

POPE FRANCIS ON MATRIMONY

On Preparation for the Wedding

Short term preparations for marriage tend to be concentrated on invitations, clothes, the party and any number of other details that tend to drain not only the budget but energy and joy as well. The spouses come to the wedding ceremony exhausted and harried, rather than focused and ready for the great step that they are about to take. The same kind of preoccupation with a big celebration also effects *de facto* unions; because of the expenses involved the couple, instead of being concerned above all with their love and solemnizing it in the presence of others, never get married.

Here, let me say a few words to fiancés. Have the courage to be different. Don't let yourselves be swallowed up by a society of consumption and empty appearances. What is important is the love you share, strengthened and sanctified by grace. You are capable of opting for a more modest and simple celebration in which love takes precedence over everything else. Pastoral workers and the entire community should make this priority the norm rather than the exception.

The Joy of Love, 212 [emphasis added]

On the Sacramental Celebration

In their preparation for marriage, the couple should be encouraged to make the liturgical celebration a profound personal experience and to appreciate the meaning of each of its signs. In the case of two baptized persons, the commitment expressed by the words of consent and the bodily union that consummates the marriage can only be seen as the covenantal love and union between the incarnate Son of God and his Church. In the baptized, words and signs become an eloquent language of faith. The body, created with a God-given meaning, "becomes the language of the ministers of the sacrament, aware that in the conjugal pact there is expressed and realized the mystery that has its origin in God himself."

The Joy of Love, 213 (quoting John Paul II's catechesis, *Insegnamenti*, 1984)

On the Consent

At times, the couple does not grasp the theological and spiritual import of the words of consent, which illuminate the meaning of all the signs that follow. It needs to be stressed that these words cannot be reduced to the present; they involve a totality that includes the future: "until death do us part."

The content of the words of this consent makes it clear that freedom and fidelity are not opposed to one another; rather, they are mutually supportive, both in interpersonal and social relationships.

Indeed, let us consider the damage caused, in our culture of global communication, by the escalation of unkept promises... Honoring one's word, fidelity to one's promises: these are things that cannot be bought and sold. They cannot be compelled by force or maintained without sacrifice.

On Liturgy and Married Life

The Kenyan Bishops have observed that “many young people concentrate on their wedding day and forget the life-long commitment they are about to enter into.” They need to be encouraged to see the sacrament not as a single moment that then becomes the past and its memories, but rather as a reality that permanently influences the whole of married life. The procreative meaning of sexuality, the language of the body, and the signs of love shown throughout married life, all become an “uninterrupted continuity of liturgical language and conjugal life becomes in a certain sense liturgical.”

The Joy of Love, 215 (quoting the Kenyan Bishops and Pius XI)

On How the Couple Should Prepare

The couple can also meditate on the biblical readings and the meaningfulness of the rings they will exchange and the other signs that are part of the rite. Nor would it be good for them to arrive at the wedding without ever having prayed together, one for the other, to seek God’s help in remaining faithful and generous, to ask the Lord together what he wants of them, and to consecrate their love before an image of the Virgin Mary. Those who help them prepare for marriage should help them to experience these moments of prayer that can prove so beneficial.

The Joy of Love, 216

On the Presider and the Assembly

The marriage liturgy is a unique event which is both a family and a community celebration. The first signs of Jesus were performed at the wedding feast of Cana. The good wine, resulting from the Lord’s miracle that brought joy to the beginning of the new family, is the new wine of Christ’s covenant with the men and women of every age... Frequently, the celebrant speaks to a congregation that includes people who seldom participate in the life of the Church, or who are members of other Christian denominations or religious communities. The occasion thus provides a valuable opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

The Joy of Love, 216