

## Holy Matrimony (Christian Marriage)

### Matrimony

- Matrimony is a sacrament of service (Holy Orders is the other sacrament of service).
- Marriage is a natural sacrament, instituted by God at the time of Creation. "God himself is the author of marriage" (*Gaudium et Spes 48*).
- "The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator" (CCC 1603).
- "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).
- After sin entered the world there was a time of polygamy.
- Moses conceded to divorce among his followers because of their "hardness of heart," but Jesus clearly declares that "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8).
- Jesus restored marriage to its original dignity: one man, one woman, becoming "one" (Matt. 19:4-5).
- The blessings of marriage are unity and procreation.

### Christian Marriage

- The purposes of marriage include mutual love, support, and procreation. Spouses help each other to know, love, and serve God and raise children according to the Faith.
- Jesus made marriage a sacrament by restoring the indissolubility of matrimony.
- Marriage models Christ's love for the Church.
- Disparity of Cults: If either the groom or the bride is not baptized (or both are not), they may marry. However, they cannot celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony. Their marriage is called a natural union and is blessed by the Church.
- Convalidation ceremony: Is needed when a Catholic couple gets married in a civil or non-Catholic ceremony, which makes it an invalid marriage in the eyes of the Church. Even if only one of them is Catholic, it's an invalid sacrament, because Catholics must always follow Church law.
- If two baptized but non-Catholic Christians get married, however, in a civil ceremony or in any religious denomination, the Catholic Church does recognize that as being valid as long as it's the first marriage for both of them.

## The Sacrament

- The Sacrament of Matrimony establishes an indissoluble bond between a man and a woman.
- Any couple, one man and one woman, who are baptized and are free to marry may receive this sacrament.
- Mixed marriage: A Catholic and baptized non-Catholic may marry and validly contract the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- The ministers of Matrimony are the man and woman (who are also the matter). The profession of marriage vows is the form of the sacrament.
- Marriage requires free consent and maturity.
- In order for a marriage to be valid, a man and woman must freely consent to give themselves to each other. To be free means “not being under constraint; not impeded by any natural or ecclesiastical law” and “free of coercion or grave external fear” (CCC 1625, 1628). If either the man or the woman is not free and cannot freely express their consent, the marriage is invalid.
- Three elements are required for a marital union to be a valid sacrament: The participants must enter the Sacrament of Matrimony with the intention that their union will be:
  - **Permanent**: Unto death
  - **Faithful**: No adultery
  - **Fruitful**: Open to the possibility of children if God wills it

## Attacks

- Marriage is attacked in the modern day. The world’s values are contrary to Holy Matrimony. Examples of attacks on marriage include divorce, adultery, fornication, impurity, homosexuality, contraception, and abortion.
- To live a good Christian marriage, the spouses should pray together and follow God’s true plan for marriage. To prepare for marriage, young people should live chastely, select good friends, and pray.

## Matrimony

- Biblical References  
Mt 19:5-6 – leave father & mother, join wife, 2 become 1 flesh  
Mk 10:7-12 – what God joined together, no man separate  
Eph 5:22-32 – union of man & wife image of Christ & Church  
Heb 13:4 – let marriage be honored among all

## Annulments and the Catholic Church

- An annulment (more accurately termed a declaration of matrimonial nullity) is an official determination by an ecclesiastical tribunal that what appeared to be a valid marriage was actually not one.
- It is a juridic determination that, at the time of the wedding, one or both parties to the marriage:
  - Lacked sufficient *capacity* for marriage or;
  - That one or both parties failed to give adequately their *consent* to marriage as the Church understands and proclaims it, or;
  - In weddings involving at least one Catholic, that the parties violated the Church's requirements of canonical *form* in getting married.
- A divorce and an annulment are similar in that they both are legal declarations that are necessary before one person can marry another, if either of them has been married before and the former spouse is not deceased. This is where the similarities end and the important differences begin.
- A divorce is a civil judicial act whereby what was a civilly valid marriage is officially broken, terminated, ended, finished, *kaput* – whatever word you want to use.
- An annulment is an ecclesiastical judicial determination whereby what was believed to be a valid marriage is declared never to have been a marriage in the first place.
- Divorce destroys something that was; annulments recognize that something never was.
- Every nullity petition should begin at the parish level with an interview in the pastor's office.
- The Catholic Church presumes the validity of non-Catholic marriages. Anything that more or less looks like a marriage among non-Catholics is going to be presumed by the Church to have been a marriage and hence worthy of the respect due marriage.
- Divorce and Remarriage  
Mal 2:14-16 – for I hate divorce, says the Lord  
Mt 5:32-33 – to divorce wife and remarry is adultery  
Mt 19:4-6, 9 – to divorce wife and remarry is adultery  
Mk 10:11-12 – if either divorces and remarries = adultery  
Lk 16:18 – to divorce & remarry or marry divorced = adultery  
Rom 7:2-3 – wife consorts = adulteress if living, but not if dead  
1 Cor 7:10-11 – if wife separates, stay single or reconcile

### **Conditions of a Valid Marriage**

In order for a marriage to be valid, a man and woman must freely consent to give themselves to each other. To be free means “not being under constraint; not impeded by any natural or ecclesiastical law” and “free of coercion or grave external fear” (CCC 1625, 1628). If either the man or the woman is not free and cannot freely express their consent, the marriage is invalid.

