

# MARRIAGE IN CHRIST

## 2

### Why Marry?

**M**OST PEOPLE, being rational animals, have reasons for what they want to do. Sometimes these reasons are mere excuses for sheerly willful actions; sometimes they are well thought out motivations for wise decisions. A young man will tell you very seriously why he wants to become a priest, doctor, engineer, writer, mechanic, or carpenter. He will give you equally valid reasons for not choosing any of the other career possibilities. A young woman will tell you why she thinks she would like to be a nun, airline stewardess, model, nurse, or secretary. She can convincingly refute your suggestions that she enter a field other than the one she has chosen. How strange it is that so many otherwise rational young people cannot answer the question: "Why do you want to marry?" Though they can expatiate on the pros and cons of a career in the Navy, to this question they can only stammer: "But we love each other!"

Even after searching thought, young couples often have few really good answers. Desire for happiness, success, security, companionship, sex, parenthood, social approval, fear of loneliness, failure, and unhappiness all enter vaguely into their reasons. Yet they cannot tell you how marriage will answer these needs with the same clarity with which they can explain their choice of a career.

The inability of young people to give reasons for entering marriage is not surprising. Marriage is a rather universal phenomenon, so universal that marrying has become "the thing to do." Whatever is so universally done, is frequently done with little thought. Nevertheless, it is most important for you to pause and ask yourself: "Why do I want to marry?"

*Marriage a Vocation.* As you examine all your conscious and unconscious reasons for entering wedlock, you should gradually become aware that marriage is a real vocation to holiness. This idea might surprise many people—most of us have grown accustomed to thinking of the priestly or religious life as the only *real vocation*. Though it is true that the priestly and religious callings

are special and extraordinary vocations, marriage and a calling to the single state outside the cloister are also vocations. The fact that most people are called by God to marriage and family life does not make this any less true; everyone has a call or vocation to holiness.

Your first calling was the creative act which called you into existence. In His eternal contemplation of Himself, God sees literally an infinite number of ways in which He could be reflected outside Himself. When, in time, He chose one of these possibilities, His choice became the creative act which brought you into existence. Your existence is, therefore, not only the result of the love exerted between your parents but, more importantly, of the love which God has for a special way He wishes to be loved outside Himself. You are called by Him to give an answer, to fill out the plan which He has for you.

Even if you have an identical twin, you are unique. You have the set of capabilities, the combination of strengths and weaknesses, that set you apart from every other human being who ever lived or who ever will live. There never has been nor will there ever be another you. And yet you share a common human nature with the rest of mankind. Your unique personality is colored by your masculinity or femininity, the circumstances of time and place within which you find yourself, the family within which you were born, the friends you make, the people you meet. Your response to each varying circumstance which God permits you to meet is another little answer to the "call" which God gives you.

Though God has called you out of nothingness to reflect some slight facet of His perfection back to Him, He has given you your being only in seed, not in a complete and perfect state. You did not start your existence as adults, only as a single cell. You have now multiplied that single physical reality billions of times; you have developed all your physical talents to maturity. You began with a single appetite for self-preservation; now you have diffused that appetite in hundreds of directions toward the satisfaction of your needs for pleasure, food and drink, curiosity, love. You are now busy choosing one avenue, discarding another, in an effort to achieve completion, happiness, and success.

By this time you have begun to discover that the satisfaction of your own needs is not enough. You have an inner urge to give what you have received, to create something outside of your-

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements carefully, then place an "X" in the box following the word or phrase which best completes the statement. Mark only one box for each statement. Each correct answer is worth five points.

1. Marriage is an agreement to work together for \_\_\_\_\_ happiness and sanctification in the service of God.  
 individual       mutual       worldly       physical
2. God is the Creator of marriage because he created the differences between \_\_\_\_\_  
 the sexes       the sacraments       man and animal       night and day
3. When two people enter marriage, they agree to strive for their \_\_\_\_\_ together.  
 fortune       fame       children       perfection
4. The two basic characteristics of Christian marriage are unity and \_\_\_\_\_  
 companionship       indissolubility       parenthood       equality
5. In choosing the vocation of marriage, one seeks perfection by \_\_\_\_\_ his natural sexual powers.  
 limiting       transcending       exercising       exploiting
6. The family established in marriage is a cell of the \_\_\_\_\_ within which new members are developed and trained in God's service.  
 parish       nation       neighborhood       Mystical Body
7. St. Paul sums up Catholic doctrine by saying marriage between \_\_\_\_\_ is the symbol of Christ's union with His Church.  
 Christians       man and woman       faiths       lovers
8. Marriage is a special contract differing from all others in that the partners can determine \_\_\_\_\_ conditions to limit the contract.  
 certain       special       no special       any
9. The minister of the Sacrament of Matrimony is \_\_\_\_\_  
 the couple       the priest       the witnesses       the state
10. St. Augustine did not hesitate to address fathers of families as "My dear fellow \_\_\_\_\_."  
 Africans       priests       Christians       bishops
11. As a sacrament conferring divine grace, marriage \_\_\_\_\_ your natural inclinations to love and serve others.  
 limits       changes       strengthens       overcomes

