

Introduction: Natural Marriage

Fr. John Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, gives four elements common to natural marriage throughout history:

1. A union of opposite sexes
2. A lifelong union ending only with the death of one spouse
3. Excludes union with any other person so long as the marriage exists
4. Lifelong nature and exclusiveness are guaranteed by contract

Marriage is a practice common to all cultures in all ages, in this respect a natural institution, something common to all mankind. Each spouse in a marriage gives up rights over his or her life in exchange for rights over the life of the spouse. While divorce has existed throughout history, it has been rare until recent centuries, which indicates that, even in its natural form, marriage is meant to be a lifelong, union. Even at a natural level, divorce, adultery, and "homosexual marriage" are not compatible with marriage, and a lack of commitment means that no marriage has taken place.

Catechism on the Sacrament of Matrimony¹

I. Marriage in God's Plan (1602 – 1620)

1602 Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of "the wedding-feast of the Lamb." Cf. Gen 1:26-27; Rev 19:7, 9 Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and its "mystery," its institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, its various realizations throughout the history of salvation, the difficulties arising from sin and its renewal "in the Lord" in the New Covenant² of Christ and the Church. ¹ Cor 7:39; cf. Eph 5:31-32

Marriage in the order of creation (1603 – 1605)

- Vocation in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the Creator
- A Divine institution based on OT (Jesus confirms: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh." Mt 19:6)
 - ◇ "...not good that man should be alone." Gen 2:18
 - ◇ Woman "flesh of his flesh"³, given by God as a "helpmate" & represents God, our help Cf. Gen 2:18-25
 - ◇ "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." Gen 2:24

Marriage under regime of sin (1606 – 1608)

- Marital union threatened by discord, domination, infidelity, jealousy, conflicts – can escalate to hatred & separation
- Disorder seems to have a universal character & according to faith, the disorder stems from sin
- Sin (break with God), sin's first consequence: rupture of the original communion between man and woman
- To heal sin's wounds, we need the help of the grace that God in his infinite mercy never refuses Cf. Gen 3:21

Marriage under the pedagogy⁴ of the Law (1609 – 1611)

- Helps *overcome* self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of self pleasure & *open* to other, mutual aid & self-giving
- Moral conscience of the unity and indissolubility of marriage developed under the pedagogy of the old law
- The law given to Moses aims at protecting the wife from arbitrary domination by the husband
- Covenant with Israel⁵, prophets taught marriage's unity and indissolubility Cf. Hos 1-3; Isa 54; 62; Jer 2-3; 31; Ezek 16; 23; Mal 2:13-17
- Ruth & Tobit bear witness to an elevated sense of marriage and to the fidelity and tenderness of spouses
- Song of Songs - human love reflects God's love, "strong as death" that "many waters cannot quench." Song 8:6-7

Marriage in the Lord (1612 – 1617)

- Jesus' first sign Cf. Jn 2:1-11 confirms sign of Christ's presence is good & efficacious
- Union of man & woman is indissoluble, "what God has joined together, let no man divide" Mt 19:6
- Follow Christ, renounce self & take up cross: spouses can live in lifelong marriage with Christ's help Cf. Mt 19:11
- "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to sanctify her" Eph 5:25-26

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 7 (<http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p2s2c3a7.htm>)

² Covenant – general sense, a solemn promise to do or refrain from specified action (ancient Suzerain Covenant, less powerful makes pact with more powerful and promises fealty in exchange for protection)

³ "Flesh of his flesh" – Counterpart & equal

⁴ Pedagogy – Teaching

⁵ Covenant with Israel – Exclusive, faithful married love

- "...a man shall leave his father and mother...joined to his wife...the two shall become one...a great mystery...in reference to Christ and the Church" ^{Eph 5:31-32; Cf. Gen 2:24}
 - ◇ Baptism – nuptial mystery (Christ's body); – nuptial bath ^{Cf. Eph 5:26-27} precedes the wedding feast (Eucharist)
 - ◇ Christian marriage – efficacious sign that gives grace; a true sacrament ^{Cf. DS 1800; CIC, Can. 1055 # 2}

Virginity for the sake of the Kingdom (1618 – 1620)

- Bond with Christ takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social. ^{Cf. Lk 14:26; Mk 10:28-31}
- From the beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have remained virgins ^{Cf. Rev 14:4; 1 Cor 7:32; Mt 2:56}
- Jesus: Eunuchs for the kingdom of God ^{Cf. Mt 19:12}
- Virginity for sake of kingdom – unfolding of baptismal grace, powerful sign of supremacy of bond with Christ & expectation of His return; marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away. ^{Cf. Mk 12:25; 1 Cor 7:31}
- Both Matrimony & virginity for Kingdom of God come from Jesus
- Esteem of virginity for sake of kingdom ^{Cf. LG 42; PC 12; OT 10} & Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable:
 - ◇ Whoever denigrates marriage diminishes the glory of virginity. Whoever praises it makes virginity more admirable & resplendent. What appears good only in comparison with evil would not be truly good. The most excellent good is something even better than what is admitted to be good. ^{St. John Chrysostom, De virg. 10, I PG 48, 540; Cf. John Paul II, FC 16}

