



## Marriage Preparation Program



*Marriage of the Duke of Nemours to Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha at Saint Cloud by Henri Félix Emmanuel Philippoteaux*

### **Introduction**

Much of this course will be based on the book [“Marriage in the Heart and Mind of the Church”](#) by Preston E. Wiggins, Jr. This course is meant to serve as both a preparation for those looking to receive marriage as well as those looking to better understand the sacramental reality of Holy Matrimony. Besides Mr. Wiggin’s book, we will draw upon the Church’s teachings in the Catechism and Holy Scripture. Additionally, we will draw upon the writings of various Popes on marriage.

Additionally, practical guidelines are offered that are meant to be discussed with your spouse. Those questions are a key part of this program. Be sure to write down your answers as proof of completing those required activities.

Take notes, pray, and reflect after each page on what you learned and how you can incorporate the teachings in your life.



## What is Marriage?



“What is Marriage?” It seems like a strange question, but in a culture that seems determined to change the definition of marriage, it is a very necessary one. Before we can move into marriage preparation, we need to determine just what marriage is.

The origins of this determined attempt to change the definition of marriage can be traced to the same source. The true definition of marriage is derived by following the stated intent of God’s Plan. The distortion of the definition is a study of how Satan takes God’s Plan and twists the wording of the Plan that makes the distortion sound to be something good but is completely at odds with what is truly good for us. Out of sheer goodness and love, God created the entire cosmos.

### **Creation of Man and Woman**

At the epitome of creation, God created man in His own image, in the image of God, He created Him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:27-28). The second account of creation gives us the “how” of man’s creation: The Lord God formed man of



dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Gen 2:7).

To demonstrate man's dominion out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name (Gen 2:19). However, none of the animals proved to be a fit helper so, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh (Gen 2:21-24).

### **The Three Lessons We Learn from the Creation of Man**

The primary lesson we take from the story of the creation is that it is God Who is the initiator. It is God Who created. It is God Who established the parameters in which man is to flourish. It is God Who gives man his marching orders. Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead. It is God who initiates all that is; it is incumbent upon man to respond.

The second lesson is that Adam and Eve were persons each in their own right; each was made in the image of God. Though each of them was made in the image and likeness of God, the image is more complete in their union as "one flesh" (Tob 9:3). As suitable helpmates, man and woman are made to be complementary in their persons and the contributions each bring to the relationship. This complementarity, this unity, is what is under attack in our modern world - a union that is an intrinsic desire of the human person. This intrinsic desire for unity is demonstrated by young children whose parents are not together who want nothing more than for Mommy and Daddy to be reunited. There also seems to be an unrelenting desire, especially for women, to be married. Juxtaposed to this natural, God-given desire for unity is the distorted idea of "unity" reflected in the drive for the acceptance of same-sex "marriage" (the definitive oxymoron). The fact that civil unions or domestic partnerships provide all the legal benefits of marriage does not seem to satisfy this intrinsic need.

This attack is nothing new, for we also read that in the beginning, the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate (Gen 3:1-6).

The serpent's (Satan's) tactics are no different today than they were in the Garden. He takes something of the world that is appealing (a tree that was good for food, and a delight to the eyes), distorts the Truth and makes the distortion seem like the preferable choice (You will not die. For



God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil) with intimidation as the method of persuasion. Let us apply this to marriage: The truth is that marriage is the union of husband and wife as mutually suitable helpmates. The distortion blurs the distinction between men and women by referring to them as “persons,” a tactic that has been employed for years in an effort to change the language (i.e., Chairperson-v-chairman, spokesperson-v-spokesman). The intimidation has to do with the excessive use of political correctness, which has little to do with reality. This intimidation takes the intrinsic need for intimate companionship and happiness of the human person and makes it a perceived good. The choice that is promulgated is for the union of persons (any combination) to be preferred over the divinely appointed lifetime union of husband and wife.

The third lesson has to do with Satan’s limited power. His animus, his disdain, is directed at God, but his attack was (is) on His icon - His image and likeness, the man and the woman. Part two of this lesson is about how the woman is the object of this attack. This attack on the woman began in earnest during the 1910’s when Margaret Sanger started her organization (that eventually became Planned Parenthood) that pushed for the acceptance of artificial birth control (ABC) as a means to limit population growth. She was so persuasive that at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, the Episcopal Church approved the use of artificial birth control for its members. Pope Pius XI responded to this event with the encyclical *Casti Connubii* (On Christian Marriage). Let us take a brief look at what Pope Pius XI perceived as the attack on the woman:

Domestic society being confirmed, therefore, by this bond of love, there should flourish in it that "order of love," as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children, the ready subjection of the wife and her willing obedience, which the Apostle commends in these words: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ is the head of the Church."

This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment, or of their ignorance of human affairs. But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.

Again, this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place and time. In fact, if the husband neglects his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family. But the structure of the family and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God, must always and everywhere be maintained intact.

The attack revolves around confusing equality with egalitarianism, which is a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs. Note that the focus is on the external, the visible, and the worldly. Satan works with the appearances of the world. Equality



has to do with the supernatural quality of each human person and the gifts each person is given for the betterment of the Church and society. The problem for Satan is that supernatural realities will always prevail (i.e., the intrinsic desire for marriage).

### **To recap:**

The sacrament of Matrimony symbolizes and makes present God's love through the sexual love, friendship and self-giving love of a wife and husband. Marriage can only be between a man and a woman.

Marriage, one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, is a sacrament at the service of community. This was the only sacrament to pre-date Christ and was established at the very beginning of time. Marriage was given by God to man and a woman as a gift to be a public covenant of their love. It is permanent (life-long), monogamous, and unconditional. It requires a total gift of self by each spouse to the other. God protects this sacrament with His grace, allowing the couple to grow in their union with each other. The couple is to be open to God's love by being open to the gift of children. The relationship of the man and woman parallels that of Christ and His Church.

## **The Purpose of Marriage**



What is marriage? Succinctly put, marriage is a covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and it is by its nature ordered toward the procreation and education of offspring. The purpose of marriage to raise children.

Why is the Church so adamant about maintaining the integrity of this unique union of a man and woman? The first key to understanding this question begins with Saint Paul's marvelous teaching that the union of husband and wife is an icon of the relationship between Jesus and the Church (Eph 5:31-32). The second key is that the Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and



image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost. These two keys will be utilized to help you further understand marriage in God's Plan of Salvation.

Are you and your fiancé prepared to live out the purpose of marriage, which is to raise children in the Catholic Faith? Do you both understand, even if one of you is not Catholic, that the children must be raised in the Catholic Faith? Take some time to talk about this with each other.

## Marriage as a Covenant between Man and Woman



“Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of ‘the wedding-feast of the Lamb.’ Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and its ‘mystery,’ its institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, its various realizations throughout the history of salvation, the difficulties arising from sin and its renewal ‘in the Lord’ in the New Covenant of Christ and the Church.” (CCC 1602)

Now that we have established our working definition of marriage, we need to better understand what is meant by “covenant.” Our modern society looks upon marriage as a contract, a promise that one signs onto in *his/her own* name. That is sufficient for the civil (legal) side, the worldly side, of the “marriage coin.” However, marriage is much more than a contract; it is a covenant. A covenant is a promise that involves an oath sworn in the name of God, asking for His assistance in this exchange of persons. Invoking the Holy Name of God strengthens and consecrates this solemn commitment.

