

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

From the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council
(*Gaudium et Spes*, #48)

Husband and wife, by the consent of marriage, are no longer two, but one flesh. By their intimate union of persons and of actions they give mutual help and service to each other, experience the meaning of their unity, and gain an ever deeper understanding of it day by day.

The intimate union in the mutual self-giving of two persons, as well as the good of the children, demands full fidelity from both, and an indissoluble unity between them.

Christ the Lord has abundantly blessed this richly complex love, which springs from the divine source of love and is founded on the model of his union with the Church.

In earlier times God met his people in a covenant of love and fidelity. So now the Savior of mankind, the Bridegroom of the Church, meets the Christian husbands and wives in the sacrament of matrimony. Further, he remains with them in order that, as he loved the Church and gave himself up for her, so husband and wife may, in mutual self-giving, love each other with perpetual fidelity.

True marriage love is caught up into God's love; it is guided and enriched by the redeeming power of Christ and the saving actions of the Church in order that the partners may be effectively led to God and receive help and strength in the sublime responsibility of parenthood. Christian partners are therefore strengthened, and as it were consecrated, by a special sacrament for the duties and the dignity of their state. By the power of this sacrament they fulfill their obligations to each other and to their family and are filled with the spirit of Christ. This spirit pervades their whole lives with faith, hope and love. Thus they promote their own perfection and each other's sanctification, and so contribute together to the greater glory of God.

Hence, with parents leading the way by example and family prayer, their children indeed, all within the family circle— will find it easier to make progress in natural virtues, in salvation and in holiness. Husband and wife, raised to the dignity and the responsibility of parenthood, will be zealous in fulfilling their task as educators, especially in the sphere of religious education, a task that is primarily their own.

Children, as active members of the family, contribute in their own way to the holiness of their parents. With the love of grateful hearts, with loving respect and trust, they would return the generosity of their parents and will stand by them as true sons and daughters when they meet with hardship and the loneliness of old age.

SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Not Married in the Catholic Church?

All Catholics who plan to marry are called to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony through the Roman Catholic Church, in order to fulfill their ongoing sacramental life which begins with Baptism and continues in the Sacraments of Confirmations and Eucharist.

If a Catholic marries "outside the Church" that person sets himself or herself outside the sacramental life of the Church and is no longer permitted to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. That person, however, remains a Catholic and participates at Mass [without receiving Holy Communion] and in the life of the Church. In this situation, the married couple should contact a priest in order to receive the Sacrament of Marriage and have their marriage "blessed in the Church" and thereby continue in their sacramental life and return to the Eucharist.