

this fashion, we trust a certain unity of approach can be observed in the country—but a united effort and attitude that also preserve and promote the rich diversity of customs surrounding marriage and marriage preparation in the United States.

Part C

A Theology and Spirituality of Marriage

Introduction

Over the past few years, many publications have examined marriage from both a speculative and a pastoral point of view.¹³⁵ What we offer in this part of the manual are a few fundamental concepts about matrimonial theology and spirituality, not an exhaustive treatment of those double approaches to marital life.

The framework we will follow is based upon the four general tasks of the family—which Pope John Paul II has emphasized—that flowed from the 1980 Synod of Bishops.¹³⁶ Under each of those functions or purposes, we will suggest several related thoughts and, then, reach out to the major or standard sources of revelation for support of those thoughts. The fountains of truth we look to and cite within quotation marks are the authentic teaching of our tradition; the inspired Word of God; the Church's liturgical celebration of marriage; and the testimony of the faithful, represented in this instance by the comments of a sacramental couple from New York.

The four general tasks, functions, or purposes of marriage and the family can be categorized as: (1) forming a community of persons; (2) serving life; (3) participating in society's development; and (4) sharing in the Church's life and mission.

1

Forming a Community of Persons

There is a parallel or, better, a mutuality of symbolism between the Most Holy Trinity and the sacramentally united couple. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are absolutely different and diverse persons, but they are bonded as one through the perfect love that each divine person has for each other person of the Trinity. God, in creating every woman and man as a totally distinct and different person, nevertheless, wishes those who enter marriage to become one in body and spirit, likewise bonded by an absolute love for each other. The divine love of the Trinity is unconditional, committed, irrevocable, and exclusive or faithful; God's plan is that human marital love will be the

same. In both cases, unity emerges out of diversity through love.

Similarly, both divine and marital unity through love are sacramental—symbols of something more—and possess a unique, mysterious power within them. The Trinity symbolizes what married life can and should be; conversely, married life can mirror, even though only in faintly reflective fashion, the love and unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity's love, however, has also reached out to us through creation and, later, through redemption. The same bonding love extends to human beings as creatures and, after fall and forgiveness, in old and new covenants of closeness. God made a marriage with humankind from the beginning and restored that union, especially through Jesus' coming, dying, and rising, as well as through his continued presence in the Church.

Once again, God's absolute, unconditional, irrevocable, and faithful love—now manifested through creation and Christ's saving life, as well as through a Church that will last until the end of time and reaches out to all—models or symbolizes what marriage can or should be. In parallel fashion, the love between spouses; between parents and children; between members of the extended family; as well as between healthy members of the family and those who are in any kind of need—from the sick or disabled young to the deteriorating and vulnerable elderly—those loves reflect and lead us to the Trinity's love, which is so vastly greater.

God's plan intends for marriage to be a community of persons, linked as one by love.

135. The following is not an exhaustive list of current books on marriage, but rather a sampling of the types of publications that are available: *Marriage among Christians*, by James Tunstead Burtchaell (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1977); *For Better for Worse*, by James Tunstead Burtchaell (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); *Marriage Studies I: Reflections in Canon Law and Theology*, Thomas P. Doyle, OP, ed. (Toledo: Canon Law Society of America, 1980); *Marriage Studies III: Reflections in Canon Law and Theology*, Thomas P. Doyle, OP, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1985); *Feast of Love: Pope John Paul II on Human Intimacy*, by Mary G. Durkin (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983); *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality and Sexual Intimacy*, by Charles A. Gallagher, et al. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983); *Covenant of Love: Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage and Family in the Modern World*, by Richard M. Hogan and John M. LeVoir (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1985); *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*, by Pope John Paul II (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981); *Theology of Christian Marriage*, by Walter Kasper (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984); *Secular Marriage, Christian Commitment*, by Michael G. Lawler (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1985); *Marriage in Canon Law*, by Laidislas Orsy, SJ (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1986); *Christian Marriage*, by David M. Thomas (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983); *Man and Woman, He Made Them*, by Jean Vanier (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); *Marrying Well: Stages on the Journey of Christian Marriage*, by Evelyn Eaton and James D. Whitehead (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1983). See also, *Pastoral Letter on the Sacrament of Matrimony*, by Most Rev. Raymond G. Hunthausen, Archbishop of Seattle (Elizabeth, N.J.: Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center, 1982).