A divorce terminates the *civil* aspect of a marriage, that is, what man has made (cf. Mt 19:6). Here we are reminded that contracts can be broken or made void. Then there is the sacramental aspect of marriage as a covenant, which cannot be broken (cf. Mt 19:6). In the annulment process, the Church investigates whether or not the covenant was actually established at the time of the marriage. You may hear it opined that the Church hates divorce. She recognizes the disorder that divorce brings to the covenant of salvation, the family, the children, and to society. Some may say the children of an annulled marriage are illegitimate. Such is not the case; while the sacramental bond of the marriage may not have existed, the natural, civil union was always in effect.



Unfortunately, divorced members of the Church are a reality. This is why there is at least a six-month period of preparation leading to the wedding. The Church understands the gravity of what you are preparing for even as the society around us attempts to diminish the importance of marriage in God's plan for the health of a society and its members.

This time of preparation is a time of discernment, learning, and coming to a better understanding about yourself, your beloved, and your heavenly Father's expectation of marriage. Here we present a three-fold plan to augment this process. We will begin by exploring the big picture of how marriage has been the guiding light of Salvation History. We will continue with how this plays out in our lives with Christ through the Sacraments. This pertains not only to yourself; it will also be helpful when you are entrusted to raise a child of God. Finally, we will offer meditations on the Rite of Marriage, the linchpin that provides insight into your preparation and your life united as one.

There is a technique that the biblical writers use to highlight an important teaching or event. They would use the same line or verse to frame the highlighted pericope (passage). Keeping in mind that the primary author of Sacred Scripture is the Holy Spirit, we need to step back and look at the entire work. The entirety of Scripture is framed by a single event - a marriage. We read that at Creation, man was created in the image and likeness of God - *male and female He created them* (Gen 1:27). The second account of Creation gives us a closer look at what happened. God created the woman from the rib of the man and presented her to him. Adam gratefully accepted Eve as his proper helpmate, "*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh*" (Gen 2:24). This verse is used by Jesus to answer the Pharisees when they challenge Him about the legality of divorce (cf. Mt 19:3-9). It is also used by Saint Paul as the summary of his wonderful teaching about marriage (Eph 5:21-32).

In the Book of Revelation, at the end of Salvation History, we read, *The voice of a great multitude cries out, "Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"-- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."* (Rev 19:7-9). The Lamb is Jesus Christ (see John 1:29, Rev 5:6). His bride is the heavenly Jerusalem in all her glory (Rev 21:2).

Throughout Salvation History, marriage and covenant have been constant intertwining themes. These themes reveal the nature of the relationship that God has established between Himself and Man. This ongoing and reaffirmed covenant of God with Man began with the first Couple, *Adam and Eve*. The people of God grew into a Family as God reaffirmed His covenant with Man through *Noah* after the Flood. The people of God continued to grow into a Tribe with the three-fold covenant with *Abraham*. During their captivity in Egypt, the people of God grew into a Nation that came into its own under the guidance of Moses. The final step along the path of preparation for the coming of Jesus was the covenant God made with *King David* as the people of God had grown into a Kingdom. It is through and in Jesus that all these covenants come together under the New and Everlasting Covenant.

This dual theme of covenant and marriage was intrinsic to the growth process of the People of God as they were prepared for the coming of Jesus Christ. In the creation story, we read that the Man (Heb. *Adam*) is made in the image and likeness of God, with the woman coming from the man. The creation of man was the final act of Creation. God made the Sabbath (the seventh day) for man to allow him the opportunity to enjoy the unique relationship that he has with his Creator.



In the book of Genesis, we read, *When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth* (Gen 5:1-3).

Let us make note of two things: 1) the repetition of language, just as Man was created in the likeness of God, so is Seth made in the likeness of Adam (Original Sin is a part of that image); and 2) Seth comes from the union of Adam and his beloved bride, Eve.

After the Flood, God re-established His covenant with Man. *God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants ...for God made man in His own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it."*

*Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish My covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you ...I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds....God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen 9:1-17).*

The instructions that were given to Adam are repeated to Noah, and notably, to his family.

Many generations later, the Lord came to Abram to tell him that He was to move his clan from Ur of the Chaldeans (North of the Persian Gulf), to the Land of Canaan (Israel) with this three-fold promise: 1) Abram's name would be great; 2) a great nation would come from him; and 3) the world would be blessed by his offspring (cf. Gen 12:1-3). The first promise to Abram is elevated to a covenant when the Lord said to him, *"To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites"* (Gen 15:18-21). Abram's wife, Sarai, thought it was an inconceivable idea to fill that land with offspring when she and Abram were childless and well past child bearing age. Taking matters into her own hand, Sarai offered her servant, Hagar, as a means to provide Abram with an heir.

Ishmael was born of the union of Abram and Hagar. However, this was not according to God's plan. He changed Abram's name to Abraham, the father of a great nation and said, *"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you"* (Gen 17:6-7). Sarai's name was changed to Sarah. It was to her, Abraham's beloved wife, that the true heir of Abraham, Isaac, was born. It was through him that the covenant





would be fulfilled. As for Hagar and Ishmael, they were banished from the clan and sent out into the desert. The covenant with Abram included Ishmael. Therefore, God spared their lives so that they could take their place in the land promised to Abram. Ishmael became the father of the twelve sons from whom the twelve tribes of the Arab nation came from (see Gen 25:12-17).

God used an angel to make His third and final covenant with Abraham in the presence of Isaac, his true heir from Sarah, on Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem). This occurred after God had stayed the hand of Abraham who was about to offer his son in sacrifice as He had ordered: *"By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice"* (Gen 22:16-18). It was with Isaac's son, Jacob, that God renewed the covenant with Abraham (see Gen 28:13-16).

The promise to Jacob began with the birth of his twelve sons and continued in Egypt where the people of Israel found themselves in response to a famine (Gen 43-46). There were 70 people of the House of Jacob (Israel) who entered into Egypt where *the descendants of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong; so that the land was filled with them* (Ex 1:7). This was to fulfill the promise to Abraham that a great nation would come from him; now it was time to reclaim the Promised Land. God called upon Moses to complete the work that had begun with Abraham. The final covenant God made with the people of ancient Israel was established with David.

Again, we see the Old Testament integration of marriage and covenant. The first son of the illicit union of David and Bathsheba was struck with a disease and died (2 Sam 12:15-18). However, the son of their licit union, Solomon, received the same message that sealed the covenant with David, *"the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take My steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before Me; your throne shall be established for ever"* (2 Sam 7:13-16; see 1 Kgs 9:1-9). Once God had established this final covenant, He spoke through the Prophets to reveal the nature of the relationship He desired with Israel.

