

# SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE



## Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, through the miracle at the wedding feast of Cana, you demonstrated your blessing of marriage as a sacrament and showed a foretaste of your Passion and death. We ask to watch over those you have joined in a sacramental covenant and make them witnesses to the everlasting love of God. We ask this in your most holy Name. Amen.

## Scripture Reading *John 2:1-12*

As his first miracle in the Gospel of John, Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, symbolically blessing Christian marriage. The turning of water into wine at the wedding feast is a foretaste of Jesus changing wine into his blood at the Last Supper and the offering of his blood on the cross.

## What are the essential properties and elements of the Sacrament of Marriage?

- "The matrimonial covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized" (Canon 1055 §1).
- From this definition, we discover the essential properties necessary for marriage and the essential elements of marriage embedded in the nature of the institution itself.
- "The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage obtain a special firmness by reason of the sacrament" (Canon 1056).
  - Unity implies exclusivity and fidelity
  - Whole of life (indissolubility) implies permanence
- These properties are not goals external to marriage but qualities inherent in the institution of marriage itself. These properties are considered part of natural law and are independent of the will or intention of the partners.
- The Essential Elements of Marriage (ends or purposes) are:
  - The good of the spouses, which consists in the growth and maturing of the spouses as persons, through the aids, comforts, and consolations, but also the demands and hardships, of conjugal life, when lived according to God's plan.
  - The good of the offspring: The procreation, nurturing, and education of children, which includes care for their physical, social, moral, and religious development.



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### What are the foundations of marriage?

- “The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and *qualified by His laws*, and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent... For, God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes” (GS 48 §1).
- God requires certain conditions to be present between a man and a woman in order to establish a valid marriage between them.
- The Church’s approach to marriage has always been anchored in Biblical foundations.
  - Jesus condemns divorce as a distortion of the Creator’s original intention for marriage and a concession to human hardness of heart (Mt. 19:3-12).
  - St. Paul responds to the Corinthian community and teaches them about marriage and divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-16).
  - He also reflects in his letter to the Ephesians on the analogy between the relationship of husband and wife and that between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).
- “God who created man out of love also calls him to love – the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man” (CCC 1604).

### What is the history of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Church?

- Augustine argued that the good of permanence distinguished Christian marriage from those of other people and because of its essential goodness, marriage was a sacred reality that imparted a permanent character and indissoluble bond similar to baptism.
- In 1184, at the Council of Verona, marriage was first included among the seven sacraments, seen as equivalent to the baptism and eucharist, and having the ability to convey grace, even though earlier theologians had spoken of marriage as a “sacrament.”
- In response to the Protestant reformers who denied the sacramentality of marriage, the Council of Trent defined marriage “as truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ the Lord” (Trent, sess. XXIV).
- The Second Vatican Council gave a prominent place to the importance of Christian marriage and highlighted that marriage is a covenant of love.
- The 1983 Code of Canon Law is the current and effective law of the Church concerning marriage.

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## How is the Sacrament of Marriage celebrated?

- Marriage is brought about through:
  - Valid Consent – The consent of the bride and groom is “an act of the will by which a man and a woman mutually give and accept each other through an irrevocable covenant in order to establish marriage” (Canon 1057 §2). (cf. Canons 1095-1104)
  - Lack of Impediment – There are no conditions that disqualify individuals from any marriage or a particular marriage. (cf. Canons 1083-1094)
  - Proper Form - For Latin Catholics, canonical form must be observed. Eastern Catholics must follow the prescribed sacred rite. Non-Catholics are always bound to manifest their consent according to some public form and to observe the law of their church or ecclesial community, and are bound by the form prescribed by civil law. (cf. Canons 1108-1123)
- Because of this, the Catholic Church presumes that any ceremony involving non-Catholics that looks like a marriage ceremony or is recognized by civil authorities as being a marriage ceremony is due the same respect as a Catholic marriage.
- This law is based on the natural rite to marry and is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. Therefore, since God is the author of all marriage, the Church recognizes all marriages that are not contrary to divine law.

## What are the symbols of the Sacrament of Marriage?

- Couple: According to the Roman Catholic Church, the spouses as ministers of Christ’s grace mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of marriage by expressing their consent before the Church.
- Exchange of Rings: Symbolizes fidelity and permanence.