



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone
who asks you for a reason for your hope"
1 Peter 3:15

The Sacraments of Matrimony & Holy Orders

The Sacrament of Matrimony

“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjwPsZaK4Do>

The Sacrament of Matrimony

At times we hear that Catholics should “get off their high horse” regarding marriage because we place too much importance on things that are not a matter of salvation. After all, people make mistakes.

However - when Jesus was teaching the crowds about marriage, he elevated it to the level of a Sacrament – just as God had done in **Genesis** between Adam and Eve (**Gen. 2:24**).

The Bible illustrates **Christ** as the ***Bridegroom*** and His **Church** as the **Bride**. (**Matt. 25:1-10, Mark 2:19-20, Rev. 19:7-9, Rev. 21:2**).

Human marriage is the ***precursor*** for this Heavenly union between us and the Lord. This is why the Church takes the Sacrament of Matrimony so seriously – because **GOD** Himself does. It is part of His master plan.

When Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting **HIM (Acts 9:4)** – He was asking this as a husband would as in defense of his spouse. When Saul asks the Lord, “Who are you?” – Jesus answers, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting”. Saul was persecuting the Church, *not* Jesus - but he was persecuting His **BRIDE**. This is why He told His disciples, “Whoever listens to **YOU** listens to **ME**; whoever rejects **YOU** rejects **ME**; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me" (**Luke 10:16**) – in the same protective way that a husband would speak to his wife.

A husband and wife become **ONE** flesh. They complete each other. It is with this understanding that Paul says that the *Church* is the **FULLNESS** of Christ (**Eph. 1:22-23**).

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "*by its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring, and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory*" (CCC 1652). Whereas others may see marriage as a mere romantic union or contract – a Catholic marriage is a covenant.

In **Malachi 2:16**, God says “**I hate divorce.**” This sounds rather harsh, but it emphasizes the fact that matrimony is ordained by God.

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus, the **Bridegroom** and his Church, his **Bride**, are inseparable (**Acts 9:4-5, 1 Cor. 12, Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22-23**). Similarly, a husband and wife are inseparable because this was God’s divine plan from the beginning (**Gen. 2:24**).

In **Matt 19:3-10**, the Pharisees, who were always looking for an opportunity to trick Jesus, asked him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause because of the **Mosaic Law** allowing it.

Jesus answered, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator '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. ***Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.***”

He went on to say, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, **whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.**”

Paul was equally insistent on this fact, declaring, "Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. . . . Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive" (**Rom. 7:2–3**).

Declaration of Nullity (Annullment)

Unlike a civil divorce, which is the dissolution of a civil contract, a marriage in the eyes of God is indissoluble. Contrary to what some may think, an annulment is not a "Catholic divorce." And, unlike a civil divorce, an annulment or ***Declaration of Nullity***, is a decree stating that a sacramental marriage ***never*** took place. It is not the ending of a marriage but an acknowledgement that a Sacramental marriage does not exist.

A Declaration of Nullity may be granted for a variety of reasons - but the case must be taken to your local priest to be presented before the official Diocesan marriage tribunal. Reasons include:

- 1.) **Insufficient use of reason (Canon 1095, 10)** You or your spouse did not know what was happening during the marriage ceremony because of insanity, mental illness, or a lack of consciousness.
- 2.) **Grave lack of discretionary judgment concerning essential matrimonial rights and duties (Canon 1095, 20)** You or your spouse was affected by some serious circumstances or factors that made you unable to judge or evaluate either the decision to marry or the ability to create a true marital relationship.
- 3.) **Psychic-natured incapacity to assume marital obligations (Canon 1095, 30)** You or your spouse, at the time of consent, was unable to fulfill the obligations of marriage because of a serious psychological disorder or other condition.
- 4.) **Ignorance about the nature of marriage (Canon 1096, sec. 1)** You or your spouse did not know that marriage is a permanent relationship between a man and a woman ordered toward the procreation of offspring by means of some sexual cooperation.
- 5.) **Error of person (Canon 1097, sec. 1)** You or your spouse intended to marry a specific individual who was not the individual with whom marriage was celebrated. (For example, mail order brides; otherwise, this rarely occurs in the United States.)