Israel reached its height under the rule of King David. The Kingdom of Israel was well established, enjoying both peace and prosperity (cf. 1 Kgs 2:11-12). That success would endure despite Solomon's rejection of God's requirements of an Israeli king. It was under Solomon's son, Rehoboam, that the Kingdom would be divided (cf. 1 Kgs 12:1-25). Ten tribes of Israel to the north retained the name of Israel, also known as Ephraim (cf. Hosea 11:12). Two tribes to the south were referred to as the Kingdom of Judah. The first king of this newly aligned Israel, Jeroboam, rejected the Lord and offered sacrifice and honor to the Baals, as did his followers. Each successive king exceeded his predecessor in worship of the Baals. God sent Elijah and Elisha to turn the peoples' hearts back to Him, but their efforts failed.



After nearly 120 years of rejection, God sent the prophet Hosea to the kingdom of Israel to confront them about their abysmal behavior. He gave a final warning of what would soon befall them (note the spousal imagery).

The Lord spoke to the people of Israel through the prophet Hosea, "Plead with your mother, plead-- for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband--that she put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a parched land, and slay her with thirst. Upon her children also I will have no pity, because they are children of harlotry.

And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. "And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me, 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD. (Hos 2:2-4, 15-20)

Because of their continued rejection of God, the ten northern tribes of Israel would soon be conquered and dispersed throughout the world (2 Kgs 17). However, there was the promise that one day Israel and Judah would be reunited (see Hos 3). We hear the same spousal imagery addressed to the Kingdom of Judah as it, too, was experiencing its own problems with fidelity to the Lord and pending exile to Babylon (2 Kgs 24).

For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Is 62:1-4)

During the Babylonian Exile, God sent the prophet Ezekiel to His people with a summary of their history, making use of the spousal imagery.

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor swathed with bands. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.



"And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live, and grow up like a plant of the field.' And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yea, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather, I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. And I decked you with ornaments, and put bracelets on your arms, and a chain on your neck. And I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful, and came to regal estate. And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord GOD. "But you trusted in your beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by.

Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! Men give gifts to all harlots; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side for your harlotries. So you were different from other women in your harlotries: none solicited you to play the harlot; and you gave hire, while no hire was given to you; therefore you were different.

"Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations? Behold, every one who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you, 'Like mother, like daughter.' You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. Yet you were not content to walk in their ways, or do according to their abominations; within a very little time, you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.

"Yea, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD" (Ez 19:1-15, 32-34, 43b-47, 59-63).

**This gives you just an idea of the importance that marriage has played throughout salvation history and the intimate relationship that God desired to have with the People of Israel.**



After the People of God had returned to Israel from Babylon, and later in the fullness of time, God *sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law* (Gal 4:4-5). To underscore that Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not abolish it (Mt 5:17), He refers to Himself as the Bridegroom who will one day be taken away from His disciples who could not fast as long as He was with them (cf. Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19-20; Lk 5:34-5). The Last Supper was Jesus' time to establish the New Covenant. This is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, making concrete the covenant that God had established with man from the beginning.

### **The most important element in preparing for marriage is your relationship with Jesus Christ.**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells of the wise man who built a house on solid rock. He had taken the words and teaching of Jesus to heart. And the foolish man who did not take His teaching to heart and built his house on sand. The wise man's house withstood the winds and destructive forces of the world, while the foolish man's house crumbled (cf. Mt 7:24-27)

St. Paul takes up this imagery as he describes the house that one builds on the Rock foundation that is Jesus Christ. He builds his house by the life he leads, with gold, silver, precious stone, wood, straw, and hay. In the end it will be tested by fire (cf. 1 Cor 3:10-14).

The strength of a marriage depends on the strength of the "house" that each of the spouses have built before the wedding. How strong is your house? Is Jesus the foundation on whom your life is built? Talk about this together now and write down what each of you learned.

### **Marriage as a Sacrament**



For this section we will turn our attention to the teachings contained in the *Roman Catechism*. Published hundreds of years ago, this book has summarized in an eloquent yet complete way the Church's teachings on marriage as a Sacrament.



“It will now be necessary to explain that Matrimony is far superior in its sacramental aspect and aims at an incomparably higher end. For as marriage, as a natural union, was instituted from the beginning to propagate the human race; so was the sacramental dignity subsequently conferred upon it in order that a people might be begotten and brought up for the service and worship of the true God and of Christ our Saviour.

“Thus when Christ our Lord wished to give a sign of the intimate union that exists between Him and His Church and of His immense love for us, He chose especially the sacred union of man and wife. That this sign was a most appropriate one will readily appear from the fact that of all human relations there is none that binds so closely as the marriage, and from the fact that husband and wife are bound to one another by the bonds of the greatest affection and love. Hence it is that Holy Writ so frequently represents to us the divine union of Christ and the Church under the figure of marriage.

“That Matrimony is a Sacrament the Church, following the authority of the Apostle, has always held to be certain and incontestable. In his Epistle to the Ephesians he writes: Men should love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall adhere to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church. Now his expression, this is a great sacrament, undoubtedly refers to Matrimony, and must be taken to mean that the union of man and wife, which has God for its Author, is a Sacrament, that is, a sacred sign of that most holy union that binds Christ our Lord to His Church.

“That this is the true and proper meaning of the Apostle's words is shown by the ancient holy Fathers who have interpreted them, and by the explanation furnished by the Council of Trent. It is indubitable, therefore, that the Apostle compares the husband to Christ, and the wife to the Church; that the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church; and that for this very reason the husband should love his wife and the wife love and respect her husband. For Christ loved his church, and gave himself for her; while as the same Apostle teaches, the church is subject to Christ.

“That grace is also signified and conferred by this Sacrament, which are two properties that constitute the principal characteristics of each Sacrament, is declared by the Council as follows: By his passion Christ, the Author and Perfecter of the venerable Sacraments, merited for us the grace that perfects the natural love (of husband and wife), confirms their indissoluble union, and sanctifies them. It should, therefore, be shown that by the grace of this Sacrament husband and wife are joined in the bonds of mutual love, cherish affection one towards the other, avoid illicit attachments and passions, and so keep their marriage honourable in all things . . . and their bed undefiled.”

## **Marriage as a Vocation**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM-V5byc5MA>

Marriage is a vocation. Many people are called to marriage but not everyone is. Is God calling you to marriage, religious life, or single life? With humility, everyone must examine themselves and determine where God is calling you.



For this part of our course, let's watch the above video. While watching this video ask yourself:

1. Do you desire to serve God above all else?
2. Do you believe God is calling you to marriage?
3. Do you pray and ask for God's help before entering into a marital union?
4. Does your fiancé also believe he or she is also being called to the vocation of marriage?

## Indissolubility of Marriage



We continue our marriage preparation reflections with the Roman Catechism's explanation of marriage as indissoluble.

“The selfsame testimony of Christ our Lord easily proves that the marriage cannot be broken by any sort of divorce. For if by a bill of divorce a woman were freed from the law that binds her to her husband, she might marry another husband without being in the least guilty of adultery. Yet our Lord says clearly: Whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another committeth adultery. Hence it is plain that the bond of marriage can be dissolved by death alone, as is confirmed by the Apostle when he says: A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die she is at liberty; let her marry whom she will, only in the Lord; and again: To them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband; and if she depart that she remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. To the wife, then, who for a just cause has left her husband, the Apostle offers this alternative: Let her either remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Nor does holy Church permit husband and wife to separate without weighty reasons.