### **Divorce vs. Annulment**

Marriage is a sacrament that is sealed by God himself. As such, the marriage bond cannot be dissolved except by the death of one of the spouses. Even the Church does not have the authority to end a valid marriage. Therefore, when couples separate in divorce, they are still married sacramentally. When the Church declares an annulment, it means that the marriage itself never took place.

### **Outline of the Marriage Rite**

A marriage properly takes place during the celebration of Mass, but it does not have to. After the homily, the man and woman stand before the congregation and make their vows to one another. To begin, the priest asks the man and woman if they have come freely, if they will stay together for the rest of their lives, and if they will accept children and raise them in the faith. If they answer yes to these questions, they join hands and make their vows to one another, promising to love and honor each other all the days of their lives. The priest then blesses the rings and they are exchanged as a sign of the love and fidelity of the newly married couple.

### **Saint Rita of Cascia**

From her earliest years, Saint Rita believed that she had the vocation to be a nun and longed to give herself to God in an Augustinian convent. Her parents, however, disagreed and she married in obedience to their wishes. Her husband is said to have been brutal and violent and the two sons they had followed his example, but Saint Rita bore all of the sufferings that came her way and fervently prayed for her family. After nearly twenty years of marriage, her husband and sons die. Before they died, however, all of them were reconciled to Saint Rita and to God by Rita’s prayer and example. After their death, Saint Rita joined the convent of the Augustinians and continued to live a life of holiness and love.

### **Prayer for Families**

Heavenly Father, you have given us a model of life in the Holy Family of Nazareth. Help us, O loving Father, to make our family another Nazareth, where love, peace, and joy reign.

May it be deeply contemplative, intensely Eucharistic, and vibrant with joy. Help us to stay together in joy and sorrow through family prayer. Amen.

- Mother Teresa

## The Sacraments

**Sacraments -** The sacraments are visible signs instituted by Jesus Christ to give us grace and to make us holy (CCC 1131).

**Matter -** The matter of sacrament is the things or actions of which it is composed, such as water in baptism (CCC 1084).

**Form -** The form of a sacrament is the set of words pronounced by the minister in administering the sacrament (CCC 1084).

**Minister -** The minister of a sacrament is the person who has the power to confer the sacrament in the Name of Jesus Christ (CCC 1084).

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<u>Sacrament</u>	<u>Matter</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Minister</u>
<b>Baptism -</b>	Water	"I baptize you in the Name of the Father..."	The ordinary minister is one who has received Holy Orders but, in case of necessity, anyone can baptize provided he has the intention of doing what the Church does (CCC 1256)
<b>Confirmation -</b>	Laying on of hands; anointing with chrism oil	"Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit."	The ordinary minister is the bishop, although a priest may receive special facilities to administer the sacrament
<b>Holy Eucharist -</b>	Bread and wine	"This is my Body.... This is the cup of my blood."	A validly ordained priest
<b>Penance -</b>	Verbal confession of sins	"I absolve you from your sins in the Name of the Father..."	A priest approved by the bishop (CCC 1444)
<b>Anointing of the Sick -</b>	Oil	"Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love..."	A priest; the pastor of the parish or another priest who has his permission (CCC 1516)
<b>Holy Orders -</b>	Laying on of hands	"We ask you, all-powerful Father.."	A bishop
<b>Matrimony -</b>	Christian man and woman	Exchange of vows	The spouses confer the sacrament on each other

<b><u>Sacrament</u></b>	<b><u>Institution</u></b>
1. <b>Baptism</b>	Mt. 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16
2. <b>Eucharist</b>	Mt 26:28; Mk 14:21-24; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26
3. <b>Penance</b>	Jn 20:21-23
4. <b>Confirmation</b>	Jn 16:7-15; Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 19:5-6; Heb 6:1-2
5. <b>Matrimony</b>	Mt 19:4-12; Eph 5:28-32
6. <b>Holy Orders</b>	Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20
7. <b>Anointing of the Sick</b>	Jas 5:14-15

### **Sacramental Grace**

Besides sanctifying grace, sacramental grace is conferred with each sacrament.

**Baptism:** We are given the grace to live a holy life. We receive the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and become part of the Church family, which gives us guidance and support.

**Confirmation:** We are given the grace to be strong in the Faith and loyal to Jesus. We also receive an outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the grace to be soldiers of Christ.

**Eucharist:** We receive the Body and Blood of our Lord and the grace to love Jesus with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. We are united in the Mystical Body of Christ and are strengthened and nourished by the Eucharist.

**Penance:** We are restored in sanctifying grace and given the grace to overcome our sins. For example, if we confess lying, God will help us to overcome the sin of lying.

**Anointing of the Sick:** Gives us the grace to suffer well and die faithfully. We are united to Christ in his Passion so we can be united with Christ in his Resurrection.

**Holy Orders:** Priests are given the grace to live holy lives and administer the sacraments. They are also given the grace to live their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

**Matrimony:** Spouses are given grace to love each other and raise children in the Faith by their teaching and example.

### **References**

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