II. The Celebration of Marriage (1621 – 1624)

- Latin Rite, marriage between two Catholic faithful usually occur during Mass because of connection of all sacraments with Paschal mystery of Christ ^{Cf. SC 61}
- In the Eucharist, memorial of the New Covenant realized, so fitting that the spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for his Church made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and by receiving Eucharist they form "one body" in Christ ^{Cf. 1 Cor 10:17}
- Appropriate for bride & groom to prepare themselves – receive the sacrament of Penance for a fruitful marriage
- Latin Church: spouses confer on other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church
- In epiclesis⁶ of marriage, spouses receive Holy Spirit as the communion of love of Christ and Church ^{Cf. Eph 5:32}; Holy Spirit is seal of their covenant, source of their love and strength to renew their fidelity

III. Matrimonial Consent⁷ (1625 – 1637)

- Parties to marriage covenant: baptized man and woman, free⁸ to contract marriage, who freely express consent
 - ◇ Consent⁹; Cf. CIC, can. 1103; no substitute for consent ^{Cf. CIC, can. 1057 # 1}; freedom lacking = invalid¹⁰ marriage (null)
 - ◇ Binds spouses to each other & finds its fulfillment in the two "becoming one flesh." ^{Gen 2:24; Cf. Mt 10:8; Eph 5:31}
 - ◇ Priest/deacon receives consent of spouses in name of Church & gives Church blessing
 - ◇ Presence of priest/deacon (and witnesses) confirms the marriage is an ecclesial reality
 - ◇ Annulment: competent Church tribunal rules a lacking of above, declare marriage sacrament null ^{Cf. CIC, cann. 1095-1107}
- Reasons Church requires marriage contract according to the church form ^{Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1813-1816; CIC, can. 1108}
 - ◇ Marriage is a state of life in the Church requiring witnesses
 - ◇ Sacramental marriage a liturgical act, appropriately celebrated in Church public liturgy
 - ◇ Spouses enter ecclesial order with rights & duties in Church between spouses & toward children
 - ◇ Public character of consent protects the vow (I do) once given & helps the spouses remain faithful
- Preparation for marriage – prime importance to help ensure marriage lasts till death
 - ◇ Example & teaching given by parents and families remain the special form of preparation
 - ◇ Pastors' & Christian communities' roles indispensable for transmission of marriage and family values ^{Cf. CIC, can. 1063}

Mixed marriages and disparity of cult¹¹ (1633 – 1637)

- Mixed marriage – between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic (Protestant, Orthodox)
 - ◇ Difference of confession between spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle
 - ◇ Both required to learn from each other the way in which each lives in fidelity to Christ

⁶ Epiclesis – moment of consecration; used in expressing when the bread and wine become the body & blood of Christ

⁷ Human act by which partners mutually give themselves to each other

⁸ Free – No constraint, not impeded by natural or church law

⁹ Consent – act of will of each without coercion or grave external fear

¹⁰ Valid & Invalid Sacrament – ruled if sacrament gave grace ex opere operato (literally "from the work having been worked" & specifically "by the very fact of the action's being performed")

¹¹ Cult – system of religious worship

- Latin Church law – mixed marriage requires express permission of church authority for liceity¹²; Cf. CIC, can. 1124
- Catholic must raise children Catholic & baptized non-Catholic must agree to not hinder this

- Marriage with disparity of cult – between a Catholic and a nonbaptized person (of different religion)
- Church law – express dispensation from this impediment is required for the validity of the marriage. Cf. CIC, can. 1086
- Catholic must raise children Catholic & unbaptized non-Catholic must agree to not hinder this
- Catholic spouse task: "...unbelieving husband...consecrated through wife...unbelieving wife...consecrated through husband." ^{1 Cor 7:14}; potential of consecration to lead to free conversion of spouse ^{Cf. 1 Cor 7:16}; sincere married love, humble & patient practice of family virtues, perseverance in prayer...prepare spouse to accept grace of conversion

IV. The Effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony (1638 – 1642)

- "From a valid marriage arises a bond between the spouses...by its very nature is perpetual and exclusive...in a Christian marriage the spouses are strengthened and...consecrated for duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament" Cf. CIC, can. 1134

The marriage bond (1639 – 1640)

- By consent spouses mutually give & receive one another – sealed by God himself ^{Cf. Mk 10:9}
- From covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law...even in the eyes of society" ^{GS 48 # 1}
- Spousal covenant integrated into covenant of God/man "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love" ^{GS 48 # 2}

The grace of the sacrament of Matrimony (1641 – 1642)

- Christian spouses, "by reason of their state in life & order, have own special gifts in the People of God" ^{LG 11 # 2}
- Grace perfects couple's love & strengthens indissoluble unity; each helps other attain holiness in married life & welcoming/educating children ^{Cf. LG 11 # 2; LG 41}
- Christ is source of grace & dwells with them, gives strength to 1. Take up their crosses & follow him, 2. Rise after they fall, 3. Forgive one another, 4. Bear other's burdens, 5. Subject to other from reverence for Christ, ^{Cf. Eph 5:21; Gal 6:2} & 5. Love other with supernatural, tender, fruitful love