136. *On the Family*, Part 3, nos. 17-64.

a) OUR AUTHENTIC TRADITION

"The family, which is founded and given life by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives.

". . . Without love the family is not a community of persons and, in the same way, without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons."¹³⁷

"By virtue of the covenant of married life, the man and woman 'are no longer two but one flesh' and they are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving.

". . . [I]n the Lord Christ, God takes up this human need, confirms it, purifies it and elevates it, leading it to perfection through the sacrament of matrimony: the Holy Spirit, who is poured out in the sacramental celebration, offers Christian couples the gift of a new communion of love that is the living and real image of that unique unity which makes of the Church the indivisible mystical body of the Lord Jesus."¹³⁸

God wills and communicates "the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for [us] and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church."¹³⁹

b) GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

"For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church."¹⁴⁰

"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. . . .

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth. . . . On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you."¹⁴¹

"In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an expiation for our sins."¹⁴²

c) THE WEDDING LITURGY

"You created us in love to share your divine life. We see this high destiny in the love of husband and wife, which bears the imprint of your own divine love. Love is our origin; love is one constant calling; love is our fulfillment in heaven. The love of man and woman is made holy in the sacrament of marriage and becomes the mirror of your everlasting love."¹⁴³

d) A SACRAMENTAL COUPLE

"Through the power of their mutual love, each spouse calls the other to be more fully the complete person God created. Rather than losing their individuality, each spouse becomes more clearly defined as a distinct person. Paradoxically, it is by dying to self that each finds himself or herself. The fear is that one will be absorbed into the other's personality and become totally dependent upon him or her. But in a properly balanced marriage, there is a wholesome interdependence that strengthens each person psychologically and spiritually.

"The personal dignity of each spouse is nurtured and honored as the couple judges actions in all parts of their lives according to what is best for their relationship. As a sacramental couple, they weigh these decisions in light of how they help build the Body of Christ, the Church. Just as they are to be one in flesh, they are to strive to be of one will and one spirit by developing a workable process for making couple-decisions, a process that considers the feelings and thoughts of each spouse and is immersed in prayer.

"In the sacrament of matrimony, husband and wife make a commitment to each other, which is permanent, total, exclusive, faithful, and unbreakable. They know the whole Church is supporting them in prayer and action. Bolstered by their awareness of the sincerity and solemnity of this mutual commitment, each partner has the courage to risk even greater intimacy. The experience of being so totally loved by another person is but a shadow of God's love for us.

"The best way for a man to be a good father is to truly love his wife. The best way to be a good mother is for a woman to truly love her husband. This rich conjugal love becomes a wholesome environment in which the children thrive. They feel secure, wanted, and joy-filled, as well as predisposed to learning how to grow up and become lovers too. When children see selfishness, discord, tension, and conflict between their parents, their whole world is threatened. Husbands and wives will, at times, fight and are called to forgive each other, reconcile, and seek healing. In doing this, they teach their children, the Church, and the world how to restore peace."

2

Serving Life

The infinite love between members of the Holy Trinity does not stop there, but overflows in a generative way to create and sustain the universe and all living

137. *Ibid.*, no. 18.

138. *Ibid.*, no. 19.

139. *Ibid.*, no. 20.

140. Eph 5:29-32.

141. Jn 14:11,1-17,20.

142. 1 Jn 14:9-10.

143. *Rite of Marriage*, Preface for Nuptial Mass, no. 117.

beings in this world of ours. In mysterious and wondrous fashion, God shares that generative, loving, and creative power with men and women.

As we discussed in the lengthy section on "Responsible Childbearing and Childrearing," every infant's conception and birth is a miracle—the product of a cooperative effort involving the divine Creator, the father, and the mother.

That miraculous event, however, is not an end, but a beginning—the start of a journey through life toward eternity. Like the God who not only creates, but sustains life, wives and husbands must not only be open to the transmission of life and responsibly bring forth new human life, but also responsibly bring up the children who are the Trinity's unique gift to them. No work of father or mother exceeds in importance the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual formation of their daughters and sons.

Just as the Trinity's love reaches out in a creative manner, so, too, Christian parents and their children must extend loving arms to other persons—especially the young—who are in need. To adopt or to foster children, to serve as a "Big Brother" or "Big Sister" of those with special burdens is to make God's loving care present to them through us.

