

A Marriage Preparation Supplement designed
to help couples understand and embrace...

GOD'S PLAN FOR
A JOY-FILLED

Marriage

SAMPLE



free. total. faithful. fruitful.

A *Marriage Preparation Supplement* designed to
help couples understand and embrace...

GOD'S PLAN FOR
A JOY-FILLED

Marriage

based on John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*
and the book *Good News About Sex & Marriage*

By Christopher West

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“True love” is possible.
That’s the promise the church holds
out to us in her teachings on sex
and marriage. This is good news.
This is great news!

GN, p. 18

Part I:

Catholic

Faith
& Your Marriage

Throughout the Old Testament,
God's love for his people is
described as the love of a husband
for
his bride. In the New Testament,
Christ *embodies* this love.

GN, pp. 18-19

God's Plan for Marriage "In the Beginning":

Male & Female He Created Them

1. The Bible & Marriage

We might not think the Bible has much to say about marriage. Yet, in a certain sense, the Bible from beginning to end is a story about (1) _____.

- The Bible begins and ends with marriages – Adam-Eve and Christ-Church.
- We can look to these marital “book ends” of Genesis and Revelation as a key for interpreting what lies between.
- Applying this analogy we learn that God’s eternal plan is to “marry” us (see Hos 2:19).
- God wanted this eternal “marital plan” to be so obvious to us that he stamped an image of it in our very being by creating us as male and female and calling us to marriage.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:21-32).

- In this way marriage becomes a “sacrament” or physical sign of God’s love in the world.
- The human body and sex, then, are not only biological realities, but theological realities.*

1a. “The Church cannot therefore be understood ...unless we keep in mind the ‘great mystery’ involved in the creation of man as male and female and the vocation of both to conjugal love, to fatherhood and to motherhood” (LF, n. 19).

* This workshop is based largely on a collection of 129 short talks by Pope John Paul II known as the *Theology of the Body*. The beautiful vision of the human body, marital love, and sexual union outlined in these talks has already begun a sexual “counter-revolution.” To learn more, visit TheologyOfTheBody.com



NOTES

1b. "It is obvious that the analogy of earthly ...spousal love cannot provide an adequate and complete understanding of ...the divine mystery." God's "mystery remains transcendent in regard to this analogy as in regard to any other analogy, whereby we seek to express it in human language" (TB, 330).

2. Christ Provides the Key to a Joy-Filled Marriage

22-25 "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8).

- Jesus is trying to help us realize that something deep in the human heart has disturbed God's original plan for marriage.
- What was it? If we answer this question we will discover the root cause of all marital problems ...*and* pave the way for a solution to those problems.

2a. "According to faith the disorder we notice so painfully [in the male-female relationship] does not stem from the nature of man and woman, nor from the nature of their relations, but from sin. As a break with God, the first sin had for its consequence the rupture of the original communion between man and woman" (CCC, n. 1607).

2b. "Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins" (CCC, n. 2336).

2c. The first man and the first woman must serve as the model for all men and women who enter marriage and unite in "one flesh" (see TB, 50).

3. Created in God's Image

19-20 "Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' ...God created man in his own image; ...male and female he created them. And God blessed them and God said to them 'Be fruitful and multiply'" (Gen 1:26-27).

- This means that somehow, in the complementarity of the sexes, we *image* God. Somehow, as male and female, we make *visible* God's *invisible* mystery.
- What is God's invisible mystery?

3a. "God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange" (CCC, n. 221).



Marriage

NOTES

3b. "Creating the human race in his own image, ...God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation ...of love and communion" (FC, n. 11).

3c. "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not ...experience it and make it his own" (RH, n. 10).

3d. The human person images God "not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning.... On all this, right from the beginning, there descended the blessing of fertility" (TB, 46).

4. Loving as God Loves

19-20

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

- There are numerous ways to describe God's love, but four qualities in particular stand out. God's love is (2) _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- Another name for this kind of love is (3) _____.
- This is precisely what bride and groom commit to at the altar and express with their whole selves (body and soul) by becoming "one flesh."
- God designed sexual intercourse so we could mirror his own eternal, life-giving love!

4a. "Every man and every woman fully realizes himself or herself through the sincere gift of self. For spouses, the moment of conjugal union constitutes a very particular expression of this. It is then that a man and a woman [are meant to] become a mutual gift to each other" (LF, n. 12).



