

SESSION

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The Sacrament of Marriage

Catechist Overview

In this session's Gospel passage, the Pharisees challenge Jesus about marriage. Jesus teaches in response that marriage is a permanent institution brought together by God. Marriage existed from the beginning. Now that Jesus has redeemed us and made marriage a sacrament, it too reflects God's Divine nature. **Just as Jesus was present at the Wedding at Cana, He offers husbands and wives the graces and the strength to live the Sacrament of Matrimony as a sacrament of love.**

This is the first of two sessions this year where students will learn about the Sacrament of Matrimony (the second comes during the Christmas season). Today, students will contemplate sacred art to understand what it means that Jesus elevated marriage to a sacrament.

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The Sacrament of Marriage

Opening Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Materials

- **Listen and Respond:** No Longer Two but One Flesh
- **Make It Your Own:** The Wedding at Cana in Sacred Art
- **Bring It Home:** Symbol for Sacramental Marriage
- *Optional:* Sophia SketchPad Marriage Video, available at SophiaSketchPad.org

Listen

Note: This Gospel refers to sensitive topics to discuss. Many students today come from different family situations that may include divorce and remarriage, or single parents. It is important to be compassionate to these situations and affirm the goodness and love that God still brings forth from them. However, this does not minimize God's original plan for humanity and marital love, which Jesus seeks to restore in our hearts.

A. Begin by asking if anyone can recall from last class what a sacrament is. *All the sacraments are visible signs of grace that effect what they signify.*

B. Ask the class how a sacrament differs from an ordinary sign, like a stop sign or smoke from a fire. *Sacraments are signs that actually bring about what they represent.*

C. Next, ask if anyone can recall from last session what happens during the Sacrament of Matrimony? What is the grace that is made real by the sacrament? *Holy Matrimony is a sign of a man's and a woman's lifelong commitment, and it actually causes their union to become permanent.*

D. Explain to your students that marriage is a covenant that has existed since God made it when He created Adam and Eve. Marriage existed after the fall because it is in our natures.

Heart of the Lesson: Continue to explain that when Jesus came, He performed His first public miracle at a wedding, and He also made marriage a sacrament. Now that Jesus has redeemed us and made marriage a sacrament, marriage is not just a human institution, but it also reflects God's Divine nature. Just as Jesus was present at the Wedding at Cana, He offers husbands and wives the graces and the strength to live the Sacrament of Matrimony as a sacrament of love.

E. If possible, you may wish to play for the class the six-minute Sophia SketchPad Marriage Video, available at SophiaSketchPad.org.

F. Share with the class that when Jesus was teaching the people, the Pharisees would often try to trip Him up and trick Him into saying something that went against the Law of Moses and Ten Commandments. We will read about one of these times today. In this Gospel, we will hear the Pharisees ask Jesus about marriage. Read aloud from **Listen and Respond: No Longer Two but One Flesh** while students follow along.

Listen and Respond

No Longer Two but One Flesh

Adapted from Mark 10:1-12

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" They replied, "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. 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, **1** no human being must separate." **2**



In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this. **3** He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

As your teacher reads the Scripture again, answer the questions below together.

- 1** When a man and woman marry, who has joined them together?
- 2** Can anything separate Jesus from His bride, the Church? How do you know?
- 3** It was common for the Pharisees to try to trap Jesus with questions. But this teaching on marriage was so hard to accept that even His disciples questioned Him about it. Did Jesus change His mind or make the teaching easier to accept?



The Wedding at Cana in Sacred Art

Look at the picture while your teacher reads aloud John 2:1-11.

Then discuss the questions.



The Wedding Feast at Cana, by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

1. Who are the figures in this painting?
2. What moment from the Gospel story has the artist shown us?
3. Why do you think Peter is kneeling?
4. What is the role of Mary at the wedding at Cana?
5. What does the story of Jesus' first public miracle at a wedding tell us about His presence in the Sacrament of Marriage?

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Respond

Read the passage aloud a second time, this time pausing where noted to check for understanding.

- 1 God.
- 2 No. Jesus offered His entire life out of love for His Church. He gave Himself up for her.
- 3 He did not. He repeated the teaching again.



Make It Your Own

A. Have students look at the artwork on **Make It Your Own: The Wedding at Cana in Sacred Art**. After a moment or two of silence, ask the following questions:

1. What do you first notice about this work of art? *Allow discussion.*
2. What do you like about it? *Allow discussion.*

3. How do the colors in the work of art draw your eye? *Allow students to point out their favorite details.*
4. What is happening in this picture? *Students may need help to see that Jesus is standing over six stone jars, which are being filled with water. Students who have been in religious education class in years prior, and/or who are readers of the Bible may know He is turning water into wine.*

B. Call on a few volunteers (one to play Jesus, one to play Mary, two or three to play servers, and one to play the headwaiter) to act out the scene of the Wedding at Cana as you read aloud from the Gospel of John's account of the Wedding Feast at Cana (text below). You will study this Gospel as a class later in session 13, but for now you are just laying groundwork.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come."

