

MARRIAGE

The Nature of Marriage

For God Himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view. (*GS*, #48)

The intimate partnership of life and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by Him with its own proper laws; it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, their irrevocable personal consent. (*GS*, #48)

Marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the product of evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love. (*HV*, #8)

[Marriage] . . . is an institution confirmed by divine law and receiving its stability, even in the eyes of society, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other; for the good of the partners, of the children, and of society, this sacred bond no longer depends on human decision alone. (*GS*, #48)

The intimate union of marriage as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them. (*GS*, #48)

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: “It is not good that the man should be alone.” The woman, “flesh of his flesh”, i.e., his counterpart, his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a “helpmate”; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been “in the beginning: ‘So they are no longer two, but one flesh.’” (*CCC*, #1605)

In his preaching Jesus unequivocally taught the original meaning of the union of man and woman as the Creator willed it from the beginning: permission given to Moses to divorce one’s wife was a concession to the hardness of hearts. 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.” (*CCC*, #1614)

The Sacrament of Marriage

In virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, by which they signify and share the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing of their children. (*LG*, #11)

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. (*CIC*, §1055)

The Creator of all made the married state the beginning and foundation of human society; by his grace he has made of it too a great mystery in Christ and in the Church and so the apostolate of married persons and of families has a special importance for both Church and civil society. (*AA*, #11)

The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist. Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant. (*CCC*, #1617)

By virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church. (*FC*, #13)

The Sacrament of marriage is the specific source and original means of sanctification for Christian married couples and families. (*FC*, #56)

The gift of Jesus Christ is not exhausted in the actual celebration of the sacrament of marriage, but Christian marriage like the other sacraments, "whose purpose is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God. (*FC*, #56)

This unequivocal insistence on the indissolubility of the marriage bond may have left some perplexed and could seem to be a demand impossible to realize. However, Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy - heavier than the Law of Moses. By coming to restore the original order of creation in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life. (*CCC*, #1615)

This is what the Apostle Paul makes clear when he says: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her," adding at once: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church." (*CCC*, #1616)

Marriage bonds between baptized persons are sanctified by the sacrament.
(CCC, #2360)

At the base of every Christian family there is a Sacrament. This means that it is not a mere contract, a simple ceremony or a purely external rite to mark an important date in one's life, but a true and proper religious act of supernatural life, from which flows an almost constant right to obtain from God all those graces, those divine aids, which are necessary for and useful to sanctify married life, to fulfill the duties of the married state, to overcome its difficulties, to maintain its resolves and to reach its highest ideals. (Pius XII, *Allocution to Newlyweds*, July 12, 1939)

The sacrament of matrimony can be regarded in two ways: first, in the making, and then in its permanent state. For it is a sacrament like to that of the Eucharist, which not only when it is being conferred, but also whilst it remains, is a sacrament; for as long as the married parties are alive, so long is their union a sacrament of Christ and the Church. -St. Robert Bellarmino (CC, #110)

Marriage...because it is both the image of the spousal relationship between Christ and his Church as well as the fundamental core and an important factor in the life of civil society, is essentially a public reality. (CDF, *Annus internationalis: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by the Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful*, September 14, 1994, #7)