POSSIBLE SCORE

55

MINUS  ERRORS X 5 \_\_\_\_\_

SUB-SCORE II \_\_\_\_\_

SUB-SCORE I \_\_\_\_\_

SUB-SCORE II \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

self. You have begun to change the world in which you live, to serve the needs of others, to devote yourself to someone's perfection.

All your appetites for satisfaction, your hopes and dreams for success, your urges to give yourself in love, are so many attempts to answer the call of God which brought you out of nothingness and which urges you to search Him out. You may not always be aware of this but, just as a flower lifts up its head to the sun and the rain falls to earth, you are consciously or unconsciously searching to find your vocation to love God. The whole problem of the challenge of life is to sort out the many possibilities of satisfying your appetites and of devoting yourself in loving service so that you can choose only those fulfillments that God has designed uniquely for you. Insofar as you achieve what He has willed, you will answer His call and, in the answering, reach the happiness you naturally desire.

*Three States in Life.* Though every human being is unique and will have experiences and make choices at least slightly different from every other unique human being, there are three general roads which can be followed in answering God's call. These three roads are named the three states of life. You can enter the celibate state in clergy or cloister, you can remain a dedicated single person, you can enter the married state. You must choose one of these three roads. Your choice will depend upon your natural inclinations, the circumstances in which you find yourself, the influence and advice of people who have entered into your life. But, when all has been said and done, you should choose one of these states because you are convinced that it is God's will for you to achieve your happiness and holiness in that state. To the question, "Why do I want to marry," the final answer must be, "Because it is the vocation in which God wishes me to know, love, and serve Him."

## The Meaning of Life

**M**ARRIAGE IS a way of life, a life-calling or vocation. As such, it can be understood adequately only in terms of the meaning of life itself. When you marry, you freely choose one of the various ways God has designed for achieving the purpose of life.

*The Purpose of Life.* What is this purpose? As you were taught from childhood, "Man was made to know, love, and serve God in this world, and so to be happy with Him forever in the next." This simple answer implies several important points. First, although we are redeemed and permanently dedicated to Christ through baptism, we must work out our salvation in space and time. Our perfection as human persons is not a static quality, given and achieved once and for all. It is a growing process, gradually developing while we pass through life. As Pope Pius XII reminded us, "The total gift of oneself to God is unquestionably a spiritual act; but it must be validated in the reality of human life, over a period of hours, days, and years."

Further, we must strive for perfection in God's service by developing the gifts, talents, and faculties He has given us; as space-bound, social beings, we must do this under the conditions and circumstances in which we happen to have been born. Men and women of all nations, regions, and social surroundings have the same ultimate purpose in life, but they must work to achieve it under different circumstances and with varied abilities and talents.

Third, there is no opposition between striving for perfection in God's service and your desire for love, companionship, and happiness in marriage. In creating you man and woman, God gave you this desire and showed that He wanted you to serve Him in this way. Marriage, lived according to His plan, will develop your finest capacities for love, sacrifice, and service. The more you love each other, work together throughout life, and are truly happy, the more you will bring out the different abilities and talents He has given you, and the more you will grow as the persons He made you. This is what it means to serve God.

**MARRIAGE AND THE PURPOSE OF LIFE**

*Perfection.* It follows that whatever else marriage may mean to you, first and foremost it must be regarded as a way of life leading to your fulfillment as a person. To strive for Christian perfection in the knowledge, love, and service of God will assure the fulfillment of your purpose in life. When you enter marriage, you agree to strive for your perfection together. What does this mean in practice? In the words of Pope Pius XI, it implies that day by day you will help each other advance in virtue by growing in true love towards God and your neighbor. Your

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

**Marriage in Christ**

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements carefully. If a statement is true, mark an "X" in the box at the left labelled "true." If it is false, mark an "X" in the box at the left labelled "false." Each correct answer is worth three points.

