

Matrimony

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE (MATRIMONY)

Weddings are beautiful celebrations initiating a life-long covenant relationship and commitment of marriage; an "I do" to an unknown future of self-sacrificing love encompassing both joyful and challenging moments. The sacrament of marriage unites two people, a man and a woman, who become one flesh in Christ. He is their "GPS" as they navigate through the crossroads of day to day living. Their bright future is in God's hands, accessible to them through commitment to family prayer.



Biblical References

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a



man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder (Matthew 19:4-6).

Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring. So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. "For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless" (Malachi 2:15-16).

Teaching of the Church

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; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799).

Necessity of Preparation

Careers require years of study. It is only common sense that the life-long vocation of marriage requires preparation. Therefore, the Church, in her wisdom, sets standards for the couple. The process is orientated toward specific circumstances whether for those never married or for those widowed, etc. Such effective preparations have contributed largely to the success of many marriages. We have parishioners who celebrate milestone wedding anniversaries – twenty-five, fifty, sixty and more years of marriage. Their witness to one another, their family, and the community is indeed a great blessing.

Solution to Marital Breakdown

Unfortunately, marriages sometimes fail. Some of those involved in failed marriages are not aware of what they can do to get back their faith life. Kindly refer to the teaching of the Church, from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, concerning this area below. It underlines why annulment should be sought by divorced persons, especially if they wish to remarry. Divorced and remarried persons, without any annulment granted by the Church, should begin the process for an annulment as soon as possible in order to receive the Sacraments properly.

From the very beginning of a marriage, circumstances may hinder a truly covenantal and sacramental relationship and an "annulment" is sought. An annulment is not a "church divorce," it has no bearing on prior civil decisions (No civil effects). Rather, an annulment involves a degree of healing from past hurts and allows one a certain freedom to pursue their faith.

Should you want more information about marriage or annulments, please call Ann Marie at 489-3643.

Biblical References

Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress (Romans 7:2-3). [Comment: Same applies to the husband]

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord (1Corinthians 7:39).

Teaching of the Church

Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil *divorce* and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ - "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. For the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities. Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, and who are committed to living in complete continence (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1650).

The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God as taught by Christ. They are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive Eucharistic communion. They will lead Christian lives especially by educating their children in the faith (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1665).