Though this fidelity of husband and wife sometimes presents difficulties, no one has the right to assert that it is impossible; it is, on the contrary, always honorable and meritorious. The example of countless married couples proves not only that fidelity is in accord with the nature of marriage, but also that it is the source of profound and enduring happiness. (*HV*, #9)

Finally, this love is fecund. It is not confined wholly to the loving interchange of husband and wife; it also contrives to go beyond this to bring new life into being. "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the procreation and education of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute in the highest degree to their parents' welfare." (*HV*, #9; Quoting *GS*, #50)

Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility. In a word it is a question of the normal characteristics of all natural conjugal love, but with a new significance which not only purifies and strengthens them but raises them to the extent of making them the expression of specifically Christian values. (*FC*, #13)

Conjugal communion is characterized not only by its unity but also by its indissolubility: "As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union, as well as the good of children, imposes total fidelity on the spouses and argues for an unbreakable oneness between them." (*FC*, #20)

Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of an absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: "And God blessed them and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'" (*CCC*, #1604)

The married couples forms "the intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and governed by his laws; it is rooted in the conjugal covenant, that is, in their

irrevocable personal consent.” Both give themselves definitively and totally to one another. They are no longer two; from now on they form one flesh. The covenant they freely contracted imposes on the spouses the obligation to preserve it as unique and indissoluble. “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” (CCC, #2364)

Some would like to maintain that happiness in married life is in direct ratio to the mutual enjoyment of marital relations. This is not so. On the contrary, happiness in married life is in direct ratio to the respect the husband and wife have for each other, even in the intimate act of marriage. Not that they should regard what nature offers them and God has given them as immoral, and refuse it, but because the respect and mutual esteem which arise from it, are one of the strongest elements of a love which is all the more pure because it is the more tender. (Pius XII, *Allocution to Midwives*, October 29, 1951)

The moral value of the intimate link between the goods of marriage and between the meanings of the conjugal act is based upon the unity of the human being, a unity involving body and spiritual soul. Spouses mutually express their personal love in the ‘language of the body,’ which clearly involves both ‘spousal meanings’ and parental ones. (CDF, *DV*, February 22, 1975, II A 2)

The moral value of the intimate link between the goods of marriage and between the meanings of the conjugal act is based upon the unity of the human being, a unity involving body and spiritual soul. Spouses mutually express their personal love in the "language of the body," which clearly involves both "spousal meanings" and parental ones. The conjugal act by which the couple mutually express their self-gift at the same time expresses openness to the gift of life. It is an act that is inseparably corporal and spiritual. It is in their bodies and through their bodies that the spouses consummate their marriage and are able to become father and mother. In order to respect the language of their bodies and their natural generosity, the conjugal union must take place with respect for its openness to procreation; and the procreation of a person must be the fruit and the result of married love. (CDF, *DV*, February 22, 1975, II B 4 b)

When love is lived out in marriage, it includes and surpasses friendship. Love between a man and woman is achieved when they give themselves totally, each in turn according to their own masculinity and femininity, founding on the marriage covenant that communion of persons where God has willed that human life be conceived, grow and develop. To this married love, and to this love alone, belongs sexual giving, "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. (PCF, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family*, December 8, 1995, #14)

A spirituality of marriage cannot be established that neglects the tasks which are primordial to it. Conjugal spirituality implies that one takes on consciously and voluntarily the aspects linked to the vocation of spouses and parents, and that they live them in faith, hope and charity. The essential elements of this conjugal mission cannot

be opposed for they are linked to one another. It should not be feared that a responsible attitude with regard to the transmission of life might be directly detrimental to the love the spouses have for one another, to the education of children or even to fidelity itself. (John Paul II, *Discourse to the Participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family: Parents Are the First and Primary Educators of Their Children*, October 10, 1986, #3)