POINTS TO PONDER

Is marriage the only vocation that reflects our creation as male and female in the image of God? If not, what other vocation(s) correspond to our call to love as God loves?

163-171

5. Nakedness Revealed God's Original Plan of Love

"And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:25).

NOTES

- Pope John Paul II calls this the “key” for understanding God’s original plan for man and woman (see TB, 52).
- They experienced sexual desire only as the desire to love in God’s image. There was no shame (or fear) in love. “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 Jn 4:18).

5a. Nakedness reveals the **nuptial meaning of the body** which is the body’s “capacity of expressing love: that love precisely in which the person becomes a gift and — by means of this gift — fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence” (TB, 63).

5b. “Nakedness’ signifies the original good of God’s vision” (TB, 57). “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31).

5c. Their nakedness demonstrates that “holiness entered the visible world.” It is “in his body as male or female [that] man feels he is a subject of holiness.” Holiness is what “enables man to express himself deeply with his own body... precisely by means of the ‘sincere gift’ of himself” (TB, 76-77).

**POINTS TO PONDER**

If this is the way God created sexual desire, why isn’t this the way we experience it?

23-26

6. God Gave Us the Capacity to Choose (But Some Choices Are Always Wrong)

“And the Lord God commanded the man saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die’” (Gen 2: 16-17).

- Why was this commandment only given to “Adam” and not the animals? The human person is the only creature in the visible world with (4) _____. This is why “there was not found a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:20) among the animals.
- Freedom is given as the capacity to (5) _____, to do good and avoid evil. But how do we know what is good and what is evil? How do we know what is loving and what is not?
- As his *creatures*, we must trust in God’s providence and not seek to determine good and evil for ourselves. The moment we do, we cut ourselves off from the life and happiness God intends. We “die.”

6a. *The “power to decide what is good and what is evil does not belong to man, but to God alone.”* Man “possesses an extremely far reaching freedom, since he can eat ‘of every tree of the garden.’ But his freedom is not unlimited: it must halt before the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil,’ for it is called to accept the moral law given by God” (VS, n. 35).

6b. “The ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator and subject to ...the moral norms that govern the use of freedom” (CCC, n. 396).

7. A Snake in the Marital Garden

25

The Serpent said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’ ...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” (Gen 3:1-5).

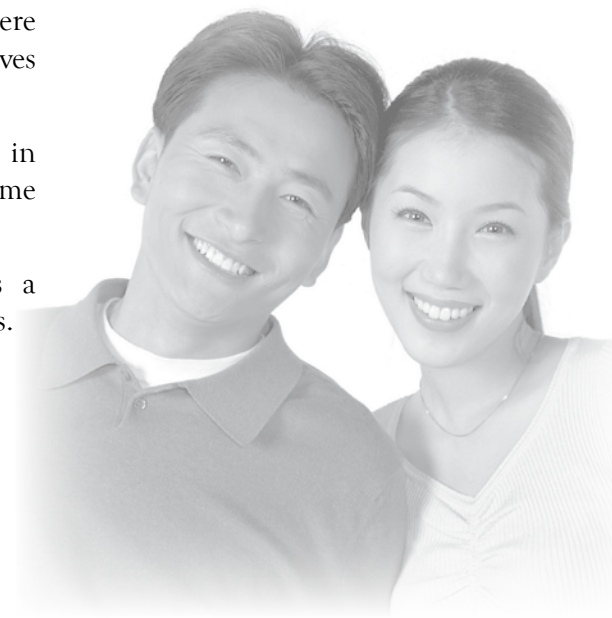
- The implication: God doesn’t want you to be like him; God is withholding something from you; God doesn’t (6) _____ you. His commands aren’t for your happiness. If you really want to be happy, don’t listen to God. Do your own thing.
- Because of this insidious deception, men and women throughout history have bought into the lie that God is not our loving Father, but our enemy.
- There has been a constant pressure on us to reject God, even to the point of hating him. Following his will comes to be seen not as the sure road to happiness that it is, but as a threat to our happiness.

8. The Entrance of Shame

25-26

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons” (Gen 3:7).

- When they disobeyed God, what “died” was the love of God in their hearts. Void of God’s inspiration, sexual desire became inverted, self-seeking.
- Lust, therefore, is sexual desire void of God’s love. It is a “reduction” of God’s original plan. It doesn’t offer more, but less.



NOTES

- We cover our bodies in a fallen world not because they are bad, but because they are “very good” and we want to protect their goodness from the degradation of lust.