6.) **Error about a quality of a person (Canon 1097, sec. 2)** You or your spouse intended to marry someone who either possessed or did not possess a certain quality, e.g., social status, marital status, education, religious conviction, freedom from disease, or arrest record. That quality must have been directly and principally intended.

7.) **Fraud (Canon 1098)** You or your spouse was intentionally deceived about the presence or absence of a quality in the other. The reason for this deception was to obtain consent to marriage.

8.) **Total willful exclusion of marriage (Canon 1101, sec. 2)** You or your spouse did not intend to contract marriage as the law of the Catholic Church understands marriage. Rather, the ceremony was observed solely as a means of obtaining something other than marriage itself, e.g., to obtain legal status in the country or to legitimize a child.

9.) **Willful exclusion of children (Canon 1101, sec. 2)** You or your spouse married intending, either explicitly or implicitly, to deny the other's right to sexual acts open to procreation.

10.) **Willful exclusion of marital fidelity (Canon 1101, 12)** You or your spouse married intending, either explicitly or implicitly, not to remain faithful.

11.) **Willful exclusion of marital permanence (Canon 1101, sec. 2)** You or your spouse married intending, either explicitly or implicitly, not to create a permanent relationship, retaining an option to divorce.

12.) **Future condition (Canon 1102, sec. 2)** You or your spouse attached a future condition to your decision to marry, e.g., you will complete your education, your income will be at a certain level, you will remain in this area.

13.) **Past condition (Canon 1102, sec. 2)** You or your spouse attached a past condition so your decision to marry and that condition did not exist; e.g., I will marry you provided that you have never been married before, I will marry you provided that you have graduated from college.

14.) **Present condition (Canon 1102, sec. 2)** You or your spouse attached a present condition to your decision to marry and that condition did not exist, e.g., I will marry you provided you don't have any debt.

15.) **Force (Canon 1103)** You or your spouse married because of an external physical or moral force that you could not resist.

16.) **Fear (1103)** You or your spouse chose to marry because of fear that was grave and inescapable and was caused by an outside source.

17.) **Error regarding marital unity that determined the will (1099)** You or your spouse married believing that marriage was not necessarily an exclusive relationship.

18.) Error regarding marital indissolubility that determined the will (Canon 1099)

You or your spouse married believing that civil law had the power to dissolve marriage and that remarriage was acceptable after civil divorce.

19.) Error regarding marital sacramental dignity that determined the will (Canon

1099) You and your spouse married believing that marriage is not a religious or sacred relationship but merely a civil contract or arrangement.

20.) Lack of new consent during convalidation (Canons 1157,1160)

After your civil marriage, you and your spouse participated in a Catholic ceremony and you or your spouse believed that (1) you were already married, (2) the Catholic ceremony was merely a blessing, and (3) the consent given during the Catholic ceremony had no real effect.

Early Church Fathers on Matrimony

To understand what the Catholic Church has always taught in regards to Christian marriage – the testimonies of the Early Church Fathers offer a wealth of information. Once again - their writings show us a mountain of evidence that non-Catholic nay-sayers simply cannot deny . . .

Justin Martyr

"But whether we [Christians] marry, it is only that we may bring up children; or whether we decline marriage, we live continently" (First Apology 29 [A.D. 151]).

Athenagoras

"Therefore, having the hope of eternal life, we despise the things of this life, even to the pleasures of the soul, each of us reckoning her his wife whom he has married according to the laws laid down by us, and that only for the purpose of having children" (Plea for the Christians 33 [AD. 177]).

Clement of Alexandria

"When the apostle [Paul] says it is good not to touch a woman [1 Cor. 7:1], he speaks not to those who chastely use marriage for procreation alone, but to those who were desiring to go beyond procreation, lest the adversary raise a strong blast and arouse desire for foreign pleasures [i.e., adultery]" (ibid. 3:15:96).