Infertile and elderly couples, while never or no longer serving life by the begetting of children, still contribute to that function by nurturing growth in each other and in others, through loving service, in a variety of ways.

a) OUR AUTHENTIC TRADITION

God calls a man and a woman "to a special sharing in his love and in his power as creator and Father through their free and responsible cooperation in transmitting the gift of human life. . . ."

"Thus, the fundamental task of the family is to serve life . . . [through] transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person.

". . . The fruitfulness of conjugal love is not restricted solely to the procreation of children . . . : It is enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and the mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world."¹⁴⁴

"Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children."¹⁴⁵

"[T]he mentality which honors women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family must be overcome."¹⁴⁶

"[E]fforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance."¹⁴⁷



"Christian families, recognizing with faith all human beings as children of the same heavenly Father, will respond generously to the children of other families, giving them support and love not as outsiders but as members of the one family of God's children."¹⁴⁸

b) GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

"God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

"God blessed them, saying: 'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth. . . .' God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good."¹⁴⁹

"Notice the ravens: they do not sow or reap; they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feeds them. How much more important are you than birds!"¹⁵⁰

144. *On the Family*, no. 28.

145. "Declaration on Christian Education," in *Vatican Council II*, no. 3.

146. *On the Family*, no. 23.

147. *Ibid.*, no. 25.

148. *Ibid.*, no. 41.

149. Gn 1:27-31.

150. Lk 12:24.

"But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . .

"And he gave some of us as apostles . . . others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery. . . . Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ. . . ."151

"If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works is dead."152

c) THE WEDDING LITURGY

"Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"153

Lord, grant that as they begin to live this sacrament they may share with each other the gifts of your love and become one in heart and mind as witnesses to your presence in their marriage.

Help them to create a home together (and give them children to be formed by the gospel to have a place in your family).

Give your blessing to N., your daughter, so that she may be a good wife (and mother), caring for the home, faithful in love for her husband, generous and kind.

Give your blessings to N., your son, so that he may be a faithful husband (and a good father).

Father, grant that as they come together to your table on earth, so they may one day have the joy of sharing your feast in heaven.¹⁵⁴

d) A SACRAMENTAL COUPLE

"Matrimonial spirituality is very sexual in its practice. One basic purpose for sexual intercourse in marriage is the procreation of children. By being open to God's plan, the couple can be full partners in enlarging and enriching the Body of Christ. When they are thus completely open to God's plan in this area of

their relationship, that spills over into all other areas and greatly assists them in becoming one.

"Both the husband and the wife must accept and practice their responsibility in being procreators. They both have an obligation to be fully informed about the Church's teaching and then practice the necessary self-discipline. However, they must also be aware of their responsibility to use sexual intercourse as a means of building their oneness and thus bringing new life to their relationship. They will discover that, as their couple relationship grows, each of them will individually grow closer to God, which is their vocation in the sacrament of matrimony.

"Many couples who use Natural Family Planning have experienced periods of abstinence from sexual intercourse. They report how they added activities of a nongenital nature which brought them much romantic excitement and enthusiasm. It is important to realize that it is not uncommon in marriage, for reasons of health or extended separation, that couples must forego intercourse. During those times, they are called to develop acceptable alternatives to express their sexual love for each other. That is what the Church means by 'chastity' —the appropriate use of our sexuality. At such times, we use this form of spiritual energy to defend our love against the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness.

"Through the power of the sacrament of matrimony, married couples are able to lead lives of holiness. Their holiness evolves from the sanctifying of the ordinary daily events of their lives. Matrimonial spirituality is marked by the call to denial of self and acceptance of suffering as a normal part of living as a Catholic Christian. Suffering is a reality for all people. In matrimony, each spouse can be a compassionate, consoling listener, and thus make the response to the suffering become a way to grow closer together and closer to God."

3 Participating in Society's Development

The well-being of society depends upon the well-being of families, which make up this society, because the family is the fundamental unit or primary cell of every society. Obviously, new citizens come forth constantly from the home to keep that society alive and growing. But the family also serves as the initial training ground of future adult citizens in those human virtues or values essential for the survival and flourishing of any society.

The current deterioration of so many family rela-

151. Eph 4:7,11-16.

152. Jas 2:15-17.

153. *Rite of Marriage*, Questions before Consent, no. 24.