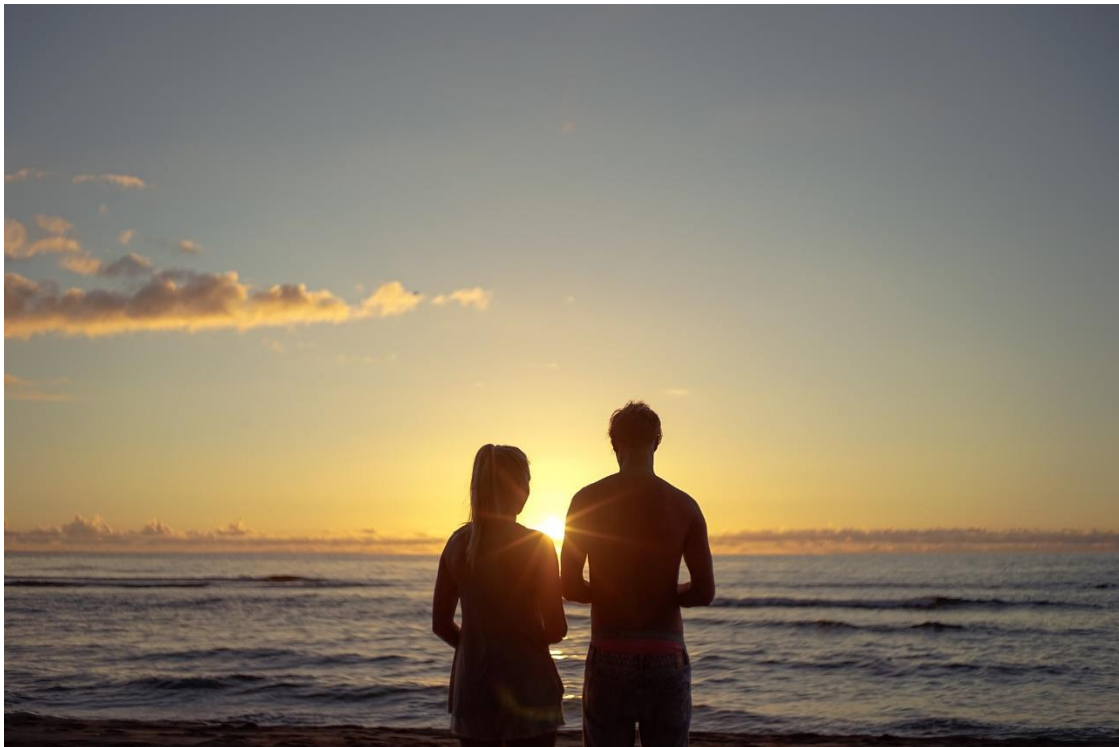
“Lest, however, the law of Matrimony should seem too severe on account of its absolute indissolubility, the advantages of this indissolubility should be pointed out.

“The first (beneficial consequence) is that men are given to understand that in entering Matrimony virtue and congeniality of disposition are to be preferred to wealth or beauty— a circumstance that cannot but prove of the very highest advantage to the interests of society at large.

“In the second place, if marriage could be dissolved by divorce, married persons would hardly ever be without causes of disunion, which would be daily supplied by the old enemy of peace and purity; while, on the contrary, now that the faithful must remember that even though separated as to bed and board, they remain none the less bound by the bond of marriage with no hope of marrying another, they are by this very fact rendered less prone to strife and discord. And even if it sometimes happens that husband and wife become separated, and are unable to bear the want of their partnership any longer, they are easily reconciled by friends and return to their common life.

**Ask Yourself:** Do you and your spouse understand that Christian marriage lasts forever and divorce is not an option?

## The Three Blessings of Marriage



We continue now with a reflection on the three blessings of marriage as summarized in the Roman Catechism:



“The faithful should also be shown that there are three blessings of marriage: children, fidelity and the Sacrament. These are blessings which to some degree compensate for the inconveniences referred to by the Apostle in the words: Such shall have tribulation of the flesh, and they lead to this other result that sexual intercourse, which is sinful outside of marriage, is rendered right and honourable.

“Lest, however, the law of Matrimony should seem too severe on account of its absolute indissolubility, the advantages of this indissolubility should be pointed out.

“The first (beneficial consequence) is that men are given to understand that in entering Matrimony virtue and congeniality of disposition are to be preferred to wealth or beauty— a circumstance that cannot but prove of the very highest advantage to the interests of society at large.

“**The first blessing, then, is a family, that is to say, children born of a true and lawful wife.** So highly did the Apostle esteem this blessing that he says: The woman shall be saved by bearing children.’ These words are to be understood not only of bearing children, but also of bringing them up and training them to the practice of piety; for the Apostle immediately subjoins: If she continue in faith. Scripture says: Hast thou children? Instruct them and bow down their necks from childhood. The same is taught by the Apostle; while Tobias, Job and other holy Patriarchs in Sacred Scripture furnish us with beautiful examples of such training. The duties of both parents and children will, however, be set forth in detail when we come to speak of the fourth Commandment.

“**The second advantage of marriage is faith,** not indeed that virtue which we receive in Baptism; but the fidelity which binds wife to husband and husband to wife in such a way that they mutually deliver to each other power over their bodies, promising at the same time never to violate the holy bond of Matrimony. This is easily inferred from the words pronounced by Adam when taking Eve as his wife, and which were afterwards confirmed by Christ our Lord in the Gospel: Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be two in one flesh. It is also inferred from the words of the Apostle: The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and in like manner, the husband hath not power of his own body but the wife. Justly, then, did the Lord in the Old Law ordain the most severe penalties against adulterers who violated this conjugal fidelity.

“Matrimonial fidelity also demands that they love one another with a special, holy and pure love; not as adulterers love one another but as Christ loves His Church. This is the rule laid down by the Apostle when he says: Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church. And surely (Christ’s) love for His Church was immense; it was a love inspired not by His own advantage, but only by the advantage of His spouse.

“**The third advantage is called the Sacrament,** that is to say, the indissoluble bond of marriage. As the Apostle has it: The Lord commanded that the wife depart not from the husband, and if she depart that she remain unmarried or be reconciled to’ her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife. And truly, if marriage as a Sacrament represents the union of Christ with His Church, it also necessarily follows that just as Christ never separates Himself from His Church, so in like manner the wife can never be separated from her husband in so far as regards the marriage.”





## The Duties of a Husband and a Wife



We again draw on the wisdom of the Roman Catechism which summarizes these duties:

### **Duties Of A Husband**

“It is the duty of the husband to treat his wife generously and honourably. It should not be forgotten that Eve was called by Adam his companion. The woman, he says, whom thou gavest me as a companion. Hence it was, according to the opinion of some of the holy Fathers, that she was formed not from the feet but from the side of man; as, on the other hand, she was not formed from his head, in order to give her to understand that it was not hers to command but to obey her husband.