- |                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| TRUE<br>→<br><input type="checkbox"/> | FALSE<br>→<br><input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Though priestly and religious callings are special vocations, marriage and a calling to the single state are also true vocations.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 2. Marriage can be understood adequately only in terms of the meaning of life.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 3. There is no opposition between striving for perfection in God's service and the desire for love and companionship in marriage.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 4. Marriage is primarily the dedication of the spouses to the service of one another.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 5. Even though a man and woman contract marriage by themselves, the institution of wedlock is not man-made.                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 6. Either parents, or civil, or church authority can contract a marriage for an individual man or woman.                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 7. The essential nature of the marriage contract is determined by man as well as God.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 8. When a man and woman receive the Sacrament of Matrimony they are consecrated for a special work in society.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 9. The secondary purposes of marriage are mutual help and a remedying of concupiscence.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 10. There can be no marriage between rightly baptized persons which is not also a sacrament.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 11. The effectiveness of the Sacrament of Matrimony is limited to the moment when the contract is made.                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 12. The purpose of Christian parenthood is to fill the earth with adorers of God and fill Heaven with Saints.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 13. If some tragedy befalls you in marriage, that marriage need not endure but may be broken in legal divorce with a right to remarry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 14. Because marriage involves a total dedication of self to love of partner, it is an abnormal school of perfection.                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               | 15. As a state in life, marriage strikes at the very root of evil in the heart of man.   |

POSSIBLE SCORE

45

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MINUS

ERRORS X 3

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

SUB-SCORE I

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

### Who bestows the Sacrament of Marriage?

Elizabeth Simms and her husband, Richard, both devout Quakers, are converted to the Catholic faith and receive unconditional baptism. Elizabeth now wonders whether they have received the *sacrament* of matrimony at the time of their baptism or whether, in order to receive it, they must now renew their matrimonial consent.

model is Christ, "that most perfect example of holiness." Your aim is "by God's grace to arrive at the summit of perfection," a goal is subordinated to this, they will hinder and limit goals are subordinated to this, they will hinder and limit your true happiness and fulfillment.

The encyclical of Pope Pius XI *On Christian Marriage* stresses this relationship between marriage and your purpose in life.

This mutual inward moulding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.

The supremacy of this purpose follows from your importance as human persons, as children of God. The Church's great theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, tells us, "The person is that which is most noble and perfect in all nature." In relation to your primary purpose in life, therefore, all other purposes are secondary or instrumental. Through baptism you are called to be saints. By choosing marriage as your way of life, you likewise choose the conditions under which you will strive for perfection together.

### What Is Marriage?

CONSIDERED FROM the viewpoint of your purpose in life, therefore, marriage is a way or a means. But as you are well aware, it is a very special, clearly defined means. Stated briefly, when you enter marriage, you agree to work together for your mutual happiness and sanctification in the service of God by dedicating yourselves *to the service of new life*. Thus you seek a double fulfillment in marriage. First, as human persons, representing two distinct images of God, you aid each other in working out your two vocations in His service. Second, as masculine and feminine persons, representing two sexually incomplete but essentially complementary possibilities of human nature, you give yourselves to each other in a mutually perfecting reproductive union.

It is because marriage provides this second fulfillment that it is distinguished from all other forms of human society or association. Like all persons, you are called to perfection in the knowledge, love and service of God. But in choosing the vocation of marriage, you

seek this perfection by exercising your natural sexual powers, the very use of which places you in a special relationship to each other as partners and parents and to God as procreators. These relationships define the framework within which you, as husband and wife, must work out your salvation as persons.

As we shall point out, marriage may be considered under many different aspects. However, if you recognize that it is primarily your dedication to the service of new life, you will have grasped its essential meaning. In a sense, when you receive the sacrament of matrimony, you are consecrated, that is, set aside for a special work in society and within the Church. The family you hope to establish is not only the cradle of the race, it is a cell of the Mystical Body of Christ within which new members are developed and trained in the service of God. Hence marriage enables you to share both in the creative act of God and in the redemptive work of Christ. Is it any wonder that the Church speaks so highly of your vocation to marriage?

### GOD IS ITS FOUNDER

Thus far we have been taking an overall view of marriage, trying to set it in the total context of life and to show how it is related to your personal perfection in the service of God. Let us now take a closer look at what it is in itself. The first point to be noted is that marriage is not a man-made institution. God Himself is its Author. This implies that it's not up to you to decide what marriage should mean. You are free to enter marriage or not, you are free to pick your marriage partner—as you have already done—but if you marry, you must accept marriage as the Creator planned it.

Pope Pius XI reminds us of this truth in his encyclical *On Christian Marriage*:

Matrimony was not instituted or restored by man but by God; not by man were the laws made to strengthen and confirm and elevate it but by God, the Author of Nature, and by Christ our Lord by whom nature was redeemed, and hence these laws cannot be subject to any human decrees or to any contrary pact even of the spouses themselves.

