

Faith in 5 – Adults

The Vocation and Sacrament of Holy Matrimony



1. The Catholic Church recognizes marriage as a covenant: a sacred, life-long interpersonal promise made between a man and a woman. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses. With God's divine grace, the couple promises to build an intimate and sacramental partnership. It is directed toward the



good of the couple and the procreation and education of their children (CCC, 1601). The sacrament of Holy Matrimony is a vocation to serve. It is a call where man and woman “leave father and mother and (are) united ... and the two shall become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5). Christian marriage possesses four goods and requirements: unity, fidelity, indissolubility and openness to fertility (CCC 1643).

2. Christ has deemed holy matrimony a sacrament between two baptized people – a physical sign of a spiritual reality. “Like God’s love, marriage is a full and unreserved gift, freely given, faithfully lived, and open to the fruitfulness of new life. Because the bond of marriage is an image of God’s love, a love which is never ending, it is a bond that cannot be broken” ([Source](#)).
3. On the cross, Christ showed us that love seeks to give even when it hurts. Christian marriage is not an easy way of life, but a long path toward sanctification. All vocations are an invitation to discipleship, to take up our cross and follow Christ. It involves sacrifice, fruitfulness, and leading people to salvation. Marriage as a vocation goes beyond meeting the needs of the spouse.
4. “It all begins with “reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21)...out of love for Him, husbands and wives should submit to one another and give themselves up for each other as Jesus did for His bride, the Church. This inner attitude...is what elevates marriage to the level of a mystery, a sacrament; it is about the quality of love that goes into each relationship in the family” ([Source](#)). The quality of love that Christ shares is sacrificial, selfless, and consistently focused on the good of others. It is exquisitely described in [1 Corinthians 13: 4-7](#), where love is patient, kind, and perseveres.
5. The Catholic Church [requires couples to meet criteria](#) before considering the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. This includes one or both being baptized Catholics; if one is not Catholic, he or she needs to be a baptized Christian. If the non-Catholic partner wants to join the Church, they may go through the process of becoming a Catholic as an adult during the marriage preparation process. The couple must not be closely related, free to marry and freely consent to marriage; they should be of the opposite sex, since the Church only recognizes marriage between a man and a woman.

6. Just as the vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, the call to marriage involves a process of discernment. The call to marriage is deeper than a romantic attraction. The discernment should allow the cooperation of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of the decision making towards marriage – finances, children, and home life.

Time in prayer with the Lord for guidance is essential. A couple should ask and expect to treat each other as a child of God with respect and love. If Christ is truly the center of the relationship, the driving force will always be God's Will first. Even if the discernment process for marriage is flawed, or when marriage becomes difficult, God will give the sacramental grace to live out the vocation in love.

7. Marriage is an act open to all people, created by God. Unfortunately, it does not have to be sacred to exist. The dwindling numbers of Christian marriages may be a result of the lack of commitment or understanding of the vocation, and growing secularization and individualism. [Cohabitation before marriage](#) is not to be confronted, condemned or ignored, but addressed by the Church with pastoral support and sensitivity.

Marriage preparation is an opportunity for evangelization and catechesis, an opportunity to help couples understand the Catholic vision of marriage. The Church want couples to be well prepared for this sacrament. Dioceses and parishes offer marriage preparation to help couples develop a better understanding of the sacrament; to evaluate and deepen their readiness to live married life, and to gain insights into themselves as individuals and as a couple. Couples should contact their local parish six to nine months before the anticipated wedding date to begin the marriage preparation process.

8. The whole expression and meaning of marriage are present and signified in each marital act of intercourse. Contraception is viewed by the Church as a deliberate intervening, separating the unitive and procreative purpose of marriage. Natural methods of family planning respect God's design for married love and support responsible parenthood.
9. It takes real effort to make marriage a holy vocation in line with God's Will. Cooperating with the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony means:
 - a. Understanding love as a choice and a gift of self.
 - b. Embracing the challenge to love one's spouse more selflessly every day.
 - c. Accepting and receiving the love of one's spouse as a blessing and gift.
 - d. Expanding spousal love into generous family love that is open to life, giving up freely personal aspirations for the sake of the family.
 - e. Being a role model, showing children what it means to love. Demonstrating acts of kindness and respect towards spouse and neighbor are important for children to witness.
10. Preserving the commitment to marriage starts with the decision that both husbands and wives draw near to the grace of God that brought them together. If the spouse is a non-believer, the believing spouse should continue to adhere to the faith and teachings, while still loving and praying for the other. Striving to live an exemplary life of holiness and virtue is done out of patience and love, and should not make the non-believer feel pressured, ashamed or guilty.

- a. Practice the faith together: weekly Mass, daily prayer and the rosary, regular confession, frequent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
 - b. Continually saying yes to the vows made, being faithful to them, deepening one's unwavering commitment and striving to give oneself to one's spouse in the same way that Christ gave Himself to the Church.
 - c. Couples should spend time with each other. This means time alone together, away from the distractions of children and family life.
 - d. Seek professional help or spiritual support and direction when necessary.
 - e. View Heather's A Catholic Mom's Life YouTube Videos on her [vocation to marriage](#), [Holiness in Marriage](#) and [being virtuous in marriage](#).
11. National Marriage Week USA and World Marriage Day provide an opportunity for the Catholic Church to focus on and celebrate the vocation to marriage and family life. [The observances of National Marriage Week](#) (Feb. 7-14) and World Marriage Day, (commemorated on the second Sunday of February) are an opportunity to focus on building a culture of life and love that begins with supporting and promoting marriage and the family.



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