

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA Matrimony

“For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:29–32)

Insight

What married couple do you know that exemplifies the holiness of marriage?

The coffee was made, and the newspaper had been brought into the house. It was time to continue with the morning routine. Bill sighed as he walked into the bedroom to wake up his wife, Arlene. She was suffering from an acute form of dementia. She didn’t really know Bill anymore, even though they had been married for 42 years. He was simply that “nice man” who took care of her.

Arlene trusted him, and they managed in spite of her condition. Bill looked tenderly upon his wife, “Come on, honey. It’s time to get up!” He took the brush from the dressing table and brushed Arlene’s hair—something she could no longer do for herself. Together, they began their day.

For Reflection . . .

The consent given and received between two spouses in marriage is sealed by God himself.

What are the qualities and virtues spouses need to maintain their marital relationship?

What do you see in society as the biggest threat to the sanctity of marriage?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1601–1666

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 277–292

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 337–350

Church Teaching

Marriage in God’s Plan

Love is our origin. Love is our constant calling. Love is our fulfillment in Heaven. Marriage thus finds its authorship in God. The vocation of marriage, woven into the complementary nature of man and woman, comes from our Creator. The mutual love of husband and wife bears the imprint of God’s divine love.

The Celebration of Marriage

A marriage is established by the marriage covenant, the irrevocable consent that the spouses freely offer to and receive from each other. A man and woman who are not constrained by any coercion or grave external fear are considered free to bestow this consent on each other.

This free consent is expressed in their vows, the “I do,” where the man and woman identify and accept each other as husband and wife throughout all circumstances and situations from that point forward in life until death parts them. In other words, the husband and wife are the celebrants of the Sacrament. The ordained minister who presides receives the consent of the couple on behalf of the Church and blesses their union. His presence and that of the witnesses visibly underscores the ecclesial reality of marriage.

The Grace Bestowed by the Sacrament

The Sacrament of Matrimony enriches and strengthens the couple so that they might help one another fulfill the duties of marriage, attain holiness, and be open to, welcome, and raise children. Christ provides these graces so that a married couple is enabled to shoulder the crosses of this life, follow the Lord, and rise again when they have fallen—forgiving each other, bearing one another’s burdens, and reverencing each other with a tender and fruitful love.