And a little further, he adds:

The sacred partnership of true marriage is constituted both by the will of God and the will of man; from God comes the very institution of marriage, the ends for which it was instituted, the laws that govern it, the blessings that flow from it, while men,

sexual aspect is brought under the order of reason and consequently into the service of God. As a manifestation of love, the marital act is freed from selfishness; as the fulfillment of a divine command in the sacramental state, it is elevated to an act of religion. Only in marriage can the expression of the sexual drive be elevated by love and thus achieve its purpose as a means of personal perfection.

*Elimination of Capital Sins.* But marriage also helps you follow the order of reason in pursuing your life-goals once you have seen them clearly. The chief sources of moral deviation in our actions can be summarized under seven headings called by theologians the seven capital sins. By shifting the center of attention from narrow preoccupation with self to the love and service of others, marriage attacks these sources of sin at their very origin. All true love tends to be unselfish, but marital love, consummated in the procreative union, almost automatically develops into the selflessness of parenthood. Because marriage necessarily involves a personal, total, and definitive dedication of self to the love and service of the partner, children, and God, married life becomes a normal school of Christian perfection for husband and wife. At the same time, as a sacrament conferring divine grace, it strengthens your natural inclination to love and serve others by providing the supernatural aid required to overcome all obstacles.

Thus marriage offers you the opportunity to develop your finest qualities as Christian husband and wife. The Creator planned it for this purpose. As Pope Pius XI expressed it in *On Christian Marriage*:

No one can fail to admire the Divine wisdom, holiness and goodness which, while respecting the dignity and happiness of husband and wife, has provided so bountifully for the conservation and propagation of the human race by the single chaste and sacred fellowship of nuptial union.

### Cases for Discussion

How can husband and wife work for each other's sanctification?

We were told at marriage that religion was one of the most important forces binding us together in life. Our pastor spoke very beautifully about the obligations of husbands and wives to work for each other's sanctification. Since we've been married, however, we're not so sure what all this really means. How can we bring religion more fully into our marriage?

Furthermore, children join you directly to the mission of the Church, for by their instruction, guidance and training from the cradle to maturity you are forming Christ in them. (Cf. THE APOSTOLIC FAMILY.)

## MARRIAGE AND PERFECTION

We started our discussion by saying that marriage was a way of life leading to perfection. How does marriage positively aid in your mutual sanctification? Much of what we have written thus far answers that question, but there is a further consideration which is pertinent here. As a state of life, marriage strikes at the very root of evil in the heart of man. How is this possible? Briefly, all men possess a natural desire for happiness. As St. Augustine explains it: "Our hearts are made for God, and we can find rest only if we rest in Him." Unfortunately, men tend to misunderstand the true nature of their desires. They focus their craving for the infinite on something short of God—on power, wealth, or physical pleasure. This explains their energy and also their constant frustration. These lesser goals are not evil in themselves, but, in relation to man's purpose in life, they are only means or instruments.

*Right Order.* Christian perfection requires that, in your search for power, wealth, and physical pleasure, you follow the order of reason. This means that you observe right order in setting up your goals and in pursuing your life activities. Now, by its very nature, marriage is divinely planned to aid you in this two-fold task.

In the first place, marriage clarifies your chief purpose in life. You are made to know, to love, and to serve God. All other life-purposes are subordinate to this. When you choose the vocation of marriage, you enter a life-partnership with each other in order to serve God by cooperating with Him in bearing and rearing children, should He will to send them. Hence in Christian Marriage, your search for power, wealth, and physical pleasure is necessarily subordinated to the needs of the family, and consequently to the service of God. The sharing of labor required to maintain a home, including your need for mutual aid and service throughout life, necessarily directs your interests and energy into unselfish channels.

*Direction of Passion.* In the same manner, your normal drive for physical pleasure becomes rightly ordered through marriage. In addition to the restrictions and limitations its expression undergoes because of the demands of mutual service and aid, its directly

through the generous surrender of their persons one to another for the whole span of life, become, with the help and cooperation of God, the authors of each particular marriage, with the duties and blessings annexed thereto from Divine institution."

Now just what do we mean when we say that God instituted marriage? We mean that God Himself is the Creator of the specific differences between the sexes. He is the Author of the powerful inclination which leads them toward marital companionship. He has decreed that the propagation of the human race is to be effected by the sexual union of man and woman. Furthermore, in specifying the manner of human reproduction, the Creator likewise decreed the very nature of marriage. For procreation not only requires the union of husband and wife, but the character of the newborn child is such that it requires the protection and guidance of both parents during many years. Hence there must be some form of stable union between husband and wife, the establishment of a home, and mutual assistance in supplying personal and family needs—economic, social, educational, and so forth. In other words, God is the Author of marriage because He created human nature as it is.