154. *Ibid.*, Nuptial Blessing, no. 120.

tionships within the United States underscores, in negative fashion, the truth of these statements.

However, the family is also a "domestic," "small-scale," "little" or "miniature" church. As such, it does or should radiate not only human virtues, but likewise gospel values, including and particularly a preferential option for the poor or those in any need. That concern for the needy will express itself first of all in direct service efforts—of various types—to alleviate people's immediate burdens. Second, it will also manifest itself in astute social justice advocacy to bring about long-term solutions by eliminating the causes of poverty, through appropriate governmental legislation or institutional action.

In these as in other undertakings, Christian couples receive through the sacrament of matrimony sufficient divine grace, providing them with the wisdom and power necessary to fulfill all their responsibilities.

a) OUR AUTHENTIC TRADITION

"[T]he family is the first and vital cell of society. . . .

"It is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself."¹⁵⁵

"Families therefore, either singly or in association, can and should devote themselves to manifold social service activities, especially in favor of the poor or at any rate for the benefit of all people and situations that cannot be reached by the public authorities' welfare organization."¹⁵⁶

"The social role of families is called upon to find expression also in the form of political intervention: Families should be the first to take steps to see that the laws and institutions of the state not only do not offend, but support and positively defend the rights and duties of the family."¹⁵⁷

"[T]he sacrament [of matrimony] gives to Christian couples and parents a power and a commitment to live their vocation as lay people and therefore to 'seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God."¹⁵⁸

"The Christian family is thus called upon to offer everyone a witness of generous and disinterested dedication to social matters through a 'preferential option' for the poor and disadvantaged."¹⁵⁹

b) GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. . . .

[W]hatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."¹⁶⁰

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."¹⁶¹

"Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. . . . Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. . . . Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all."¹⁶²

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."¹⁶³

c) THE WEDDING LITURGY

God the eternal Father keep you in love with each other,
so that the peace of Christ may stay with you and be always in your home.

May (your children bless you,)
your friends console you
and all live in peace with you.

May you always bear witness to the love of God in this world
so that the afflicted and the needy
will find in you generous friends,
and welcome you into the joys of heaven.¹⁶⁴

d) A SACRAMENTAL COUPLE

"Catholic couples living in the sacrament of matrimony are radical and countercultural. In a contemporary culture that puts a supreme value on 'expressive individualism,' the matrimonial couple is an anomaly. They are not self-centered. They are other-

155. *On the Family*, no. 42.

156. *Ibid.*, no. 44.

157. *Ibid.*

158. *Ibid.*, no. 47.

159. *Ibid.*

160. Mt 25:34-40.

161. Acts 2:42-47.

162. Rom 12:9-18.

163. 2 Cor 12:9.

164. *Rite of Marriage*, Blessing at the End of Mass, no. 125.

centered. Other-centeredness is a gospel value. The fundamental call to matrimonied couples is to die to self, to make one's spouse the first priority, and thus to risk rejection and move toward oneness in a truly intimate relationship.

"Married couples soon discover they have entered into a new world of total sharing, which ranges from their most interior personal knowledge to the mundane activities of each day. It might be that the wife is alarmed to have him walk into the bathroom while she is showering or he gets upset when she uses his razor to shave her legs. Or, suddenly, both their paychecks go into a common pot and the other spouse now has a voice in how 'my' money is spent. It is a powerful lesson of how rights must yield to responsibilities and duties.

"Having learned, as a married couple, the importance of sharing in their own home, they must now reach out to those outside the family. This is the next level of dying to self and demands that they make themselves more aware of the needs of others and then respond within their means. That could mean, financially, by sacrificial giving or tithing. It could mean by contributing used clothing or household appliances to a parish Human Development Committee instead of having a garage sale and keeping the money for their own purposes. It could mean being involved actively in the Pro-Life Movement.

"In a world marked by consumerism and greed, a married couple can choose voluntary poverty and remove themselves from an anxious preoccupation with job promotions and salary increases for the sake of acquiring more things. They can choose instead to emphasize family relationships and a simplified life style. The nonverbal witness of their actions will be a sign to others that it is possible to choose how we want to live."

4

Sharing in the Church's Life and Mission

By God's unique marriage with humanity—through Jesus' paschal or Easter mystery of coming into this world, suffering, and dying on it out of love for all, and rising to bring us divine life both here and hereafter—a new covenant between Creator and creature has been established. This heavenly covenant, made possible by Christ's saving action, is reflected in the human covenant between husband and wife.