8a. “Man is ashamed of his body because of lust. In fact, he is ashamed not so much of his body as precisely of lust” (TB, 116).

8b. Shame also has a positive meaning as “a natural form of self-defense for the person against the danger of descending or being pushed into the position of an object for sexual use” (LR, 182).

8c. “The ‘heart’ has become a battlefield between love and lust. The more lust dominates the heart, the less the [heart] experiences the nuptial meaning of the body” (TB, 126).



POINTS TO PONDER

84-86

175

How is lust (disordered sexual desire) manifested differently in men and women? Why is pornography viewed primarily by men? Why are romance novels read primarily by women? Do these offer a realistic portrayal of man and woman’s relationship? Are they an aid to teaching us the meaning of self-giving love?

Summary:

What’s It Mean for Our Marriage?

- God created us male and female and calls us to “be fruitful and multiply” in order to reveal his own mystery of love and enable us to participate in it.
- This means that marriage can only satisfy our deep longing for love and union to the degree that it images God’s love.
- The sin of our first parents disoriented man and woman’s desire for each other. Men and women must now resist the selfish sting of lust and the tendency to use each other if they are to experience the happiness for which they long.



Christ Restores God's Plan for Marriage:

Male & Female He Redeemed Them

27-28

1. Christ's First Miracle

It is of utmost significance that Christ performed his first public miracle at a (1) _____.

On the third day, there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus was also invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast. ...The water [had] now become wine (Jn 2:1-9).

Wine is a symbol of God's (2) _____. "Running out of wine" seems to indicate that...

1a. "Without [Christ's] help man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives for which God created them 'in the beginning'" (CCC, n. 1608).

While we might sense a deep longing in our hearts for the original harmony of the sexes, God's original plan for marriage often seems like pie-in-the-sky idealism. Is it possible to live it?

- Christ came into the world for this specific reason: to restore the "wine" of God's love in superabundance. This is why the Gospel is *good news*.
- Because of the distortions of sin in our hearts, loving rightly is a difficult struggle. But if we drink deeply from the "new wine" that Christ gives us, we have a sure path to a "joy-filled" marriage.



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1b. "By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, [Christ] himself gives the strength and grace to... 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it" (CCC, n. 1615).

27 2. Christ Takes Us to the Heart of the Matter

103-104 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:27-28).

- Marriage *does not justify lust*. Lust, in fact, is the main enemy of true married love, the root cause in a sense of all marital disharmony.

74-76

- The opposite of love is not hatred. The opposite of love is to *use* someone as a means to my own selfish end. The opposite of love is *lust*.

- Therefore, if spouses are to experience true, lasting joy in their marriage, they must work diligently with God's help to overcome the selfish "sting" of lust.

2a. Liberation from lust "is the condition of all life together in the truth" (TB, 158-159).

2b. "Adultery in the heart is committed not only because man 'looks' in this way at a woman who is not his wife.... Even if he looked in this way at his wife, he could likewise commit adultery 'in his heart'" (TB, 157).

2c. Are we to fear the severity of these words, or rather have confidence in their power to save us (see TB, 159)?

2d. Christ calls us to experience "a real and deep victory" over the distortion of lust (see TB, 164). Christ wants to in-spire sexual desire "with everything that is noble and beautiful," with "the supreme value which is love" (see TB, 168).

82-84 Through ongoing conversion of our hearts to Christ, we come gradually to experience sexual desire as the desire to love as God loves: freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully. This means we can experience the (3) _____ of our sexual desires.



POINTS TO PONDER

If Christ has restored God's original plan for sexual desire as the norm, and truly gives us the power to live it, why, then, do so few people seem to be living it? What can I do, personally, to enter more fully into a transformed or "redeemed" experience of sexual attraction and desire?

3. Liberation from Lust Sets Us Free from the Law

65-66

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You “were called to freedom... if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:13, 18).

- How many people think that being a Christian means following a long list of oppressive rules?
- Christ did not come to give us more “rules” to follow; he came to change our hearts so that we would no longer need the rules.
- In effect Christ says, “You’ve heard the commandment not to commit adultery, but the problem is your *desire* to commit adultery.”
- Here’s where the Gospel becomes *good news*: If we let him in, Christ can change our hearts to the point that we become “free from the law” – not free to break it, but free to fulfill it.
- True freedom is liberation not from the *external* “constraint” that calls me to good, but from the *internal* constraint that hinders my choice of the good.