*Sacred Scripture.* The Old Testament describes most beautifully how God is the Author of marriage.

And God said, "Let us make mankind in our image and likeness . . .

God created man in his image.

In the image of God he created him.

Male and female he created them.

Then God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. . . ." (Genesis 1:26-28.)

After the summary of the creation, Scripture repeats the invention in greater detail:

Then the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. . . . (Genesis 2:7.)

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that man is alone; I will make him a helper like himself." (Genesis 2:18.)

The Lord God cast the man into a deep sleep and, while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib which the Lord God took from the man, he made into a woman, and brought her to him. Then the man said,

"She now is bone of my bone,

and flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman,

for from man she has been taken."

For this reason a man leaves his father and mother, and clings to his wife and the two become one flesh. (Genesis 2:21-24.)

## MARRIAGE—CONTRACT AND INSTITUTION

*Contract.* As we pursue our analysis of marriage further, we notice that the term is used to signify two different things. For example, we say, "Their marriage was scheduled for ten o'clock at the main altar in the Cathedral." Used in this way, the term *marriage* signifies the act of making the *contract* and the ceremonial acts related to it. But we also say, "Their marriage has been very happy." Here the term stands for married life, the state or society resulting from living out the contract.

This distinction is obvious, but it reminds us that marriage can be considered both as a contract and as a state of life established by the contract. Let us take a good look at the formal definitions of these two aspects since they tell us in clear terms what marriage is. How do we define the marriage contract? Briefly, it is a legitimate agreement between a man and a woman conferring the mutual, exclusive, and perpetual right both to acts which are of their very nature proper for begetting children, and to the sharing of life together.

In other words, when you make this agreement, you place yourselves in what may be called a reproductive state, that is, a way of life suitable for the fitting procreation and education of children. The gift and acceptance of marriage rights necessarily implies that you share life together and establish a "home," a little domestic society, in which, through love, warm affection, mutual service and cooperation, you supply the conditions needed for the normal development of the little ones who are your children and also children of God. Hence marriage, considered as a contract, is the agreement which binds you to each other for the purpose of carrying out all the requirements involved in bearing and rearing children.

The marriage contract is a special kind of contract. The consent to this contract is absolutely personal and no human power can supply this consent. Neither parents nor civil nor church authority can contract for the individual man and woman. Free and knowing consent of both parties must be given or there is no marriage.

Marriage is further a special contract differing from all others in that the partners can determine no special conditions to the contract. God alone sets the essential nature of this contract. The parties may freely contract marriage or not, but they are not free to change the nature of the contract they consent to.

be like oneself, because companionship implies equality. It was to be different from self because as a helpmate this "other" was to supply what was lacking in the individual. This difference we know as sex, a difference which may be broadly characterized as manliness and womanliness, and which is rooted in the fact that men and women have different generative systems and consequently different roles in the process of bearing and rearing children.

*Husband and Wife.* In marriage, you complete each other as husband and wife by sharing these differences. A woman has her own way of showing affection, looking at beauty, truth, at life in general—yes, even at religion, for we come to God as we are. A man likewise, by training and nature, has his distinctive approach to life. In the intimate, life-companionship of marriage, each tends to "condition" and perfect the other. This perfecting process is enduring—through joy and sorrow, success and failure, health and sickness, to the serene inactivity of old age, husband and wife are "good" for each other as the Creator planned it. (Cf. MAN AND WIFE.)

*Parenthood.* The fullness of masculinity and femininity is to be found in fatherhood and motherhood. Parenthood supplies the widest scope for your mutual development and human fulfillment. Married love is by its very nature creative and productive, growing both inward to the couple and, beyond them, to their extension in the child. According to the divine plan, the marital act itself is typical of this shared creativity. By giving yourselves completely to each other in the act and contributing the co-principles of life which you bear within you, you both share in the creation of new life if the Creator blesses your union with a child. While the wife nourishes this extension of her husband within her during the period of gestation, he provides for her care. Because the child she bears is the expression of their mutual love, she yearns for the day when she can present it to him and share its nurture and training with him. (Cf. PARENTHOOD.)

