

The Sacrament of Matrimony

I. Introduction

a. The Catechism on Marriage:

- i. CCC, #1533: “Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ’s disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.
 1. For the good of the individual
- ii. CCC, #1534: “Two other sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. They confer a particular mission in the Church and serve to build up the People of God.”
 1. For the good of others
- iii. CCC, #1601: “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.”
- iv. CCC, #1641: This grace proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couple’s love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they help one another to attain the holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children.

b. Summary: Christian marriage is a sacrament, i.e., *an outward sign instituted by Christ which gives grace*

- i. So marriage is designed to lead the couple closer with God
 1. Marriage gives the grace to become holy.
 2. The husband and wife are a support to each other, and each seeks to draw the other closer to God. Further, the honor of bearing and raising Children

II. The Two Goods of Marriage --- marriage is ordered both to the good of the spouses and the good of offspring.

a. The good of the Spouses

- i. Marriage is a unique partnership whereby we help each other become holy
 1. true friends
 - a. know one another
 - b. desire the authentic good of the other
 - c. relate to each other in virtue
 - i. this takes work; it is a habit that needs to be developed
 - d. love unconditionally while desiring the other’s perfection
 2. the more we have virtue and holiness, the more we can help our spouse

ii. Three Loves associated with the relationship between husband and wife:
Charity, Friendship, Sexual Union

1. Charity (Agape)

- a. This is the love that seeks to serve the other, to promote their good.
 - i. This kind of love demands selflessness and sacrifice
- b. St. Paul in *Ephesians* compares the love of a marriage to Christ's love for His Church
 - i. That is, laying down one's life in service and abandonment.
- c. This can be the only perfectly secure foundation for a marriage
 - i. Charity means a love that is unconditional, faithful even during the most intense suffering.
- d. Marriage is an excellent environment for learning how to love in true charity;
 - i. #1609: "Marriage helps to overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one's own pleasure, and to open oneself to the other, to mutual aid and to self-giving."
 - ii. To attain holiness, we must conquer self-centeredness
 1. Marriage and Family, with all its differences, struggles, difficulties, and crosses is an excellent remedy to heal us from the disease of selfishness.
 - iii. It is easy to give when we get what we want, or it feels good.
 - iv. It's hard to give of oneself when there seems to be no return, and when that gift causes pain, sacrifice, suffering.
 1. To give to your spouse when they do not give back perfects our love.
 - v. Marriage and Family gives a constant flow of opportunities to deny oneself, and to give a gift of self.

2. Friendship (Philia)

- a. The enjoyment of each other's company
 - i. Finding joy in the presence of the other; personal connection
- b. Friendship demands:
 - i. *Common goals*
 1. Friends like to *do* things together.

2. Pursuit of virtue and holiness, cooperation in raising children, meals, games, reading, conversations...
 - a. The more common activities you engage in, the deeper grows the friendship
3. The nobler the common goals, the nobler the friendship
 - a. Friendship based on the desire to grow in sanctity together is the greatest of all friendships

ii. *Time spent together*

1. To pursue common activities, to know your friend through conversation, means taking out time for one another
2. Real friendship doesn't just happen on it's own
3. This goes for spouses too
 - a. Have to set aside certain times *every day*
 - i. To talk together, take a walk together
 - ii. Asking questions of your spouse, listening, responding, etc...

iii. Only with continued time and effort together will husband and wife become true partners and companions

1. Friendship makes a marriage not only beautiful and holy, but also *joyful*.

iv. NOTE: WATCHING TELEVISION TOGETHER DOES NOT COUNT AS EITHER COMMON ACTIVITY OR TIME

1. Television gives the illusion of accomplishing something, though nothing gets done
2. Watching television gives the illusion of spending time together, though in fact you dedicate no attention or effort to the other person
 - a. You're each spending time separately in the world of the show.