Clement of Alexandria

"Since pleasure and desire seem to fall under marriage, it must also be treated of [in this work]. Marriage is the first conjunction of man and woman for the procreation of legitimate children. . . . Neither ought everyone to take a wife, nor is it every woman who is to take [a husband], nor always, nor in every way, nor inconsiderately. But he who is in certain circumstances, and such a one as and at such time as is requisite, and for the sake of children, and one who is in every respect similar, and who does not by force or compulsion love the husband who loves her. . . . Now marriage is a help in the case of those advanced in years, by furnishing a spouse to take care of one and by rearing children of her to nourish one's old age" Stromata 2:23 [AD. 206]).

Tertullian

"We [Christians] do not indeed forbid the union of man and woman, blessed by God as the generator of the human race, and devised for the replenishment of the earth and the furnishing of the world, and therefore permitted, yet singly [monogamously]" (To My Wife 2 [AD. 207])

Minucius Felix

"By choice we [Christians] are bound by the bond of a single marriage with the desire of procreating" (Octavius 31:5 [AD. 226]).

Origin

"But in the New Covenant also there are some legal injunctions [given in concession to human weakness], for example, because of our hardness of heart, it has been written on account of our weakness, 'But because of fornications, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband' [1 Cor. 7:2]" (Commentary on Matthew 14:23 [A.D. 248]).

Lactantius

"Whoever cannot control his affections, let him keep them within the limits of a lawful bed" (Divine Institutes 6:23:3 [AD. 307]).

"God gave us eyes not to see and desire pleasure, but to see acts to be performed for the needs of life; so too, the genital part of the body, as the name itself teaches, has been received by us for no other purpose than the generation of offspring" (ibid. 6:23:18).

Cyril of Jerusalem

"Let those. . . be of good cheer who are married and use their marriage properly; who enter marriage lawfully and not out of wanton and unbounded license; who recognize periods of continence so that they may give themselves to prayer; who in the assemblies bring clean bodies as well as clean garments into church; who have embarked upon the matrimonial estate for the procreation of children, and not for the sake of indulgence" (Catechetical Lectures 4:25 [AD. 350]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

"And those who are once married - let them not hold in contempt those who have accommodated themselves to a second marriage [after death of a spouse].
Contenance is a good and wonderful thing; but still, it is permissible to enter upon a second marriage, lest the weak might fall into fornication" (ibid. 4:26 [AD. 350]).

John Chrysostom

"There is no great reason to have money, while there is great reason to have wives to preserve chastity; hence no one blames a man who has lawful intercourse with his wife into old age, but all blame him who accumulates money" (Homilies on Titus 5 [AD. 395]).

"[A wife] was espoused to her husband to be his partner in life, and for the procreation of children, not for the purposes of indecency and laughter; that she might keep the house, and instruct him also to be serious, not that she might supply to him the fuel of fornication" [Homilies on 1 Thessalonians 5 [A.D. 400]).

"There are two reasons why marriage was instituted, that we may live chastely and that we may become parents" (On Those Words of the Apostle 'On Account of Fornication' [A.D. 392]).

Augustine

"Among all nations and all men, therefore, the advantage of marriage is for the sake of begetting offspring and in the fidelity of chastity. In the case of the people of God, however, there is also the holiness of the sacrament, on which account a woman is not permitted, even when she leaves with a repudiation, to marry another while her husband yet lives, not even for the sake of bearing children. Although this is the only reason why marriage takes place, even if this for which marriage takes place does not follow, the marriage bond is loosed only by the death of a spouse" (On the Good of Marriage 24:32 [A.D. 401]).

"In marriage, however, let the blessings of marriage be loved: offspring, fidelity, and the sacramental bond. Offspring, not so much that it may be born, but because it can be reborn [as a Christian]; for it is born to punishment unless it be reborn to life. Fidelity, but not such as even the unbelievers have among themselves, ardent as they are for the flesh. . . The sacramental bond, which they lose neither through separation nor through adultery-this the spouses should guard chastely and harmoniously" (Marriage and Concupiscence 1:17:19 [A.D. 419]).

"The procreation of children is the first and natural and lawful reason for marriage" (On Adulterous Marriages 2:12:12 [A.D. 419]).

The Sacrament of Holy Orders

Priest

The minister of Divine worship, and especially of the highest act of worship, sacrifice

One who offers sacrifice.