3a. Those bound by lust “experience God’s law as a burden, and indeed as ...a restriction of their own freedom. On the other hand, those who are impelled by love ...feel an interior urge... not to stop at the minimum demands of the Law, but to live them in their ‘fullness.’ This is a still uncertain and fragile journey as long as we are on earth, but it is one made possible by grace” (VS, n. 18)

3b. “The Law of the Gospel ...does not add new external precepts, but proceeds to reform the heart” (CCC, n. 1968). In “the Sermon on the Mount ...the Spirit of the Lord gives new form to our desires” (CCC, n. 2764).

4. Liberation from Lust Leads to “Reverence for Christ”

“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:21, 24-25).

- According to the analogy, the wife is a symbol of the Church and the husband is a symbol of Christ.
- Christ came not to *be served* but to *serve* – to lay down his life for his Bride (see Mt 20:28).

61-63



NOTES

- St. Paul *does not justify male domination*. This is the result of sin (see Gen 3:16). St. Paul is seeking to restore the original order *before* sin.
- When St. Paul calls wives to “submit” to their husbands, he’s saying, “Wives, allow your husbands to (4) _____ you by pouring their lives in love and care for you.”

4a. Since the “submission of the Church to Christ ...consists in experiencing his love,” we can conclude that “the wife’s ‘submission’ to her husband ... signifies above all ‘the experiencing of love’” (TB, 320).

4b. That “reverence for Christ” St. Paul speaks of is none other than a spiritually mature form of the mutual attraction of the sexes (see TB, 379).

4c. If a husband is truly to love his wife, “it is necessary to insist that intercourse must not serve merely as a means of allowing [his] climax. ...The man must take [the] difference between male and female reactions into account ...so that climax may be reached [by] both ...and as far as possible occur in both simultaneously.” The husband must do this “not for hedonistic, but for altruistic reasons.” In this case, if “we take into account the shorter and more violent curve of arousal in the man, [such] tenderness on his part in the context of marital intercourse acquires the significance of an act of virtue” (LR, 272, 275).

5. How Do We Live a Redeemed Marriage?

69-70
82-84
100-102

If the source of all of the problems of man and woman’s relationship is the fact that we have doubted God’s love for us and turned our back on him, then what would the solution be?

- We must (5) _____ to God. Christ’s first words of his public ministry were, “Repent and believe the good news!” (Mk 1:15).
- We must invite Christ into our lives as our Redeemer and allow him to convert our hearts. We must say “yes” to God’s marriage proposal.
- As members of the Church, we must submit to Christ as our Bridegroom, abandoning ourselves to his love for us and pledging our love to him in return.

This means spending time with Christ in daily *prayer*, getting to know him by reading his *word* and living a (6) _____ life.

- Living a sacramental life means embracing the faith we received in *Baptism*, being reconciled to Christ and his Church when we fall through *Confession*, and being fed each Sunday (and more often when possible) in the *Eucharist*.



POINTS TO PONDER

As C.S. Lewis once said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance; and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.” Following Christ is a radical call. Christ himself encouraged us to “count the cost” before beginning the journey (see Lk 14:28-33). But he also promised an eternal inheritance for those who “sold everything” to follow him. Ponder the following words of Christ. What bearing do they have on your future marriage?

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” (Lk 9:23-25).

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in heaven that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Lk 12:32-34).

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15).

Summary

What’s It Mean for Our Marriage?

- The *good news* of the Gospel is that Christ came into the world to restore God’s original plan for marriage. If we drink the “new wine” that Christ offers every married couple, we really can experience the love and happiness we long for.
- Living God’s plan for marriage does not mean following a long list of oppressive rules. To the degree that we allow Christ to transform our hearts, we experience “freedom from the law” – not as license to break God’s law, but as an interior yearning to live God’s plan for marriage to the full.
- Because of the selfish sting of original sin in each of us, marital love is in need of redemption, healing, transformation. Experiencing this transformation begins by entrusting our lives and our relationship entirely to Christ.



Private Reflection Exercise

Note on the Goal of this Exercise

Throughout this class you will be given opportunities such as this to reflect on various ideas and questions that are of importance to your relationship – first, individually, by writing in your workbook, and then by sharing what you’ve written with your fiancé(e). If you aren’t used to writing down your thoughts, you may find it doesn’t come easily at first. We encourage you to stick with it and just write down whatever comes to mind. Once you get started you’ll find it gets easier. This method of reflection has proven to be a very effective way of stimulating thoughtful communication on topics that sometimes remain inadequately addressed otherwise. This is your chance to address honestly some issues of the “heart”– your own heart, and the heart you share as a couple. It may take some effort, but it’s sure to pay off in the many ways it will help you grow in your love for and understanding of one another.