“The husband should also be constantly occupied in some honest pursuit with a view to provide necessaries for the support of his family and to avoid idleness, the root of almost every vice.

“He is also to keep all his family in order, to correct their morals, and see that they faithfully discharge their duties.”

### **Duties Of A Wife**

“On the other hand, the duties of a wife are thus summed up by the Prince of the Apostles: Let wives be subject to their husbands. that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word by the conversation of the wives, considering your chaste conversation with fear. Let not



their adorning be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.

“To train their children in the practice of virtue and to pay particular attention to their domestic concerns should also be especial objects of their attention. The wife should love to remain at home, unless compelled by necessity to go out; and she should never presume to leave home without her husband's consent.

“Again, and in this the conjugal union chiefly consists, let wives never forget that next to God they are to love their husbands, to esteem them above all others, yielding to them in all things not inconsistent with Christian piety, a willing and ready obedience.”

**Ask Yourself:** Are you both prepared to support and help one another in the vocation of Christian marriage? What difficulties do you see?

## The Rite of Holy Matrimony



## Tridentine Latin Mass

For those who will be married in the Tridentine Latin Mass, [please click here to read a guide to the beautiful 1962 Rite of Marriage.](#)



## Novus Ordo Mass

For those who will be married in the Novus Ordo Mass, often said in the vernacular, we present a following step by step guide.

### Introduction to the Rite:

My dear friends, you have come together in this church so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now He enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions.

***That the Lord may seal and strengthen your love ...Consecrated you in baptism and now He enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament...Duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity:*** Confirmation as the "Matrimony" of the sacramental life. The grace of matrimony brings the spouses into a special union with each other as they partake in their union with Jesus Christ. It is the Lord who gives you the grace to love your spouse completely, but you have to cooperate with that grace.

### The Questions:

(Name) and (Name), have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage? Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives? Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

***Freely and without reservation:*** In order to be true, love must be freely given and freely received. That is why God has given us freedom, so that we can freely choose to return the love that He has for us and, in turn, give love freely to others.

***Give yourselves to each other in marriage:*** The couple, as ministers of Christ's grace, mutually confers upon the other the Sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church.

***Love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives:*** This is a somber decision to love your spouse, to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21). The love of God is total, selfless, and unconditional. Christ came to serve, not to be served (Mt 20:28).

***Accept children lovingly from God:*** Children are a gift from God. The family is the visible sign of the invisible reality of the Holy Trinity; it is the visible fruitful love of their marital union.

***Bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church:*** The two goods of marriage are unity of the spouses and raising and education of children.

### Consent:



### **Option A**

*The bridegroom says:* I, (Name), take you, (Name), to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

*The bride says:* I, (Name), take you, (Name), to be my husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

***I promise to be true to you:*** This is the difference between the civil and sacramental aspects of marriage. You will sign a paper stating that you are legally married; here you are declaring an oath, freely made in front of God and His Church. Once made, the Church presumes that you have freely and without reservation made this pledge. Your words before God are more binding than your signature on a paper for the state.

***In good times and in bad, in sickness and in health:*** This statement underscores your decision to love your spouse. There are times in every marriage when the sailing is not so smooth. Your decision to love your spouse and the grace of the sacrament will result in a stronger, more powerful bond after those “bad times.”

***Love you and honor you:*** To honor your beloved is the fruit of your faithful love.

### **Option B**

*The bridegroom says:* I, (Name), take you, (Name), for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

*The bride says:* I, (Name), take you, (Name), for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

*Receiving their consent, the priest says:*

You have declared your consent before the Church. May the Lord in His goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with His blessings. What God has joined, men must not divide.

***Declared your consent before the Church:*** The Church holds the exchange of consent between the spouses to be the indispensable element that makes the marriage.

***What God has joined, men must not divide:*** The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself.

### **Blessing of Rings**

*The priest says:* Lord, bless these rings which we bless in Your name. Grant that those who wear them may always have a deep faith in each other. May they do Your will and always live together in peace, good will, and love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.



**We bless in Your Name:** The Lord blesses the rings, the symbol of complete love, as He consecrates your relationship.

**Live together in peace, good will, and love:** The angels declared peace and good will at the birth of Jesus (cf. Lk 2:14). As long as He remains the center and foundation of your marriage (individually and collectively), peace, good will and love will always prevail.

### Exchange of Rings

*The bridegroom says:* (Name), take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*The bride says:* (Name), take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Sign of my love and fidelity:** This is the epitome of what a (the) Sacrament is all about; the rings are the visible sign that you are united as one with your one unique helpmate. It is also one of the first things people look for when they meet you. The ring is honored by others as a sign that you are “spoken for.”

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:** Everything that you do is to be for the greater glory of God the Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Time for prayer:** The Nuptial Blessing is a very concise summary of the Church’s Heart and Mind concerning marriage. When this takes place during the ceremony, your mind will most likely be on receiving Communion, getting to the reception, and the honeymoon. Take the time to sit quietly before the Blessed Sacrament and pray the Nuptial Blessing on your own and, especially, with your beloved. The underlined portions are to help you recall what you have read in this book as you prepare for the ceremony and marriage. May our Lord and His Mother bless your time of preparation and your life united as one.

### Nuptial Blessing

#### Option A

My dear friends, let us turn to the Lord and pray that He will bless with His grace this woman (*or Name*) now married in Christ to this man (*or Name*) and that (through the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ,) He will unite in love the couple He has joined in this holy bond.

*All pray silently for a short while. Then the priest extends his hands and continues:*

Father, by Your power You have made everything out of nothing. In the beginning you created the universe and made mankind in your own likeness. You gave man the constant help of woman so that man and woman should no longer be two, but one flesh, and you teach us that what You have united may never be divided.

Father, You have made the union of man and wife so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and His Church.



Father, by Your plan man and woman are united, and married life has been established as the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in the flood. Look with love upon this woman, Your daughter, now joined to her husband in marriage. She asks Your blessing. Give her the grace of love and peace. May she always follow the example of the holy women whose praises are sung in the scriptures. May her husband put his trust in her and recognize that she is his equal and the heir with him to the life of grace. May he always honor her and love her as Christ loves His bride, the Church.

Father, keep them always true to Your commandments. Keep them faithful in marriage and let them be living examples of Christian life.

Give them the strength which comes from the Gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others. (Bless them with children and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their children's children.) And, after a happy old age, grant them fullness of life with the saints in the kingdom of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

### **Option B**

Let us pray to the Lord for *(Name)* and *(Name)* who come to God's altar at the beginning of their married life so that they may always be united in love for each other (as now they share in the Body and Blood of Christ).

*All pray silently for a short while. Then the priest extends his hands and continues:*

Holy Father, You created mankind in Your own image and made man and woman to be joined as husband and wife in union of body and heart and so fulfill their mission in this world.

Father, to reveal the plan of Your love, You made the union of husband and wife an image of the covenant between You and Your people. In the fulfillment of this sacrament, the marriage of Christian man and woman is a sign of the marriage between Christ and the Church. Father, stretch out Your hand, and bless *(Name)* and *(Name)*.