Activity Continues

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His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it.

And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him (John 2:1-11).

C. Have the students return to their seats, and then discuss the questions on the worksheet, using the answer key to guide discussion.

D. Gently help students understand that just like all graces, we must cooperate with those Jesus offers the spouses in marriage for them to bear fruit in our lives. Some spouses choose to leave each other, but the marriage still exists. They may say that the marriage has failed, but the grace from the sacrament does not disappear. And even if a husband and wife decide they can no longer live together, they are still married in the eyes of God.

E. Share with the class how not only is marriage a sign of Jesus' unfailing love for His Church, but it is also a sign of God Himself in the Blessed Trinity. God, who is three Persons in one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—exists as an eternal exchange of love. The Father, eternally pours out His love to generate the Son, who eternally returns His love to the Father. The love shared between them is so perfect that it is fruitful and becomes personified in the Holy Spirit, who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. God is love because He is a communion of Persons. This essential mystery of our Christian faith is made seen in the union of man and woman in marriage. A husband loves his wife and gives his entire self to her in marriage. She in turn receives his love and returns it as a gift of her entire self to him.

Make It Your Own Answer Key

1. Jesus is central, in blue and red. Mary is to the left of Jesus, John to the right. Peter is kneeling. The man standing in red and white is likely an apostle, probably James. The two men kneeling in green are servants, and the man in yellow is likely the head waiter. The man and woman sitting in the back right are the bride and groom. All the other people are guests.
2. Jesus is turning the water into wine.
3. Allow discussion, and then explain that Peter, as pope, intercedes for the Church before God, which his kneeling position represents.
4. Mary is an intercessor for the couple; she brought their needs to Jesus.
5. Just as Jesus was present at the Wedding at Cana, He offers husbands and wives the graces and the strength to live the Sacrament of Matrimony as a sacrament of love.

Symbol for Sacramental Marriage

Read the reflection on marriage. Then create a symbol or logo for sacramental marriage that shows how it is both a human institution and a supernatural, divine institution.

God, who is love, created man and woman in His image for love. Thus, the God-given vocation of every human being is to love. God calls some people to live out this call in the priesthood or religious life. He calls most people

to marriage. When Jesus came, He made marriage a sacrament.

Now that Jesus has made marriage a sacrament, marriage reflects God's Divine nature. God Himself is the Blessed Trinity: an eternal, unbreakable exchange of life-giving love. Just as Jesus was present at the Wedding at Cana, He offers husbands and wives the graces and the strength to live the Sacrament of Matrimony as a sacrament of love. In a unique way, man and woman were created for each other and called to become one in a covenant of love. And this oneness becomes an image of the unfailing love of Jesus for His Church.



Your symbol or logo for sacramental marriage

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Walking with Jesus, Grade 5

F. Pause here and ask what the greatest gift of marriage is; in what way is marriage life-giving love, like the Blessed Trinity gives life? *The greatest gift of marriage is children: your students are, for their parents, the greatest gift they could receive from God.*

G. Conclude by explaining that married love, in the normal course of things, is fruitful, and, in the cooperation of God's creative power, produces life. Thus, the family is the primary and essential cell of society. The union of spouses was planned by God from the beginning to be an icon of the Trinity, a sign of His very life itself. As such, the love between a husband and wife in marriage resembles the love that is God Himself, the love that He pours out upon us, His precious children.



A. If possible, invite the parents to pick up their children in your classroom. Before you close the session, begin a discussion with your students. Ask for a volunteer student to explain what teaching Jesus gave in the Gospel today. Ask a student to retell the story of the Wedding at Cana. Ask a third volunteer to explain how married love resembles Jesus' love for His Church, and a final volunteer to explain how it resembles the Blessed Trinity.

B. Explain to your students the take-home activity. Parents should read with their children the reflection on **Bring It Home: Symbol for Sacramental Marriage** and use their imagination to create a symbol or logo for marriage. Encourage families to design a symbol or logo that shows how marriage is both a human and divine institution.

C. Close by explaining that the Mysteries of the Rosary provide a way to reflect on Jesus' life. The Wedding at Cana, which we contemplated in sacred art today, is one of the Luminous Mysteries. Together, offer a decade of the Rosary while meditating on the Wedding at Cana. Ask Mary to intercede for all the parents in the room that Jesus will bless and strengthen their marriages.

