



# **MATRIMONY**

## **Texts from the**

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

#### ***What is this sacrament?***

*The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptised persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. (1601)*

#### **MARRIAGE IN GOD'S PLAN**

##### ***Marriage in the order of creation***

God himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution. Despite the many variations, some sense of the greatness of the matrimonial union exists in all cultures.

The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life. (1603)

Since God created man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is very good in the Creator's eyes. This love is intended to be fruitful: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it". (Gen 1:28) (1604)

Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good for man to be alone". (Gen 2:18) "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh". (Gen 2:24) The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union in the plan of the Creator "in the beginning". (1605)

##### ***Marriage under the regime of sin***

Every man experiences evil around him and within him. The relationship between man and woman has always been threatened by discord, domination, infidelity, jealousy and conflict that can escalate into hatred and separation. This disorder seems to have a universal character. (1606)

This disorder does not stem from the *nature* of man and woman, but from *sin*.

The first sin (original sin) had for its first consequence the rupture of the original communion between man and woman. Relations were distorted by domination and lust. The vocation to be fruitful and multiply was burdened by the pain of childbirth and the toil of work. (Gen 3: 16-21) (1607)

To heal the wounds of sin, man and woman need the help of the grace that God in his infinite mercy never refuses them. Without this help man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives for which God created them. (1608)

##### ***Marriage under the Law of Israel***

After the fall, marriage helps to overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one's own pleasure, and opens oneself to mutual aid and self-giving. (1609)

The law given to Moses aims at protecting the wife from arbitrary domination by the husband, even though it still carries traces of man's 'hardness of heart' which was the reason Moses permitted men to divorce their wives. (1610)

Seeing God's covenant with Israel in the image of exclusive and faithful married love, the prophets prepared the Chosen People's conscience for the deepened understanding of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. (1611)

##### ***Marriage in the Lord Jesus***

The nuptial covenant between God and his people Israel prepared the way for the new and everlasting covenant, for the "wedding feast of the Lamb". (1612)

Jesus performs his first sign - at his mother's request - at the wedding feast at Cana. The Church sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that henceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence. (1613)

Jesus unequivocally taught the original meaning of the union of man and woman as the Creator willed it from the beginning: permission given by Moses to divorce was a concession to the hardness of hearts. (1614)

The matrimonial union of man and woman is *indissoluble*: "What God has joined together let no man put asunder". (Mt 19:6) Jesus' insistence on the indissolubility of marriage could seem impossible to realise. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, Jesus himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life. (1615)

St Paul says: "husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her...for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church". (Eph 5:25-27) (1616)

Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Baptism is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath, which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist. Christian marriage becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. *Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptised persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant.* (1617)

##### ***Virginity for the sake of the kingdom***

The bond with Christ takes precedence over all other bonds, familial and social. From the beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming. (cf. Mt 19:12) (1618)

Both the sacrament of Matrimony and virginity for the Kingdom of God come from the Lord himself, who gives them meaning and grants them the grace to live them in conformity with his will. Esteem for virginity for the sake of the kingdom and the Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable, and they reinforce each other. (1620)

#### **THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE**

In the Eucharist the memorial of the New Covenant is realised, the New Covenant in which Christ has united himself for ever to the Church, his beloved bride, for whom he gave himself up. It is therefore fitting that spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for his Church in the eucharistic sacrifice, and by communicating in the same Body and the same Blood of Christ, they may form by 'one body' in Christ. (1621)

It is appropriate that the bride and groom should prepare themselves by receiving the sacrament of Penance. (1622)

The spouses as ministers of Christ's grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church. (1623)

## MATRIMONIAL CONSENT

### ***Consent must be free***

The parties to a marriage covenant are a baptised man and woman, who freely express their consent. 'To be free' means not to be under any constraint. *If consent is lacking there is no marriage.* This consent that binds the spouses to each other finds its fulfilment in the two 'becoming one flesh'. If this freedom [in consent] is lacking there is no marriage. (1625-28)

For this reason the Church, after examination by a tribunal, can declare the nullity of a marriage. (1630)

### ***The necessity of ecclesiastical form - consent must be given publicly in a liturgical act***

The priest (or deacon) who assists at the marriage receives the consent of the spouses in the name of the Church and gives the blessing of the Church. This visibly expresses the fact that marriage is *an ecclesial reality*. (1630)

This is why the church requires that the faithful contract marriage according to the *ecclesiastical form*. The reasons are: sacramental marriage is a *liturgical act*; marriage is in an *ecclesial order*; it is a state of life in the Church and certainty is necessary, hence witnesses; the public character of the consent protects the 'I do' of the spouses. (1631)

*Preparation for marriage* is of prime importance. (1632)

### ***Mixed marriages***

A mixed marriage (a Catholic and a baptised non-Catholic) for lawfulness needs the *express permission* of the ecclesiastical authority. Disparity of cult (a Catholic and a non-baptised person) requires an *express dispensation* for the validity of the marriage. (1635)

This permission or dispensation presupposes that both parties do not exclude the essential ends of marriage and the obligations assumed by the Catholic party concerning the baptism and education of the children in the Catholic Church. (1635)

## THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

### ***The marriage bond***

In a valid marriage there is a perpetual and exclusive *bond*; in a Christian marriage the spouses are consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state *by a special sacrament*. (1638)

*The marriage bond* has been established by God himself - a marriage concluded and consummated between baptised persons can never be dissolved. The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom. (1640)

### ***The grace of the sacrament of Matrimony***

The grace of the sacrament of matrimony perfects the couple's love and strengthens their indissoluble unity. They help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children. (1641)

*Christ is the source of this grace.* Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and follow him, to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21), to love one another with a supernatural, tender, fruitful love. In the joy of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb. (1642)

## THE GOODS AND REQUIREMENTS OF CONJUGAL LOVE

### ***Unity and indissolubility***

'They are no longer two but one flesh'. Married persons are called to grow in their communion through fidelity and total mutual self-giving. This human communion is completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given in the sacrament of Matrimony. It is deepened by the Eucharist shared together. (1644)

*Polygamy* is contrary to conjugal love which is undivided and exclusive. (1645)

### ***The fidelity of conjugal love***

The intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children, demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable union between them. (1646)

The deepest reason is found in the fidelity of God to his covenant, in that of Christ to his Church. Through the sacrament, the indissolubility of marriage receives a new and deeper meaning. (1647)

God loves us with a definitive and irrevocable love. Married couples share in this love, and by their own faithfulness they can be witnesses to God's faithful love. (1648)

The Church permits the physical *separation* of the couple for serious reasons. (1649)

Some contract civil *divorce* and contract new civil unions - the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognised as valid, if the first marriage was. The divorced cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. Reconciliation through Penance can be granted only to those who have repented and who are committed to living in complete continence. (1650)

### ***Openness to fertility***

By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory. Children are the supreme gift of marriage. (1652)

Parents are the principal and first educators of their children. In this sense the fundamental task of marriage and the family is to be at the service of life. (1653)

## THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

In our own time believing families are of primary importance as centres of living radiant faith, the *Ecclesia domestica* (the domestic church). Parents by word and example are the first heralds of the faith to their children. (1656)

All members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptised*. The home is the first school of Christian life. (1657)

## IN BRIEF

**The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptised to the dignity of a sacrament. (1660)**

- **The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life. Unity, indissolubility and openness to life are essential to marriage. (1661, 1664)**