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 and to have a place in Your family). Give your blessings to *(Name)*, 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 *(Name)*, 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. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

### **Option C**

My dear friends, let us ask God for His continued blessing upon this bridegroom and his bride (or *Name and Name*).

*All pray silently for a short while. Then the priest extends his hands and continues:*



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 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. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

## **Contraception: An Attack on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony**



The Church needs holy marriages more than ever before. With so many attacks on the Faith, we need future priests and future committed lay Catholics to defend the Faith. Without holy families, we would not have future generations on which this depended.

And the devil knows this. That is why there are more attacks than ever on the sanctity of marriage. These attacks include the rise of “homosexual” marriage, the rise of artificial birth control, the prevalence of divorce, and so many other attacks.

Let's turn in this module to understanding the evils of artificial contraception.



In the aftermath of the Lambeth Conference, most major Protestant denominations accepted the use of Artificial Birth Control (ABC). This method of population control came with the “promise” that couples would draw closer together by the ability to enjoy the marital embrace without the worry of pregnancy. The weight of the acceptance by the Protestants led to Pope John XXIII’s establishment of a commission to explore the possibility of the Catholic Church changing Her teaching that forbade the use of ABC. John XXIII died before the commission completed its work. The recommendation of the commission to Pope Paul VI was that the Church should ease her restrictions concerning use of Artificial Birth Control.

Pope Paul’s response was to expound on the beauty of conjugal love when the full dignity of both husband and wife is respected. Included in this response, *Humanae Vitae*, the Pope details what would happen if this dignity of persons is not respected.

Upright men can even better convince themselves of the solid grounds on which the teaching of the Church in this field is based, if they care to reflect upon the consequences of methods of artificial birth control. Let them consider, first of all, how wide and easy a road would thus be opened up towards conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality. Not much experience is needed in order to know human weakness, and to understand that men—especially the young, who are so vulnerable on this point—have need of encouragement to be faithful to the moral law, so that they must not be offered some easy means of eluding its observance. It is also to be feared that the man, growing used to the employment of anti-conceptive practices, may finally lose respect for the woman and, no longer caring for her physical and psychological equilibrium, may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.

Let it be considered also that a dangerous weapon would thus be placed in the hands of those public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies. Who could blame a government for applying to the solution of the problems of the community those means acknowledged to be licit for married couples in the solution of a family problem? Who will stop rulers from favoring, from even imposing upon their peoples, if they were to consider it necessary, the method of contraception which they judge to be most efficacious? In such a way men, wishing to avoid individual, family, or social difficulties encountered in the observance of the divine law, would reach the point of placing at the mercy of the intervention of public authorities the most personal and most reserved sector of conjugal intimacy.

Consequently, if the mission of generating life is not to be exposed to the arbitrary will of men, one must necessarily recognize insurmountable limits to the possibility of man's domination over his own body and its functions; limits which no man, whether a private individual or one invested with authority, may licitly surpass. And such limits cannot be determined otherwise than by the respect due to the integrity of the human organism and its functions, according to the principles recalled earlier, and also according to the correct understanding of the "principle of totality" illustrated by our predecessor Pope Pius XII. (emphasis added)

The development of a readily available oral contraceptive (the Pill), the removal of prayer from public school and the emergence of the ‘sexual revolution’ have all contributed to a diminished understanding of marriage in our “progressive,” modernist society. In his 1993 Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor*, Pope John Paul II pinpointed what had happened since the promulgation of





Humanae Vitae. Simply put, modernism had finally grown to the point where it was beginning to invade all aspects of the culture. One of the basic tenets of modernism is that science is no longer beholden to the divine; it is an entity unto itself, to the point that it has placed itself outside of and above religion.

One of Satan's victories over the last several centuries has been to use our reliance on improvements in technology and science as a wedge between God and His creatures (namely us). God gave us dominion over His creation. This enables us to live in a controlled climate (indoors), fly (in a plane) and drive cars (relatively speedy transport). We are able to harness what God has created; however, we cannot control the weather or contain any other "natural event" (i.e., earthquakes, hurricanes, blizzards); gravity takes over should a plane lose power; gasoline is very explosive and has to be handled with great care not to mention all the laws of

physics that have to be obeyed in order for us to drive safely. We can harness the forces God has created. When we try to control those forces through a false sense of ourselves, due to advances in technology and science, it is a recipe for disaster.

Let us hold fast to the truth.

## **Cohabitation, Divorce, Pornography, and Artificial Insemination**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8IEHMDAFqw>

### **Cohabitation**

The percentage of first births to cohabiting women tripled from 9% in 1985 to 27% for births from 2003 to 2010. This rise in first births to cohabiting women parallels increases in first births to unmarried women overall. Of first births from 2006-10, 46% were to unmarried mothers, compared with 38% in 2002. (Source: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth 2006-2010).

Cohabitation, the living with your spouse while not yet married, is a sin. Since sex may only be shared among couples, the Church rightfully teaches that sharing the same bed with a spouse is a sin. To save sex and living with each other (even if you sleep in different rooms) for marriage.

### **Divorce**

Marriage is rapidly becoming temporary. The divorce rate among couples married in the United States is approaching fifty percent. And divorce is not limited to couples of non-Catholic belief. Although surveys encouragingly have shown that the divorce rate among Catholic couples is much lower than average, that rate, too, is increasing. More couples today are living in "non-traditional" marriages – man and woman cohabiting, man and man cohabiting and woman and woman cohabiting. Indeed, the very concept of what it means to be married is being challenged at the highest federal levels in the United States and in other countries.

### **Pornography**

Pornography in Western Society is pervasive. Most teens and young adults have been presented with pornographic images or videos, even if inadvertently, before they are old enough to drive a



car. Some may think it is okay for a married couple to look at such images or videos. But you may be surprised to learn that pornography is always mortally sinful. It is not permissible for singles or for couples. It is a disordered production that oppresses women, encourages and advocates sex outside of marriage, and strips sexuality from its God-given procreation function. It may have no place in marriage.

If you or your fiancé struggle with this, there is help. [Check out Strive, a 21-day anonymous online program meant to help you overcome these temptations.](#)

### **Artificial Insemination & In Vitro Fertilization**

Artificial fertilization, outside of marriage, is to be condemned outright as immoral. Such is indeed the natural law and the positive divine law, that the procreation of a new life can only be the fruit of marriage. Marriage alone safeguards the dignity of the spouses (mainly the woman in this case), their personal property. By itself, only it provides for the good and education of the child. Consequently, on the condemnation of artificial fertilization outside the conjugal union, no difference of opinion is possible between Catholics. A child conceived under these conditions would, by the very fact, be illegitimate.

Artificial fertilization in marriage, but produced by the active element of a third party, is also immoral and, as such, to be condemned without appeal. Only the spouses have a reciprocal right over their body to engender a new life, an exclusive, non-transferable, inalienable right. And that must also be taken into consideration of the child. To anyone who gives life to a small being, nature imposes, by virtue of this bond, the burden of its conservation and education. But between the legitimate husband and the child, the fruit of the active element of a third party (the spouse was he consenting), there is no bond of origin, no moral and legal bond of conjugal procreation.