Honest Prayers

All of us are at different places in our relationship with God.

Hopefully one or more of the following prayers will be helpful to you in your situation.

Pick the prayer that most honestly expresses your heart and share why with your fiancée.



“**God, if you exist...**

Dear God, I don't even know if you exist. I feel strange even asking at the risk that I'm praying to nobody. If you're there, please hear my prayer. Please, somehow, let me know that you are real and that you love me. And teach me how to love you in return. Amen.

“**God, I know you're there, but...**

Dear God, I know you're there, but I'm afraid to surrender my life and our relationship to you. I'm afraid of what you might ask of me, what I may need to change or give up. If you are all-loving, I know I shouldn't be afraid, but I am. Forgive me. Give me the grace to trust you with my whole life and with our relationship. Amen.

“**God, I reaffirm my commitment to you...**

Dear God, thank you for the great gift of sharing in your love and your life. I reaffirm my commitment to you and ask you to draw me ever deeper into your infinite love. Jesus, you know I am not perfect. You know my failings, my weaknesses, and my sins. Yet you love me unconditionally. Help me so that my life might reflect that love more perfectly. I place my life and our entire relationship in your hands. Give us the grace to remain always faithful to you and to each other. Amen.

“**God, I give you my life...**

Dear God, I believe that you love me and desire only what is best for me. Jesus, since you came to give up your life for me, I, now, want to live my life for you. I'm sorry for the ways that I have turned from you in the past. I'm sorry for the ways that I have not let you into my life and into our relationship. Jesus, I believe that you died for me so that I could live a new life. I accept this great gift of your love, and from this day on, I want to live as you are calling me to live. Show me the way. I give you my whole life. I give you our relationship. Teach us what it means to love each other as you love us so that our marriage might be what you want it to be. Amen.

“**God, I recommit my life to you...**

Dear God, you know I once committed my life to you, but have fallen away. Forgive me for losing sight of your infinite love for me. Forgive me for choosing my own path instead of following you. I recommit my life to you. I give our entire relationship to you. Just as I desire to be faithful to my future spouse, I desire to be faithful to you. Lord, you know I am weak. Grant me the grace never to turn from you again. Thank you for welcoming me back into your arms. Amen.

What Are You Saying "I Do" to?

45-64

The Basics of Marriage in the Church

1. Defining Marriage

Since "God himself is the author of marriage" (CCC, n. 1603), we are not free to change it at will. Marriage is only marriage to the extent that it conforms to God's design for it.

1a. Marriage is the intimate, exclusive, indissoluble communion of life and love entered by man and woman at the design of the Creator for the purpose of their own good and the procreation and education of children; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament (see CCC, n. 1601 and CCL, can. 1055).

46-47

2. What Makes Marriage a Sacrament?

47-49

Sacraments are visible signs in the world that truly communicate God's invisible mystery of life and love to us. Sacraments, you might say, are where heaven and earth "kiss," where Christ becomes one with his Bride in and through our (1) _____.

The purpose of the sacraments is to unite us with Christ our Bridegroom in an eternal, life-giving bond of love. Marriage, then, is not only one of the seven sacraments, but, according to John Paul II, it is in some sense the (2) _____ of all the sacraments (see TB, 339).

2a. "The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism...is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist" (CCC, n. 1617).

The (3) _____ and _____ are the ministers of the sacrament of marriage which is brought about by the free exchange of consent (the wedding vows). The priest or deacon serves only as an official (4) _____ for the Church (see CCC, n. 1623).

50-52

For sacraments to be celebrated validly they must have proper "form" (this refers to the words spoken) and "matter" (the physical reality). The exchange of (5) _____ properly witnessed

NOTES

by the Church is the form, and the very (6) _____ of husband and wife make up the matter of the sacrament of marriage.

20 3. The Exchange of Consent

53

The priest or deacon will ask you three “Questions of Intention to Marry.” They are:

- *Have you come here **freely** and **without reservation** to give yourselves to each other in marriage? (Bride & groom respond “I have.”)*
- *Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the **rest of your lives**? (Bride & Groom respond “I will.”)*
- *Will you **accept children lovingly** from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church? (Bride & Groom respond “I will.”)*



POINTS TO PONDER

Is it possible for people to consent to these questions of intention to marry without meaning what they say? Would they still be married if they did?