The entire process of parenthood is developmental. As parents you will find your lives stimulatingly enlarged and extended in your children, for through love, sympathy, and understanding, you will live vicariously in each one. Likewise, children will draw you into the wider life of the community, extending your interests in school, church, and neighborhood, and effectively motivating you to fulfill your wider obligations as members of the Church and as citizens.



in the structure of his Church. In your lives as partners and as parents you will be witnesses to Him before the world. Through the home which you will establish, the Church takes root in society, and Christ continues His saving mission in time and in space. This will be possible only if you recognize that you are ministers and instruments of divine grace and love to each other, only if you regard your home as a vital extension of the Church, through which Christ sanctifies His members. Thus the sacrament penetrates every facet of your married lives. Your mutual love and devotion, dedicated to the service of new life, becomes the sign of your love and devotion to Christ and His Church. Even the expressions of your most human emotions, impulses, and drives, together with the pleasures normally associated with them, receive their meaning and their direction from this sacrament.

*Christian Parenthood.* Holy Marriage also makes parenthood a spiritual reality. Fatherhood and motherhood become sublime. St. Augustine does not hesitate to address fathers of families as "My dear fellow bishops" and goes on to say:

Each and every one of you have in the home the bishop's office, to see to it that neither his wife nor his son nor his daughter nor even his servant fall away from truth. For they are bought with a great price.

Motherhood, too, advances to a supernatural plane. Though a husband is to exemplify and imitate the Fatherhood of God, a wife must recreate the motherhood of the Church in concern for the extension of Christ's Body to full maturity in her children, and to make them virtuous and holy members of the Christian community. St. Francis De Sales says: "The purpose of Christian parenthood is to fill the earth with adorers of God and to fill Heaven with Saints."

## Marriage and Human Fulfillment

SINCE YOUR sacramental life in marriage is not lived in a social vacuum, and does not imply that you cease to develop as human persons, it may be helpful to consider how marriage is designed to promote your human fulfillment. The Bible tells us that, in the beginning, the Creator said, "It is not good for man to be alone." God thus indicated that there was something incomplete in the individual. Fulfillment required another. This other was to

Finally, the words of consent are meaningless unless the will consents. All the exterior ceremony and ritual will not make a marriage contract. Only interior and willing consent, shown exteriorly so that the consent will be publicly witnessed, make a marriage.

*Institution.* When we consider marriage as an *institution* or state of life, therefore, we are talking about the domestic society which results from living out the conditions specified in the contract. This is technically defined as the legitimate union or society of a man and woman for the purposes of generating and educating offspring, and for mutual aid and companionship. In other words, it is a society which is suitable for fulfilling the obligations you assume in making the contract.

You may wonder why we have spent so much time distinguishing between marriage as a contract and marriage as an institution. Divorce is so prevalent in American society that there has been some tendency to emphasize only certain aspects of the marriage contract; namely, its permanency and indissolubility—Catholics cannot get a divorce and remarry! By emphasizing the state of life which results from the contract, we have called attention to your positive obligation to develop and supply all those human qualities and conditions which are needed to fulfill your agreement. In other words, it serves as a reminder that you bind yourselves to make the practical adjustments and adaptations normally required to lead a happy, successful married life together.

### PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

It may simplify our analysis if, for the time, we drop from our consideration of marriage as a *sacrament* and concentrate on its purposes as a *natural* institution. Since God is the Author of marriage, let us ask ourselves what God intended when He created man "male and female," and blessed marriage as the union of "two in one flesh," saying, "increase and multiply." Our discussion of marriage as a contract and as an institution has already indicated its purposes. Briefly, the chief or primary purpose of marriage is to provide for the fitting procreation and education of children. Related to this primary purpose, and subordinated to it, is a two-fold secondary purpose: mutual help and the relief or remedying of concupiscence.

Although these purposes should be self-evident to anyone who stops to think about them, misunderstanding and confusion have arisen in the past from a tendency to emphasize one aspect or one purpose at the expense of the others. Hence it may be worthwhile to explain them in some detail.

*Procreation and education.* In the first place, it should be noted that the chief purpose is *procreation and education*. In the Creator's plan, marriage was designed not only for the fitting generation of children, but it was also to provide what we might call a social womb in which they could be nurtured, protected, instructed, trained, and guided until they reached maturity. Animals are sufficiently mature to fend for themselves not long after birth. Human beings need many years to reach such maturity. We must look upon the primary purpose (procreation-education) as *one* process unfolding for years. Consequently, it demands long years of parental love, service, and sacrifice. In marriage you dedicate yourselves to the service of new life. The *one* primary purpose of marriage is the entire process of childbearing and childrearing.