When a man is ordained a priest it leaves an indelible mark on his soul **(Catechism 1581-1584)**.

The ability to consecrate the Eucharist is part of the essence of being a priest and therefore always remains with him, because he is always a priest. As such, when a priest who has been excommunicated is received back into the Church, he is not re-ordained, because his ordination can never be undone.

In the Latin Church, Holy Orders include the priesthood, diaconate, and subdiaconate

The Sacraments at the Service of Communion

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

***Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests.
Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments.***

***Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.
Set their souls on fire with love for your people.***

***Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow
in the footsteps of Jesus.***

Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom.

***Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel.
Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.***

Help them to become instruments of your divine grace.

***We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal
Priest.***

Amen.

The Sacraments at the Service of Communion

- ***Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation.*** They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.
- **Two other sacraments, *Holy Orders and Matrimony*, are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. They confer a particular mission in the Church and serve to build up the People of God.**
- **Through these sacraments those already *consecrated* by Baptism and Confirmation for the common priesthood of all the faithful can receive particular *consecrations*. Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders are *consecrated* in Christ's name "to feed the Church by the word and grace of God." On their part, "Christian spouses are fortified and, as it were, *consecrated* for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament."**

The Sacrament of Holy Orders

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: *Episcopate, Presbyterate, and Diaconate.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RmLMsUTsPw>

In the **Old Testament**, we read about **three** distinct levels of Priests:

- The **High** Priest.
- The **Levitical/Ministerial** Priesthood
- The **General** Priesthood of the rest of Israel.

The **New Testament** also speaks of a three-tiered priesthood.

- Jesus, our **High Priest (1 Tim. 2:5 and Heb. 7:22-25)**
- The **Ministerial** Priesthood (**John 20:21-23, 1 Tim. 5:17, James 5:14-15**)
- The **General** Priesthood of all Christians (**1 Peter 2:5-9**)

Whereas the Old Testament priests would offer slaughtered bulls and goats as a sacrifice before God as reparation for sins, the ministerial priest in the New Covenant offers up the **eternal** and **perfect** sacrifice made by Christ on our behalf, which is represented in the Eucharist. New Testament fulfillments are **always** more glorious than their Old Testament types – without exception.

Some examples of Ordained ministers in the New Testament:

Heb 13:17

Obey your LEADERS and defer to THEM, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1 Thess. 5:12-13

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are laboring among you and **who are OVER YOU in the Lord** and who admonish you, and to show esteem for them with special love on account of their work.

1 Tim. 5:17

Let the **PRIESTS** that rule well, be esteemed worthy of **double honour**: especially they who labour in the word and doctrine:

The Eucharist

Luke 22:19-20

Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me."
And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

The Eucharist

Luke 22:19-20

Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.”

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.

1 Cor. 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Reconciliation

John 20:21-23

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send **YOU.**” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins **YOU FORGIVE** are forgiven them, and whose sins **YOU RETAIN** are retained.”

Anointing of the Sick

James 5:14-15

Is anyone among you sick? He should **summon the PRESBYTERS** of the church, and **THEY** should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

Baptism

Matt. 28:19-20

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, **BAPTIZING** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

John 3:22

After this, Jesus and his **disciples** went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them **BAPTIZING**.

Early Church Fathers on Matrimony

The Early Church Fathers were ordained Priests who understood the importance of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the offices of the ordained (Bishops, Priests & Deacons). Their testimonies speak to the reality of this sacrament in Church history and to the structure of the Early Church – which was unmistakably **CATHOLIC**.

Ignatius of Antioch

Good, too, are the priests; but the High Priest is better, to whom was entrusted the holy of holies; and to Him alone were entrusted the secret things of God. He is the door of the Father, through which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and the Apostles and the Church. All these are joined in the unity of God (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 9:1 [A.D. 110]).

Irenaeus of Lyons

And all the apostles of the Lord are priests, who do inherit here neither lands nor houses, but serve God and the altar continually (*Against Heresies* 4:8:3 [A.D. 189]). Moreover, he made the priests of God his counselors, and deemed it incumbent on him to honor the God who had appeared to him with all devotion (*Life of Constantine* 1:32 [A.D. 339]).

Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles

The Priest says this secret prayer in the sanctuary: O Lord God Omnipotent, Thine is the Holy Catholic Church, inasmuch as Thou, through the great passion of Thy Christ, didst buy the sheep of Thy pasture; and from the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is indeed of one nature with Thy glorious divinity, are granted the degrees of the true priestly ordination (6 [A.D. 200]).

Teachings of the Apostles Syriac

And by ordination to the priesthood, which the apostles themselves had received from our Lord, did their Gospel wing its way rapidly into the four quarters of the world (27 [A.D. 230]).

Origen

So, too, the apostles, and those who have become like apostles, being priests according to the Great High Priest and having received knowledge of the service of God, know under the Spirit's teaching for which sins, and when, and how they ought to offer sacrifices, and recognize for which they ought not to do so (*On Prayer* 18 [A.D. 233]).

Cyprian of Carthage

On which account it is fitting, that with full diligence and sincere investigation those should be chosen for God's priesthood whom it is manifest God will hear (*Letter* 67:2 [A.D. 254]).

Peter of Alexandria

Since I have found out that Meletius acts in no way for the common good, – for neither is he contented with the letter of the most holy bishops and martyrs, – but, invading my parish, hath assumed so much to himself as to endeavour to separate from my authority the priests, and those who had been entrusted with visiting the needy; and, giving proof of his desire for pre-eminence, has ordained in the prison several unto himself; now, take ye heed to this, and hold no communion with him (*Fragments* 1 [A.D. 300-311]).

Eusebius

Moreover, he made the priests of God his counselors, and deemed it incumbent on him to honor the God who had appeared to him with all devotion (*Life of Constantine* 1:32 [A.D. 339]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

After this the Priest cries aloud, "Lift up your hearts." For truly ought we in that most awful hour to have our heart on high with God, and not below, thinking of earth and earthly things. In effect therefore the Priest bids all in that hour to dismiss all cares of this life (*Catechetical Lecture* 23:4 [A.D. 350]).

Gregory of Nyssa

The man who ungrudgingly spent upon the poor his patrimony even before he was a priest, and most of all in the time of the famine, during which he was a ruler of the Church, though still a priest in the rank of presbyters (*Against Eunomius* 1:10 [A.D. 382]).

John Chrysostom

The Offering is the same, whether a common man, or Paul or Peter offer it. It is the same which Christ gave to His disciples, and which the Priests now minister. This is nowise inferior to that, because it is not men that sanctify even this, but the Same who sanctified the one sanctifies the other also. For as the words which God spake are the same which the Priest now utters, so is the Offering the same, and the Baptism, that which He gave (*Homily 2 on 2 Timothy* [A.D. 393-397]).

Jerome

You see then that the blessedness of a bishop, priest, or deacon, does not lie in the fact that they are bishops, priests, or deacons, but in their having the virtues which their names and offices imply (*Against Jovinianus* 1:35 [A.D. 393]).

Apostolic Constitutions

And I James, the son of Alphaeus, make a constitution in regard to confessors: A confessor is not ordained; for he is so by choice and patience, and is worthy of great honour, as having confessed the name of God, and of His Christ, before nations and kings. But if there be occasion, he is to be ordained either a bishop, priest, or deacon (8:23 [A.D. 400]).

John Cassian

But sometimes it creates a wish to take holy orders, and a desire for the priesthood or diaconate. And it represents that if a man has even against his will received this office, he will fulfil it with such sanctity and strictness that he will be able to set an example of saintliness even to other priests; and that he will win over many people, not only by his manner of life, but also by his teaching and preaching (*Institutes* 11:14 [A.D. 425-430]).

Sozomen

And the event has exceeded my prayer, in that so many priests of Christ have been conducted into the same place; now, it is my desire that you should be of one mind and be partakers of a consentient judgment, for I deem dissension in the Church of God as more dangerous than any other evil (*Church History* [A.D. 440-443]).

Theodoret

Was it that I ordained to the priesthood men of character and of honorable life?
(*Letter 81* [circa **A.D. 443**]).

Leo the Great

Priests and deacons may not be ordained on weekdays any more than bishops
(*Letter 6:6* [**A.D. 446**]).