50-54

Then the priest or deacon will say:

Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands and declare your consent before God and his Church.

You will then declare your consent:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/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.

4. The Definitive Expression of Married Love

20

Marriage is brought about by the free exchange of consent properly witnessed by the Church. However, marriage is not (7) _____ that is, perfected, sealed, and brought to completion – until the spouses...

- 4a. “...have performed between themselves in a human manner the conjugal act which is *per se* suitable for the generation of children” (CCL, can. 1061).



This technical definition from the *Code of Canon Law* is obviously not the most romantic way to talk about sex, but in our day of widespread sexual confusion, it's important to have a precise understanding of what does and does not consummate a marriage.

- Genital intercourse is called the “conjugal act” or the “marital embrace” because it’s the definitive expression of the marriage commitment. It’s a sign that encompasses and sums up the whole reality of the joining of two lives in marriage. 55
- When a husband and wife consummate their marriage, the “form” and “matter” of the sacrament are united. The words of the wedding vows become (8) _____.
- This means every time a husband and wife have sexual intercourse they’re meant to be expressing and (9) _____ their wedding vows. 87-91

4b. Marital “consent ...finds its fulfillment in the two ‘becoming one flesh’” (CCC, n. 1627).



POINTS TO PONDER

If sexual intercourse is the defining element of marital love, how might the definition of marriage be affected by a redefinition of sexual intercourse?

54-57
107-108

5. What Makes Marriage Valid?

Marriage is not something that automatically “happens” to a couple by virtue of going through the motions of a ceremony. Marriage only “happens” if a bride and groom validly minister the sacrament to each other. 50-58

- Numerous things can and sometimes do impede the valid celebration of a marriage. Thus, it’s very important to understand what makes a marriage valid and what might impede it from being so.
- A declaration of nullity, (commonly referred to as an “annulment”), is not a Catholic version of divorce, but an official statement that a valid marriage never, in fact, existed. Divorce, in the sense of ending a valid marriage, is always an impossibility.

NOTES

50-53

In order for a marriage to be validly established, bride and groom must:

- *not have any (10) _____ to marriage; See below...*
- *follow the proper (11) _____ of the sacrament;*

This means (unless a dispensation is granted) you must have your exchange of vows witnessed by an official minister of the Church and two other witnesses. It also means you cannot alter the vows. For example, you could not say, "I promise to be true to you in good times, but not bad ...and only for the next three years at which time we will re-evaluate."

- *have the proper capacity to exchange consent and do so (12) _____ and _____;*

This means if either party is hampered psychologically, or offers consent under fear or duress, or places any condition on the marriage (I'll only stay married if...), then marriage is not contracted.

- *consent to what the Church intends by marriage, that is: (13) _____, _____, and openness to _____.*

5a. "The Church holds the exchange of consent between the spouses to be the indispensable element that 'makes the marriage.' If consent is lacking there is no marriage" (CCC, n. 1626).

Impediments to marriage include (see CCL, cans. 1083-1094):

- men under age 16 and women under age 14;
- pre-existence of a valid marriage;
- persons bound by perpetual vows to remain celibate (e.g. priests and religious);
- persons who have brought about the death of their spouses in order to marry;
- persons who have abducted their fiancé(e) for the purpose of marriage;
- close relatives whether by blood or adoption;

- definitive and perpetual impotence (inability to consummate marriage).

**POINTS TO PONDER**

It's often said that sex isn't everything in a marriage. That's true in some sense. But why is the ability to have marital intercourse essential to the ability to marry?

*Summary.***What's It Mean for Our Marriage?**

- Getting married in the Catholic Church presupposes that you intend what the Catholic Church intends by marriage. That is, you intend to enter a Sacrament (if you are both baptized) and live, with God's help, the commitments of fidelity, indissolubility, and openness to children.
- Marriage takes place at the moment bride and groom exchange consent according to the form of the Church. Marital consent is brought to fulfillment when the spouses express the defining element of marriage in conjugal intercourse.
- Marriage does not happen "automatically." Various factors can and sometimes do impede the valid celebration of the sacrament. It is therefore extremely important that a couple understand what makes marriage valid in the eyes of the Church.



