

The Story of Holy Matrimony

Directions: Read the essay, and then answer the questions.

It is not just a coincidence that the written record of salvation, the Bible, begins with the first marriage and ends with the wedding feast of the lamb in the book of Revelation. The story of salvation communicates the greater relationship that God desires to have with us. Jesus begins His public ministry with a miracle at the Wedding at Cana, lifting the primordial sacrament (primordial means it has existed since the beginning of time) to a Sacrament of the Church.

Marriage and human nature

Marriage is an integral part of what it means to be human. To be made in God's image and likeness is, in part, to be male and female, in order to carry out God's one command in the beginning: to be fertile and multiply and fill the earth. Genesis 2 more fully describes the creation of woman and the unity shared between the sexes. God tells Adam that it is not good that he is alone, so He will create a helper for him. God brings all of the animals to Adam in search of a companion, not because God thought any of the animals was a suitable mate for Adam, but rather so that Adam would recognize that he is unique out of all creation. While sharing certain characteristics with the animals, man is also undeniably and substantially different from all of them. Only then does God create woman from Adam's side. Rather than the mistaken notion that woman was made somehow less than man, man and woman are in fact equal in dignity and close to one another's hearts.



©Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C.
Photograph courtesy of the National Shrine.
Photographer: Geraldine M. Rohling.

When Adam meets his wife for the first time, she causes him to speak in verse, bringing forth the best of man in recognition of the beauty before him. Adam proclaims that at last there is one like him, a person who is unique out of all creation, but shares in the same dignity and vocation to love and holiness as he, “bone of my bones, flesh of my

flesh.” Man and woman become “one body,” and cling to one another united in marriage to fulfill God’s command to fruitfulness. The foundation of marriage, both as natural law and a sacramental covenant, is found in the very beginnings of the creation of man and woman and is an integral part of what it means to be human.

Jesus elevates marriage to a Sacrament

The story of salvation, having begun with the first marriage of the original man and woman, ends with a vision of Heaven in the book of Revelation. This vision shows us that Heaven is the wedding celebration of the Lamb, Jesus, who is united for all eternity with His Bride, us, His Church. We recognize in Holy Matrimony a sign of Jesus’ union with His Church, which is consummated every time we receive Him in the Eucharist. We are truly blessed as Christians to be invited to partake

of the wedding feast of the Lamb every time we receive the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Not only does the Bible begin with a wedding and end with a wedding feast, but Jesus began His public ministry with a miracle at a wedding. This is no coincidence! Jesus is first revealed to the public as the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior, in the midst of a wedding. By doing so, Jesus announced that the time had come for God’s relationship with His people to be restored. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 1613 states: “The Church attaches great importance to Jesus’ presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious [effective] sign of Christ’s presence.” It is for this reason that the Church places such a great importance on the Sacrament of Matrimony and defends the union of one man and one woman so vigorously.

1. How do we know men and women are equal in dignity?

2. What is the vision of Heaven in the book of Revelation, and how does it connect to marriage?

3. Where did Jesus perform His first public miracle, revealing Himself to be the Messiah?

The Purposes of Marriage

Directions: Fill in the chart according to the instructions of your teacher.

The Purposes of Marriage	
Unitive	Procreative
Definition:	Definition:
List at least three pieces of supporting evidence from the video:	List at least three pieces of supporting evidence from the video:

God's Love and the Goods of Marriage

Marriage as an icon of the Trinity

God is love. At His heart, God is three Persons in one God who eternally share their love for each other. From all eternity the Father pours out all He is in generating the Son, who in turn pours out all He is in love toward the Father. The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is one and equal. This exchange of love between the divine Persons is perfect and eternal, without beginning or end. Divine love shows us that love creates communion and always generates life.

Marriage and divine love

The Lord created man and woman in love. We are made in the divine image, so, in imitation of the Blessed Trinity, we too are called to love totally and completely, following the pattern of Trinitarian love.