*Mutual Help.* Furthermore, it is this primary purpose which distinguishes marriage from all other possible associations between men and women. This does not mean, however, that the secondary purposes are not important. These are real purposes of marriage as the Creator planned it. The term *secondary* merely tells us how these purposes are related to the primary purpose. In other words, the term, *secondary*, signifies that "mutual help" and the "remedy for concupiscence" are purposes which exist because of "procreation and education," and are so designed that this primary purpose can be more easily and fully achieved. They are consequently subordinated to it, and though they may have considerable importance to the individual couple, they do not constitute the primary purpose of marriage considered in itself.

*Remedy for Concupiscence.* It also follows that the marital act is subordinate to the primary purpose of marriage. Although the marriage contract gives you both equal rights to this act, its proper use is subordinated to the primary purpose of marriage. This means that if you choose to perform the act, you must respect its natural physiological process and place no contraceptive obstacle to hinder its possible fruitfulness. It also signifies that the act is not to be used merely to satisfy the selfish desire of one partner, but, considered as an act of mutual love and affection, its purpose

do they give themselves to each other, but that they also are ministers of a sacrament which brings with it all the supernatural reality and helps to their union!

## THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENT

Like all the sacraments, marriage gives you an increase of sanctifying grace, rendering you more pleasing to God. It likewise confers special graces enabling you to live up to your high vocation as Christian spouses. In *On Christian Marriage*, Pope Pius XI explains this point of doctrine as follows:

By the very fact, therefore, that the Faithful with sincere mind give such consent, they open up for themselves a treasure of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their tasks and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly even unto death. Hence this Sacrament not only increases sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle (*obex*) in its way; but it adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers in such a way that the parties are assisted not only in understanding but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties. It gives them, in fine, a right to the actual assistance of grace, whensoever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.

Stated briefly, this sacrament sanctifies and strengthens you for the duties and the dignity of your vocation as marriage partners and parents. This sacrament brings with it remedies for the weakness of human nature, even for the weaknesses suffered through the personal faults of the partners. It also brings God's inspiration to husband and wife for knowing the right answers and acting according to them. Its effectiveness in conferring grace is not confined to the moment when you make the contract. The bond which unites you remains an efficacious sign of grace as long as it endures. In this respect, St. Robert Bellarmine compares it to the Eucharist: "Because it is a Sacrament like that of the Eucharist, which not only when it is being conferred, but also whilst it remains, is a Sacrament; for as long as the married parties are alive, so long is their union a Sacrament of Christ and the Church."

You may find it difficult at this time to grasp the full significance of these sacramental graces for your future happiness and success. Remember, when Christ unites you for life in the Sacrament of Matrimony, He expects your home to become a new, creative cell

union of husband and wife becomes the effective instrument through which Christ confers grace upon Christian spouses. Thus, as husband and wife, you are instruments of Christ's grace to each other.

Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water by means of the word; in order that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish. Even thus ought husbands also to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife, loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh; on the contrary he nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ also does the Church (because we are members of his body, made from his flesh and from his bones). (Ephesians 5:21-30.)

It will help to understand this mysterious sacrament described by St. Paul if you recall that at Baptism you were consecrated a member of Christ's Mystical Body. This involves your personal and total dedication of self to Christ. The Sacrament of Matrimony involves your personal and total dedication to your spouse. Now, in Christian marriage, there is no opposition between these two bonds, because the bond of human love between spouses becomes a sign or symbol of the supernatural bond between the Christian and Christ. Since Christ has made this human bond an efficacious sign, that is, a sign which effects the grace which it signifies, the permanent marriage bond continues to be an instrument of grace for Christian spouses.

Christ has taken the natural contract of marriage between baptized persons and raised it to the level of a sacrament. Therefore, there can be no marriage between rightly baptized persons which is not also a sacrament. On the other hand, since Baptism is necessary before we can receive any other sacrament, no unbaptized person can receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Christ has planned that all graces He will confer upon His members shall be given through human ministers. Most other sacraments demand an ordained priest as minister of the sacrament, but the contracting parties administer to each other the Sacrament of Matrimony. The priest is merely an official witness ordinarily necessary, when at least one party is Catholic, to make the contract valid. How thrilling for the young couple to know that not only

is to strengthen and unite you through life so that you more perfectly fulfill your roles as marriage partners and parents.

*Objective and Subjective Purposes.* Lastly, it is important to distinguish between the objective ends of marriage considered in itself, and the subjective purposes of those who enter marriage. The objective purpose of anything is that toward which it is directed *by its very nature*. The primary and secondary purposes of marriage we have been discussing are objective purposes in this sense. Subjective purposes, on the other hand, are the *personal motives* or intentions people may have in marriage. Men and women may rightly have any number of subjective purposes for getting married, ranging from the desire for security to mutual love. Hence, their subjective purposes may or may not coincide with the objective purposes of marriage, so long as they are not in opposition to them. However, once they enter marriage, it is obvious that they must respect and fulfill its objective purposes, since this is what they agree to do when they make the contract. Though you might choose an automobile because it gives you a feeling of prestige in your community, you still must use it as a means of transportation which it is by design.