3. Sexual Union (Eros)

- a. Sexuality is meant to be the expression of the deep love and friendship between husband and wife
- b. It is a critical aspect of a marriage: *consummation*
 - i. This is good and proper
- c. However, it cannot be the ultimate foundation of a marriage
 - i. The intensity of sexual attraction comes and goes
 - ii. Without the basis of Charity and Friendship, it will degenerate into lust and frustration
- d. But when put in its proper context, it deepens the love and intimacy of the spouses, and yields the wondrous good of children.

b. The good of Children

- i. #1652 (GS 50): “**Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves...** God blessed man and woman with the words: ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ Hence, true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it, without diminishment of the other ends of marriage, are directed to disposing the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will increase and enrich his family from day to day.”
 1. #2227: Children in turn contribute to the growth in holiness of their parents.
 - a. Nothing like kids to help you fight your own selfishness.
 - i. Up late at night with the baby crying.
 - ii. Parents participate in God’s work of creation, redemption and sanctification in their role as parents
 1. Hence they must be open to life
 - iii. The Parents’ Role as Educators
 1. #1653: “The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that parents hand on to their children by education. Parents are the principal and first educators of their children.”
 - a. In other words, parents aren’t done with their job if they just bring the child physically into the world and then keep them fed. They have to tend to the spiritual needs as well.
 2. #2221-25. This parental responsibility for education is crucial
 - a. “The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable.”
 - i. No one (!) can take away a parent’s right or duty to educate their own child.

3. What are parents responsible for teaching their child?
 - a. The virtues, self-mastery, the subordination of material and instinctual goods to interior and spiritual goods.
 - b. They have the “responsibility and privilege” of *evangelizing their children*.
 - i. Teach and form their children in the faith.
 1. (Means more than just dragging the kids to Sunday Mass once a week).
 - ii. This “education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years.”
 - c. In order to effectively educate their children, parents must
 - i. Provide a good example
 - ii. Create a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule
 1. “A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith, and remain a support for it throughout one’s life.”
 2. We want people to ask our kids how it is that they live the Catholic faith so well, and for them to respond. “That’s how I was raised.”
 - d. Development of the soul is the priority
 - i. We all say we want what is best for our kids
 1. Let’s mean it...
 - a. Is the best thing material or social success?
 - b. Or Holiness, a depth of virtue and prayer which will enable them to be true children of God?
 - ii. Teach them to pray and love their faith

III. Patience and Trust in a Marriage

- a. The success of a marriage is based on unconditional love
 - i. Often we hold back love until the other person fixes what’s wrong with them
 1. We remain frustrated and nagging until they change themselves to conform to our ideas of how they should be.
 - a. This is called conditional love; doesn’t work
- b. In every marriage there are causes for discouragement
 - i. Imperfections in yourself, your spouse, your marriage, your parenting, your kids
 1. A wife doesn’t see her husband being converted, or vice versa

2. A son or daughter is not interested in the Church or just can't get on track in life
3. We see good things that we want for our family (peace, holiness, stability, agreement), and when those things are missing we become irritated
 - a. E.g., a father should watch over the holiness of his wife and kids; but if this father gets angry and loses his patience and peace, it's not the Holy Spirit animating him.
- ii. It's right to want spiritual goods for our families, but our desire must always be:
 1. Caring, peaceful, patient, detached, and above all, abandoned to God.
 2. As opposed to hurried, restless, impatient, etc...
- c. Have to remember that God, not us, is ultimately in charge of our family
 - i. If God has still not transformed our spouse or our children, it's because He has decided to put up with them for the moment. This is the divine method: to wait with patience for the opportune moment.
 1. We must follow His example; can't be more demanding than the Creator. If we would love unconditionally, then we must love patiently, as He does.
 2. Col 3:12-15: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other. And above all these things put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
 - ii. Often we cause ourselves to become agitated and disturbed by trying to resolve everything by ourselves
 1. It's more effective to remain peaceful, allowing God to act and work in us with His wisdom and power, which are of course infinitely superior to ours
 - a. Isaiah 30:15: By waiting and by calm you shall be saved; in quiet and in trust your strength lies.
- d. This is not an invitation to laziness or inaction
 - i. It is an invitation to place our trust in God, thus allowing Him to work most profoundly in our family.
 - ii. Instead of letting pride, frustration, and despair rule our family relationships, we retain a determined perseverance and prayer, which is the ultimate test of courage.