In Holy Matrimony, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is made visible in human love. Jesus, on the night before He died, freely gave His Body to His Bride, the Church, in the Eucharist. The next day He sacrificed Himself for her by embracing His Cross. Original Sin damaged our understanding of what love is and our ability to love. We tend to mistakenly think love is just a "feeling" we can fall in and out of, rather than a free choice we make every day. We also tend to be selfish and sinful. The good news is that Jesus restored the true meaning of love to us by His Cross and Resurrection and revealed to us the Trinitarian life of love. On the Cross, He showed us that love means doing what is good for the other. When Jesus' side was



Martin and Zelig Martin were the first married couple to be canonized together.

pierced on the Cross (John 19:34), blood and water flowed out. The Fathers of the Church teach that the blood and water signify the Sacraments of Eucharist and Baptism, the Sacraments that create the Church. In a way, we can say that out of Jesus' side is formed His Bride, the Church, just as Eve was formed out of the side of Adam. Jesus is married to the Church. Married love reflects and reveals divine love. God's love is freely given, faithful, total self-giving, and fruitful. The love shared between a man and a woman in marriage is a reflection of the love of God.

The goods of marriage

Love freely given

God's love is a free gift to us. We do nothing to earn His love, and there is nothing we can do to lose His love. These Scripture passages attest to God's free gift of love:

Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 4:19 – We love because he first loved us.

Marital love must be freely given. The consent of the spouses is the fundamental requirement for marriage. In fact, in sacramental marriage, the ministers of the Sacrament are the spouses who give their consent to one another and exchange vows of lifelong commitment before God and His Church. The priest or deacon serves as the official witness of this exchange and offers the blessing of the Church on the marital union. This is why Catholic weddings take place in a church, before the assembly, and within a liturgical celebration such as the Mass.

Faithful love

God's love is faithful. God does not withdraw His love from us at any time for any reason. Even though we are less than faithful to Him when we sin, He remains near to us and showers us with His grace. These Scripture passages attest to God's faithful love:

Romans 8:37-39 – No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Deuteronomy 7:9 – Know, then, that the LORD, your God, is God: the faithful God who keeps covenant mercy to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments.

Married love is faithful, constant, dependable, and trustworthy. Marriage is a total gift of self, body and soul, to another of the opposite, complementary sex. It cannot be a total gift of self if something is held back or reserved for another. Love's fidelity or faithfulness is expressed in the fact that marriage can be between only one man and one woman. Moreover, this relationship doesn't start and then stop. It is a relationship "until death do us part."

Total self-giving love

God's love is total and self-giving. God gives all of Himself to us. He holds nothing back. He loved us so much that He assumed a human nature in the person of Jesus Christ and gave all that He had, His very life, for us on the Cross. These Scripture passages attest to God's total self-giving love:

Philippians 2:7-8 – Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

Marital love is also total and self-giving. The bond of love given and received in marriage cannot be broken. The Blessed Trinity reveals that love means to give oneself to others. But we also know that sin has harmed our ability to love. So, to love truly in this fallen world will involve sacrifice. It will involve working against our tendency to be selfish and unfaithful. Because of our sinfulness,

loving will also mean forgiving and asking for forgiveness when we do wrong. It involves both spouses sharing every aspect of their lives with each other. Because it is a total gift of self, the bond of marriage is therefore indissoluble and permanent. As Jesus explains, “what God has joined together, no human being must separate” (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). Remarriage after the divorce of a lawful, living spouse violates God’s plan for marriage. Such remarried couples are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive the Holy Eucharist. They lead their lives within the Church most especially by educating their children in the Faith.

Everything that God creates is good, including the union of man and woman in marriage.

Fruitful love

God’s love is fruitful. God is the Creator of all things, and He holds all things in continued existence solely because He loves us. He is love itself, and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son and is one and equal with them. These Scripture passages attest to God’s fruitful love:

John 1:3-5 – All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Genesis 1:31 – God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

Marital love must also be fruitful. The sexual union of male and female, in cooperation with God’s divine plan, results in the procreation of children. This is the natural result of the love shared between spouses. A husband and wife create a special world, in imitation of the Blessed Trinity. In the home, in their arms and under their loving, watchful eyes, husband and wife create the first world their children will ever know. The *Catechism* puts it this way: “And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation...” (CCC 1604). The Christian home, called the “Domestic Church” is where children first learn about Jesus and the Catholic Faith. Their parents raise them with love, showing them what virtue means, teaching them to pray, and doing all they can to help their children cooperate with God’s grace. Father and mother watch over, support, provide for, and shepherd their children to prepare them for adult life and an eternity in Heaven. Therefore, anything that intentionally interrupts or prevents this natural fruit of marriage is contrary to God’s design and is seriously sinful. Some spouses are unable to have children, but this does not mean that their marriage cannot be fruitful. They are called to bear fruit in their union in other ways, such as through adoption, or devoting their lives to serving others.