



## **Session 32. Matrimony: Sign of Covenant and Faithful Love**

### **1) Welcome**

- » How was your week? What's new or noteworthy—something that happened or an idea or discovery?
- » Who do you know whose marriage you would consider successful?

### **2) Presentation of the Theme**

Catholics consider Matrimony a sacrament of the Church, that is, a sacred sign through which Christ becomes present and acts in our lives. Marriage is a way in which a disciple shapes her or his distinct way of following Jesus with unconditional, exclusive, and selfless love for the spouse and an openness to bearing children. The Sacrament of Matrimony is a way of living out the grace of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

#### **This passage from the Scriptures is quite famous for its discussion of marriage:**

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.*

~Ephesians 5:25-33

#### **From the US Catechism:**

"The grace of this Sacrament perfects the love of husband and wife, binds them together in fidelity, and helps them welcome and care for children. Christ is the source of this grace and he dwells with the spouses to strengthen their covenant promises, to bear each other's burdens with forgiveness and kindness, and to experience ahead of time the 'wedding feast of the Lamb' (Rev 19:9)" (p. 285).

#### **What does the idea of marriage being modeled on Christ's love for His people suggest to you about marriage?**

### **3) Discussion and Sharing**

- » How would you compare the ideals of marriage in Catholic teaching with the ideals of marriage in popular understanding?
- » How would you explain in your own words the idea of marriage as growing in holiness? How do you see transformation happening in marriage?
- » How do you see children as fruit of the love of the spouses in marriage? Give examples from your own life or from the lives of people you know.



#### 4) Questions

What questions do you have about the Sacrament of Matrimony? Here we can also emphasize the high place Catholics give marriage, including our belief that a valid and true marriage cannot be dissolved. At the same time, though, compassion for divorced and separated people is essential.

#### 5) Catholic Factoid

Baptized Catholics should marry before a priest or deacon, in accord with Catholic ritual, before two witnesses. If couples must, for an important reason, marry outside a Catholic Church, they ought to ask permission of the bishop to do so.

#### 6) Prayer

Read (or listen to) **Hosea 2:21-24** slowly, thinking of God's love for you like the love a husband has for his wife in an unbreakable covenant:

*I will betroth you to me forever:  
I will betroth you to me with justice and with judgment,  
with loyalty and with compassion;  
I will betroth you to me with fidelity,  
and you shall know the Lord.  
On that day I will respond—oracle of the Lord—  
I will respond to the heavens,  
and they will respond to the earth;  
The earth will respond to the grain, and wine, and oil...*

Jesus is like a groom to humankind and to the Church. This is a powerful way to understand our relationship with Jesus in faith. As you are comfortable, offer aloud petitions for married couples, families, and people who are engaged.

#### 7) Announcements

#### 8) Hospitality



**For further reference:**

**CCC 1603-1605:** Marriage in the order of creation

**CCC 1612-1617:** Marriage in the Lord

**CCC 1638-1642:** Effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony

**USCCA pp. 279-281:** Catholic Marriage

**Write any thoughts or prayers below. They are private and will not be shared with others.**

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**For reflection:** *Who are married couples I consider to be “holy”? What makes them stand out to me?*