In carrying out his work of salvation, Jesus Christ served and serves as a prophet, a priest, and a king. The married couple and the family that grows from their mutual love, in parallel fashion, are meant to fulfill prophetic, priestly, and kingly roles or functions while living out a Christian marriage.

As *prophets* who speak in the name of God and proclaim God's message, married couples, above all,

must have faith in the gospel and be eager to share that faith with others. They will be the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith and are urged to be also the best of teachers.¹⁶⁵ This requires ongoing efforts to renew and deepen themselves spiritually so that they may proclaim the good news to those within their home and beyond its walls.

These tasks will, likewise, demand generosity and courage—qualities always needed by prophets and evangelists in the Church's history. Only courageous and generous parents can maintain great interior serenity when their young children reject or do not practice the faith, or, on the other hand, decide to follow a temporary or permanent missionary career far away from home.

As *priests* who mediate between God and other human beings, married couples are called through this sacrament of matrimony to live holy lives that will radiate Christ's love to all those who come in contact with them.

Such marital holiness will center on the Eucharist, but it will also find expression and nourishment in the other sacraments, especially reconciliation and penance, as well as in private, family, and liturgical prayer.

As *kings*, spouses, with their families, have the task of building a better Church and world through their loving service of others. This, of course, includes members of our faith community but also embraces sisters and brothers outside our spiritual family since true love can discover the face of Christ in everyone, especially those who are poor or weak, who suffer or are unjustly treated.

a) OUR AUTHENTIC TRADITION

"It is thus in the love between husband and wife and between members of the family—a love lived out in all its extraordinary richness of values and demands: totality, oneness, fidelity and fruitfulness—that the Christian family's participation in the prophetic, priestly and kingly mission of Jesus Christ and his Church finds expression and realization."¹⁶⁶

"[T]he Christian family fulfills its prophetic role by welcoming and announcing the Word of God: It thus becomes more and more each day a believing and evangelizing community. . . .

"Only in faith can they discover and admire with joyful gratitude the dignity to which God has deigned to raise marriage and the family, making them a sign and meeting place of the loving covenant between God and man, between Jesus Christ and his bride, the Church."¹⁶⁷

"By means of the sacrament of marriage, in which

165. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, Final Blessing, no. 105.

166. *On the Family*, no. 50.

167. *Ibid.*, no. 51. Sections 51-54 speak very concretely to the practical meaning of the prophetic role for married couples.

it is rooted and from which it draws its nourishment, the Christian family is continuously vivified by the Lord Jesus and called and engaged by him in a dialogue with God through the sacraments, through the offering of one's life and through prayer.

"This is the priestly role which the Christian family can and ought to exercise in intimate communion with the whole Church through the daily realities of married and family life."¹⁶⁸

"[T]he Christian family is inspired and guided by the new law of the Spirit and, in intimate communion with the Church, the kingly people, it is called to exercise its 'service' of love toward God and toward its fellow human beings.

"Inspired and sustained by the new commandment of love, the Christian family welcomes, respects and serves every human being, considering each one in his or her dignity as a person and as a child of God."¹⁶⁹

b) GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

"As the bow appears in the clouds, I will see it and recall the everlasting covenant that I have established between God and all living beings—all mortal creatures that are on earth."¹⁷⁰

"Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."¹⁷¹

"For I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. . . . I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. You shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God."¹⁷²

"Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said: 'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given up for you; do this in memory of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.'¹⁷³

"But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people; you 'had not received mercy' but now you have received mercy."¹⁷⁴

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. . . .

"This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church."¹⁷⁵

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."¹⁷⁶

"[Y]ou will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth."¹⁷⁷

"He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."¹⁷⁸

"Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."¹⁷⁹

"Again, amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."¹⁸⁰

"You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. . . .

"But, as it is, my kingdom is not here."¹⁸¹

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the holy Spirit; whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others."¹⁸²

c) THE WEDDING LITURGY

Holy Father, Creator of the universe,
maker of man and woman in your own
likeness,
source of blessing for married life,
we humbly pray to you for this woman
who today is united with her husband in this
sacrament of marriage.
May your fullest blessing come upon her and
her husband

168. *Ibid.*, no. 55. Sections 55-62, likewise, treat specific details of the priestly function of married couples.

