

THREE TO GET MARRIED

The Sacramentality of Marriage

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.

~Catechism of the Catholic Church 1661

Things to Remember...

- ◆ Matrimony aims to help the couple at a life-long and exclusive love affair. Your wedding is merely a day, a few hours in fact. Marriage, however, is for a lifetime.
- ◆ Marriage is more than just a “contract” between two parties. It is a “covenantal agreement” because it calls upon God to become witness and partaker in the union that will last as long as both of the spouses are alive.
- ◆ Marriage was set up to mirror God’s love for the world. It is a sacrament not just for the “wedding day” rather it is set up as an enduring visible sign, a living sacrament!

- ◆ 5 fundamental characteristics of conjugal love (remembered with 5 “F”s) that mirror God’s covenantal love to us.
 - ◆ Free (interior and exterior freedom)
 - ◆ Faithful (exclusive)
 - ◆ Fruitful (open to life)
 - ◆ Forever (till death do us part)
 - ◆ Forgiving

- ◆ The ministers of the sacrament of marriage are the couple themselves. They confer the sacrament on each other and have that ability from their own baptism. The essential part of the sacrament are the wedding vows and the consummation of the vows in the conjugal act.

- ◆ In order for the marriage to be valid as a sacrament the intentions of the spouses must be in conformity with what the Church understands for marriage and not violate in a significant way the 5 “F”s before the marriage takes place. There are 3 particular requisites that need be established beforehand:
 1. The couple must be capable of being married—that is, they must be a woman and a man who are free of any impediment that would prevent marriage. One must consult beforehand with a priest if something would make their union unlawful (issues remaining unresolved

such as a previous marriage, someone not in right reason, marrying out of fear, holding back major secrets that would affect the marriage). These impediments apply to the state of the spouses before marriage not what comes up during marriage.

2. The couple must give their consent to be married — that is, by an act of their will they irrevocably give and accept one another in order to establish marriage. One of the elements you are asked to “accept” is also the other’s fertility, the openness to possible children if they do come. One cannot lawfully enter Catholic marriage with the resolution never to have children.
 3. Finally, the couple must follow the canonical form for marriage—that is, they must be married according to the laws of the Church so that the Church and the wider community will be certain about the validity of their marriage.
- ◆ The sacramental grace that God provides the marriage is called the Marriage Bond. This is the love and intimacy that God sustains within the relationship. Couples are encouraged to rely and call upon “the grace of the sacrament” that is theirs and always at their disposal, especially when needed in times of trial or sickness.
 - ◆ Marriage also incorporates a couple into the community of the local Church and parish in a new way, forming their own “domestic” Church as a married couple and future family.

Keep Learning...

Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love by Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Sophia Institute Press 1991 (this is particularly good. It is short but very profound and not difficult to read).

Men and Women and the Mystery of Love by Edward Sri, Servant Books 2007.

Good News about Sex & Marriage: Answers to your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching, Revised Edition, by Christopher West, Servant Books 2006.

Learning to Love at the School of John Paul II and Benedict XVI by Lívio Melina, trans. by Joel Wallace, Gracewing, 2011 (this is a bit more challenging for those who want to whet their appetite on deep concepts).

Called to Love, Approaching John Paul’s Theology of the Body, Carl Anderson and Jose Granados, Doubleday, 2009.