As for the lawfulness of artificial fertilization in marriage, it suffices for us, for the moment, to recall these principles of natural law: the simple fact that the result to which we aim is achieved by this route, does not justify the use of the medium itself; nor the desire, in itself very legitimate among spouses, to have a child, is not enough to prove the legitimacy of the recourse to artificial fertilization, which would fulfill this desire.

Let it not be forgotten: only the procreation of a new life according to the will and the plan of the Creator carries with it, to an astonishing degree of perfection, the achievement of the aims pursued. It is, at the same time, in conformity with the bodily and spiritual nature and with the dignity of the spouses, with the normal and happy development of the child.

*Source: Speech of Pope Pius XII to Catholic Doctors in Rome for their 4th International Congress (Sept. 29, 1949), Acta Apostolicae Sedis 49*

**Ask Yourself:** Do you and your fiancé understand the Catholic teaching on these issues? Are you prepared to live out the Catholic teaching on cohabitation, divorce, pornography, and artificial insemination? Have you had an honest conversation on this?

**Let us pray:** Dear Lord, give me the strength and sense to keep from visiting internet sites or otherwise looking at salacious materials that will only entice me further into a slime pit of sin and shame. Let me remember that such sites and magazines, however appealing at first, can become dangerously addictive with images that cloud my mind and turn me away from the true value of sexuality in loving my spouse. Shield me from wishing to partake of the poison of pornography,



whether soft or hard, remembering that however sweet it may taste at first, it can all too quickly turn quite bitter, leaving me obsessing over base desires and my spouse feeling threatened and abandoned. Blessed Mother Mary, I ask for your help and grace in these matters as well, in the name of Your Beloved Son, Christ our Lord. Amen.

## A Summary of Marriage by the Catechism



We've touched on a lot of topics so as we conclude, let's recap what marriage is and what the Church teaches on marriage. To do this, let's review the Baltimore Catechism on marriage.

### **Q. 1005. What is the Sacrament of Matrimony?**

A. The Sacrament of Matrimony is the Sacrament which unites a Christian man and woman in lawful marriage.

### **Q. 1006. When are persons lawfully married?**

A. Persons are lawfully married when they comply with all the laws of God and of the Church relating to marriage. To marry unlawfully is a mortal sin, and it deprives the souls of the grace of the Sacrament.

### **Q. 1007. When was marriage first instituted?**

A. Marriage was first instituted in the Garden of Eden, when God created Adam and Eve and made them husband and wife, but it was not then a Sacrament, for their union did not confer any special grace.



**Q. 1008. When was the contract of marriage raised to the dignity of a Sacrament?**

A. The exact time at which the contract of marriages was raised to the dignity of a Sacrament is not known, but the fact that it was thus raised is certain from passages in the New Testament and from the constant teaching of the Church ever since the time of the apostles. Our Lord did not merely add grace to the contract, but He made the very contract a Sacrament, so that Christians cannot make this contract without receiving the Sacrament.

**Q. 1009. What is the outward sign in the Sacrament of Matrimony, and in what does the whole essence of the marriage contract consist?**

A. The outward sign in the Sacrament of matrimony is the mutual consent of the persons, expressed by words or signs in accordance with the laws of the Church. The whole essence of the marriage contract consists in the surrender by the persons of their bodies to each other and in declaring by word or sign that they make this surrender and take each other for husband and wife now and for life.

**Q. 1010. What are the chief ends of the Sacrament of Matrimony?**

A. The chief ends of the Sacrament of matrimony are:

1. To enable the husband and wife to aid each other in securing the salvation of their souls;
2. To propagate or keep up the existence of the human race by bringing children into the world to serve God;
3. To prevent sins against the holy virtue of purity by faithfully obeying the laws of the marriage state.

**Q. 1011. Can a Christian man and woman be united in lawful marriage in any other way than by the Sacrament of Matrimony?**

A. A Christian man and woman cannot be united in lawful marriage in any other way than by the Sacrament of Matrimony, because Christ raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament.

**Q. 1023. Can the bond of Christian marriage be dissolved by any human power?**

A. The bond of Christian marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power.

**Q. 1024. Does not a divorce granted by courts of justice break the bond of marriage?**

A. Divorce granted by courts of justice or by any human power does not break the bond of marriage, and one who makes use of such a divorce to marry again while the former husband or wife lives commits a sacrilege and lives in the sin of adultery. A civil divorce may give a sufficient reason for the persons to live apart and it may determine their rights with regard to support, the control of the children and other temporal things, but it has no effect whatever upon the bond and spiritual nature of the Sacrament.

**Q. 1025. Does not the Church sometimes allow husband and wife to separate and live apart?**



A. The Church sometimes, for very good reasons, does allow husband and wife to separate and live apart; but that is not dissolving the bond of marriage, or divorce as it is called, for though separated they are still husband and wife, and neither can marry again till the other dies.

**Q. 1028. Which are the effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony?**

A. The effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony are:

1. To sanctify the love of husband and wife;
2. To give them grace to bear with each other's weaknesses;
3. To enable them to bring up their children in the fear and love of God.

**Q. 1029. What do we mean by bearing with each other's weaknesses?**

A. By bearing with each other's weaknesses we mean that the husband and wife must be patient with each other's faults, bad habits or dispositions, pardon them easily, and aid each other in overcoming them.

**Q. 1030. How are parents specially fitted to bring up their children in the fear and love of God?**

A. Parents are specially fitted to bring up their children in the fear and love of God:

1. By the special grace they receive to advise and direct their children and to warn them against evil;
2. By the experience they have acquired in passing through life from childhood to the position of parents. Children should, therefore, conscientiously seek and accept the direction of good parents.

**Q. 1031. To receive the Sacrament of Matrimony worthily is it necessary to be in the state of grace?**

A. To receive the Sacrament of Matrimony worthily it is necessary to be in the state of grace, and it is necessary also to comply with the laws of the Church.

**Q. 1047. How should Christians prepare for a holy and happy marriage?**

A. Christians should prepare for a holy and happy marriage by receiving the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist; by begging God to grant them a pure intention and to direct their choice; and by seeking the advice of their parents and the blessing of their pastors.

**Q. 1050. Where and at what time of the day should Catholics be married?**

A. Catholics should be married before the altar in the Church. They should be married in the morning, and with a Nuptial Mass if possible.



## Conflict Resolution



“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

After having discussed the important spiritual dimensions of marriage, we now turn to the practical considerations.

No marriage will be perfect. There will undoubtedly be conflicts. Because you and your spouse care about each other, you may at times passionately argue. Relax, that is normal. While we should always look to the Holy Family and see in the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph a true, harmonious marriage, we can not expect to always replicate that. There will be conflict.

So how do we deal with that? How can we in our marriage overcome these conflicts? Here are some tools to keep in mind taken from Focus on the Family:

**Define the problem and stick to the issue.** Clearly define the issue and stay on topic during the discussion. Conflict deteriorates when the issue that started the conflict gets lost in angry words, past issues, or hurts tossed into the mix.