V. The Goods and Requirements of Conjugal Love (1643 – 1654)

- "Conjugal love involves totality...deeply personal unity...open to fertility...which...purifies and strengthens them...raises them...making them the expression of specifically Christian values" ^{FC 13}

The unity and indissolubility of marriage (1644 -1645)

- "no longer two, but one flesh" ^{Mt 19:6; Cf. Gen 2:24}, "called to grow continually in...communion through day-to-day fidelity...promise of total mutual self-giving" ^{FC 19}, deepened by common faith and Eucharist received together
- "unity...made clear in...equal personal dignity...(of) man and wife in mutual...unreserved affection" ^{GS 49 # 2}

The fidelity of conjugal love (1646 – 1651)

- By its very nature...requires the inviolable fidelity of the spouses
- Deepest reason is found in fidelity of God to his covenant, in that of Christ to his Church
- Seem difficult/impossible to bind self for life to another human being... more important to proclaim Good News that God loves us with definitive & irrevocable love, married couples share in this love (supports & sustains them), and by their faithfulness can be witnesses to God's faithful love ^{Cf. FC 20}
- Situations in which living together becomes practically impossible; in cases Church permits physical separation of spouses (living apart), but do not stop being husband and wife before God & are not free to contract a new union
- "Whoever divorces...and marries another, commits adultery" ^{Mk 10:11-12}
- Divorced remarried civilly objectively contravenes God's law; cannot receive Eucharist as long as situation persists & cannot exercise certain church responsibilities; sacrament of Penance granted only to those who 1. Repent for violating sign of covenant & fidelity to Christ, 2. Committed to living in complete continence¹³; they should listen to the Word of God, attend Mass, persevere in prayer, contribute to works of charity and community efforts for justice, raise children in Christian faith, cultivate spirit and practice of penance, imploring, day by day, God's grace. ^{FC 84}

The openness to fertility (1652 – 1654)

- By its nature marriage and married love ordered to procreation/education of children (crowning glory) ^{Cf. GS 48 # 1; 50}

¹² Liceity – liturgical practice in accord with Church law

¹³ Continence – lifestyle in which one refrains from all sexual contact even while married

- Parents are principal/first educators of children ^{Cf. GE 3} Fundamental task of marriage/family is to serve life ^{Cf. FC 28}
- Spouses without children can have meaningful conjugal life; all marriage radiates charity, hospitality and sacrifice

VI. The Domestic Church (1655 – 1658)

- Christ chose to be born and grow in holy family (Joseph & Mary); the Church is "the family of God"; core of Church those who were believers with their entire household ^{Cf. Acts 18:8}; desired entire family be saved ^{Cf. Acts 16:31; Acts 11:14}
- The Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls family *Ecclesia domestica* ^{14 LG 11; cf. FC 21}
- Parents first teachers of faith (word/example); encourage each child in vocation (especially religious) ^{Cf. LG 11}
- Members of family exercise priesthood of baptized by receiving sacraments, prayer, thanksgiving, holy life, self-denial, active charity ^{Cf. LG 10}
- The home is first school of Christian life and "school for human enrichment" ^{GS 52 # 1}
- Learn endurance/joy of work, fraternal love, repeated forgiveness, divine worship (prayer/offering one's life)
- Single persons are especially close to Jesus' heart and deserve special affection and active solicitude of Church, especially pastors; remain without a human family; some live life in spirit of Beatitudes, serving God and neighbor in exemplary fashion; doors of domestic churches must be open to all of them. "No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who 'labor and are heavy laden.'" ^{FC 85; cf. Mt 11:28}

IN BRIEF (1659 – 1666)

- St. Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church... This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church" ^{Eph 5:25, 32}
- Marriage covenant (man and woman form intimate communion of life and love) founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator; by its nature ordered to good of couple and generation and education of children; Jesus raised marriage btw baptized to dignity of a sacrament ^{Cf. CIC, can. 1055 # 1; cf. GS 48 # 1}
- The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life ^{Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799}
- Marriage based on consent (will to give themselves to other mutually/definitively, to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love) of contracting parties
- Marriage establishes couple in public state of life in Church, fitting to be celebrated in public liturgical celebration before priest/deacon (Church witness), witnesses and assembly of the faithful
- Unity, indissolubility, and openness to fertility are essential to marriage
- Christian home is where children receive the first proclamation of the faith; the family home is rightly called "the domestic church," a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity
- Problems:
 - ◇ Polygamy incompatible with unity of marriage
 - ◇ Refusal of fertility turns married life away from its supreme gift: the child ^{GS 50 # 1}
 - ◇ Divorce separates what God has joined together
- The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God as taught by Christ. They are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive Eucharistic communion. They will lead Christian lives especially by educating their children in the faith

This talk is posted here: <http://melekali.50megs.com/Writings/Index.html>

¹⁴ *Ecclesia domestica* – Latin for "domestic Church"