169. *Ibid.*, nos. 63-64.

170. Gn 9:16.

171. Ex 19:5-6.

172. Ex 37:21-28.

173. Lk 22:17-20.

174. 1 Pt 2:9-10.

175. Eph 5:25-27,32.

176. Mk 16:15.

177. Acts 1:8.

178. Acts 18:26.

179. 1 Pt 2:4-5.

180. Mt 18:19-20.

181. Jn 18:37,36.

182. Rom 15:17-18.

so that they may together rejoice in your gift
of married love
(and enrich your Church with their children).

Lord, may they both praise you when they are
happy and turn to you in their sorrows.

May they be glad that you help them in their
work

and know that you are with them in their
need.

May they pray to you in the community of
the Church,

and be your witnesses in the world.

May they reach old age in the company of
their friends,

and come at last to the kingdom of heaven.¹⁸³

d) A SACRAMENTAL COUPLE

“The fundamental responsibility of a husband is to reveal to his wife God’s image and likeness within her. That is, not to solve her problems or offer good advice, but rather to listen in prayer and then tell her how she reveals the kingdom of God to him. She must do the same for him. It is so simple. When we do this, grace flows abundantly and we slip-slide into becoming one, which is our sacramental, gospel call. As St. Paul writes, in Ephesians 5:21:33, the world will see how much Jesus loves the Church by observing how this husband loves his wife.

“A common problem in marriages is that one spouse wants to grow spiritually and the other one is not at all interested. As sacramental couples, each of us is responsible for our own spiritual growth, and responsible to be supportive of our spouse’s spiritual growth.

“Each married couple has a responsibility to help the Church come to a greater understanding of the meaning of the sacrament of matrimony as a vehicle for communicating what the Church is all about. This can be done by reflecting on the grace-filled experience of their own sacramental life and by the public sharing of their story in their parish. This will call for courage because usually there are suffering and mistakes to be shared. But through sharing, we grow as a Church.

“One direct way to be filled with Jesus Christ is to receive more frequently the Eucharist. A married couple will find the Eucharist to be an unequalled, rich source of nourishment for their marriage. Eucharist is the symbol of our oneness in the Body of Christ and thus is a parallel to the symbol of oneness expressed by a sacramental couple. Eucharist is also a powerful gift from God to help us become more one. There is a divine, transcendent analogy between this act of spiritual intercourse and a married couple’s act of physical intercourse.”

Part D

Liturgical Preparation and Celebration

Introduction

As the letter introducing this section of the manual indicated, the potential bride and groom may question the Church’s competency in certain areas of married life and, perhaps, therefore resist elements of the preparation process. But ordinarily, they do consider the wedding ceremony or liturgy as the prerogative of the clergy and, in most cases, are anxious to tap the priest’s or deacon’s expertise in this field. Today, couples about to marry share at least one thing in common: they all want the liturgical celebration to be uniquely personal, beautiful in itself, and impressive to the guests present. The Church shares their hopes for the nuptial liturgy.

The *Rite of Marriage* recommends that the couple should be given a review of the fundamentals of Christian doctrine:

This may include instruction on the teachings about marriage and the family, on the rites used in the celebration of the sacrament itself, and on the prayers and readings. In this way, the bridegroom and the bride will receive far greater benefit from the celebration.¹⁸⁴

Pope John Paul II suggests that the nuptial liturgy be “valid, worthy, fruitful, simple and dignified.”¹⁸⁵ He also stresses:

Inasmuch as it is a sacramental action of the Church, the liturgical celebration of marriage should involve the Christian community, with the full, active and responsible participation of all those present, according to the place and task of each individual: the bride and bridegroom, the priest, the witnesses, the relatives, the friends, the other members of the faithful, all of them members of an assembly that manifests and lives the mystery of Christ and His Church.¹⁸⁶

The *Code of Canon Law* urges a grace-filled and effective liturgical celebration of marriage that will clearly teach that “the spouses signify and share in that mystery of unity and of fruitful love that exists between Christ and the Church.”¹⁸⁷

183. *Rite of Marriage*, Nuptial Blessing, no. 121.

184. *Ibid.*, Introduction, no. 5.

185. *On the Family*, no. 67.

186. *Ibid.*

187. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1063.