**Pursue purity of heart.** “Take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5 NASB). Before approaching others regarding their faults and shortcomings, prayerfully face up to your own. Confess any way you might have contributed to the problem.



**Plan a time for the discussion.** Plan a time to meet with the other person when you are both rested and likely to respond in love to the other person's concerns. When you are tired, stressed, and distracted with other responsibilities, things rarely will go well.

**Listen carefully.** Once you share your feelings, listen to the other person's perspective. Lean in; be present. "One of the most powerful communication techniques I know is to listen well," points out Sande. Make sure your body language conveys that you are open to the other's perspective. Reflect back to the individual what you believe you have heard. For example, "I heard you say that you feel expectations from me. Is that correct?"

**Forgive others as Christ has forgiven you.** "Forgiveness is both an event and a process," Sande says. He suggests you make forgiveness concrete with four promises:

1. I promise I won't bring this up and use it against you in the future.
2. I promise I'm not going to dwell on it in my own heart and mind.
3. I'm not going to talk to other people about it.
4. I'm not going to let it stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

**Propose a solution.** Remember the relationship is more important than the issue. When working toward a solution, consider Philippians 2:4-5: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Seek solutions that keep everyone's best interests in mind.

**Ask Yourself:** How are you prepared to handle conflict in marriage?

## Financial Management & Career Choices

Before your marriage, it is also important to consider the practical issues of financial management and career choices.

### Career Choices

Have I discussed your career choices with your spouse? Have you been honest with your current financial situation and your long-term career aspirations? Is your career sufficient to provide for you and your family? Will your spouse all need to work? Does your spouse want to work?

These are important practical considerations. There are no right or wrong answers. But it's very important to understand each of your views.

Has sufficient attention been paid to the raising of your (future) children? Will both of your career choices allow you and your spouse to provide for them?

Do your career prospects require you to sacrifice time with your children, especially when they are young? If you are the mother, is there a way for you to stay at home with your children, at least for a while when they are most in need? If you are the father, will you be able to refrain from working on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation to set a good example for your wife and children?

Remember that marriage is a vocation. In the Rite of Holy Matrimony, you will receive God's grace to allow you to perform your vocation well, but you still need to put in the practical steps to ensure that you and your family will be taken care of. And you always must do so while keeping the



Catholic Faith and its teachings (e.g. Sunday Mass, the importance of daily prayer, etc) at the center of your life.



## Financial Management

When you enter a marital union you become “one flesh” with your spouse. Besides the spiritual dimension, this involves a sharing in each other’s debts. The Church has long taught that the giving of one spouse to the other must be complete with no strings attached. For that reason, the Church has always taught that prenuptial agreements are not to be used. Divorce is not a possibility for a Catholic. And therefore, prenuptial agreements are in place only for the point of what would happen in a divorce. Some priests and dioceses will outright prohibit the marriage of anyone in a prenuptial agreement.

Here are some important things to consider, and you will have the chance to write your thoughts down on our upcoming worksheet.

Have you discussed with my fiancé the importance of finances? Do each of you have similar financial goals? Do you understand who will manage the bank accounts and the bills? How will this responsibility be shared?

Have both of you discussed retirement and what each of you aspires to in life? What does the ideal retirement look like for each of you? What does that mean in terms of savings this year or this month to make that a reality?





Have both of you been honest with each other about your debt, income, assets, and financial situation? Have you both discussed various retirement tools like 401(k)s and IRAs as means to save for retirement? Are you aware of college 529 plans which would allow you to save for your children's future college education? Are both of you intent on raising your children in the Catholic Faith and either sending them to Catholic schools, a parish CCD program, or homeschooling them with a program like the CatechismClass.com homeschool program?

Do both of you have similar ideas on the importance of spending versus savings? Do both of you have a realistic monthly budget that allows us to provide for our families while also contributing to our parishes and our community?

These are all honest questions that you should have with each other long in advance of setting a marriage date.

## Couple Worksheet



Before our final prayer and the quiz on this lesson, let's stop and download our marriage preparation worksheet. Prayerfully complete this work. Really think about this.

None of your answers will be reviewed by us so be as honest as you can. Share this worksheet though with your fiancé. Are you both on the same page?

### **Let's start first though with a prayer to the Holy Ghost:**

O Holy Ghost, Divine Spirit of light and love, I consecrate to Thee my understanding, my heart and my will, my whole being, for time and eternity. May my understanding be always submissive to Thy heavenly inspirations and the teachings of the Catholic Church, of which Thou art the



Infallible Guide. May my heart be ever inflamed with love of God and of my neighbor. May my will be ever conformed to the Divine will, and may my whole life be a faithful imitation of the life and virtues of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to Whom, with the Father and Thee, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

**Now, let's complete our worksheet:**

[Download the Marriage Preparation Worksheet \(PDF\).](#)

## **Married Couple's Prayer to the Sacred Heart**



O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, King and center of all hearts, dwell in our hearts and be our King; grant us by Your grace to love each other truly and chastely, even as You have loved Your spotless Bride, the Church, and have given Yourself up for her.

Bestow upon us that mutual love and Christian forbearance which are so highly acceptable in Your sight, and a mutual patience in bearing each other's defects; for we are certain that no living creature is free from them. Do not permit even the slightest defect to mar that full and gentle harmony of spirit, the foundation of the mutual assistance in the many and varied hardships of life, that is the end for which woman was created and united inseparably to her husband.

O Lord God, grant that between us there may reign a perpetual holy rivalry toward a life perfectly Christian, by virtue of which there may shine forth more and more clearly the Divine image of Your mystic union with Your Holy Church, as You have deigned to imprint it upon us on the auspicious day of our being made one, and so living, may both of us ascend into heaven, and merit to praise You and bless You forever. Amen.



## Congratulations!



You have nearly completed the Marriage Preparation Program. It is our hope that through this lesson you have learned a wide array of information to which you have not been previously exposed. Please remember to pray in preparation for your marriage.

### **To receive credit from CatechismClass.com and a certificate of completion for passing this course, you must do the following steps:**

1. You must take the quiz at the end of this lesson, and all lessons within our Marriage Preparation Program, and score at least a 90% on them.
  2. You must remit a Processing Fee for your Certificate of Completion. [Use this link for the Standard Processing Fee](#) . Certificate processing time is about 2 - 3 business days. If you should need the Certificate to be processed in 24 hours, [you may also add the Additional Expedited Processing Fee here](#) .
  3. Please note that this course may or may not qualify you to earn a Certificate. Some users may need additional courses, which all depends on your situation. Please use our [Course Calculator by clicking here](#) to determine if you have yet met all requirements to earn a Certificate for Preparation for this Sacrament. Note, that in nearly all locations it is required to receive the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation before you may receive Holy Matrimony. As a result, to those taking this course who are not also studying with us for Confirmation, you may be required to submit to us proof of having received Confirmation in order for us to issue you a certificate for this course.
- After step 1 - 3 are completed, please [contact us through our support system](#) to receive a personalized Certificate of Completion indicating that you have studied and are prepared for the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.