#### NATURE OF THE MARRIAGE BOND

The bond which unites you in marriage has two basic characteristics. It exists between one man and one woman, and it is indissoluble. These two qualities of *unity* and *indissolubility* are sometimes called the essential properties or laws of marriage. This means they stem from the very nature of marriage as God planned it when He created man "male and female" and decreed that husband and wife should be "helpmates."

*Unity.* Unity signifies exclusiveness, that is, there is to be but one husband and one wife. Polygamy is opposed to unity. This exclusiveness applies not only to external acts, but to the inner dispositions of love and affection. Adulterous desires are also against unity. In marriage you become "two in one flesh," so that henceforth you must love each other in a special way as an extension of your very selves. No other human union involves such a complete and exclusive gift of self, body and soul, to each other.

*Indissolubility.* Indissolubility implies that the bond cannot be dissolved or broken by any mere human authority. When you marry, you marry for life. Indeed, if you are in love, you will find it

unthinkable to set a time limit on it. However, even if through some tragedy your love should wither and cease to operate, the bond that unites you in marriage endures until "death do us part." This enduring quality of the bond flows from the very nature of marriage itself, for the purpose to which you dedicate yourselves in the contract can be adequately achieved only if both are devoted and secure in each other's service throughout life. How could a young mother face life with several immature children if she knew that at any moment she could be left alone with them? For this reason, Our Lord solemnly warned us, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." This warning has a positive note. Not only is the bond indissoluble, but you must give the best that you have in you to make it strong and unifying.

## The Sacrament of Matrimony

SO FAR, we have described marriage as the Creator designed it when He made man in the beginning. After the Fall, human weakness frequently modified and desecrated this beautiful pattern. When Christ came to redeem us, even God's Chosen People, the Jews, had perverted the divine ideal by tolerating easy divorce. But Jesus corrected their false views and restored marriage to its original place in the Divine Plan:

And some Pharisees coming up asked him, testing him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" But he answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted us to write a notice of dismissal, and to put her away." But Jesus said to them, "By reason of the hardness of your heart he wrote you that commandment. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (Mark 10:2-10.)

*A Sacrament.* Furthermore, Our Lord marvelously increased the excellence of marriage by making it one of the seven sacraments or primary channels of grace through which He sanctifies the members of His Mystical Body. What do we mean when we say that marriage is a sacrament? It will help us grasp the full significance of the answer if we review briefly what we know about a sacrament in general.

As you well know, Christ continues his redemptive work in space and time through the Church which He established to teach His message of salvation and to dispense the graces which He merited. This dispensation of grace to men is carried on primarily through the sacraments. In other words, Our Lord instituted a set of permanent rites, called the sacramental system, which constitute the principal channels through which He sanctifies His members in the Church. These channels or sacraments are certain transactions of such a nature that they stand as visible signs of something spiritual and they cause, confer, and contain what they signify. Hence a sacrament may be defined as an outward, sensible sign instituted as a permanent rite by Jesus Christ to signify and effect by the conferring of divine grace the sanctification of men. For example, the pouring of water on the head of the recipient in the sacrament or rite of baptism signifies the inner cleansing from sin and, in conjunction with the words of the rite, actually confers supernatural life upon him.

In making Christian marriage a sacrament, Christ ordained that the marital agreement or contract was to signify and effect, by the divine grace which it conferred, the sanctification of the marriage partners. In other words, when each of you receives your partner's pledge of love, expressed in the simple "I will" of the marriage contract, you also receive the gift of Christ's divine love, for He has made your human consent in this rite the sign or symbol of His own gift. Likewise, in giving your own pledge of love, your love becomes the symbol or sign of Christ's love for your partner. This means that you are ministers of the sacrament, one to another. The mutual gift and reception of your "I will" is the sign of the gift and reception of Christ's divine love for you. The mutual giving and receiving are the matter and form of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

*A Miniature Mystical Body.* St. Paul sums up Catholic doctrine on this point by stating that marriage between Christians is the sign or symbol of Christ's union with His Church. When two Christians (i.e. validly baptized persons) are joined in marriage, their union renders visible that more profound, supernatural union of Christ and his Mystical Body. Just as husband and wife in a consummated marriage become "two in one flesh," so Christ and the members of His Mystical Body become one through baptism. Just as union with Christ confers grace upon His members, so the