

# Homily Hints on Marriage

With marriage being a widely-discussed topic in the media, there are opportunities to address the issue. The fundamental point to convey is that marriage is the loving, faithful, permanent union of a man and a woman. In the sacrament of marriage, couples promise to one another a love that is free, faithful, total (gift of self) and fruitful (open to life).

## What married love teaches us about God's love:

- Marriage is ordered to the good of the spouses (unity) and the procreation and education of their children (the fruit of their love and the supreme gift of marriage – an eternal soul).
- The love between a husband and a wife is uniquely capable of providing children with the most supportive environment for growth and mature development. One of the most profound expressions of self-giving love is the procreation and education of a child where the couple becomes co-creators with God.
- Marriage is more than just a contract (a civil union); it has been raised to a sacrament by Christ. In so doing marriage is a means toward holiness and couples are called to transform their homes into domestic churches (a school of love). No family is perfect, but we all strive toward holiness and loving one another perfectly. When we inevitably fall short, forgiveness is essential.

## What married love teaches us about Jesus' self-giving love:

- Marriage is a unique human institution in that it bonds men and women who are different yet complementary (Gn. 1:27), to one another in a permanent relationship that is best suited for their total exclusive love and the raising of a family. In the gospel today, Jesus teaches his disciples about the nature of self giving and self sacrificing love. The sacrament of marriage is an important expression of self-giving love between a man and a woman.
- In the Church and in your own profession and workplace we see the benefit of the diversity of gifts that men and women bring. There is a complementarity between man and woman that finds its fullest expression in marriage. Because men and women have complementarity they are able to cooperate with one another physically, psychologically and emotionally in the formation of a complete whole – this union was chosen by Christ as a image of His relationship with the Church (Eph. 5:32).

## Marital love's importance to society:

- Beyond the Catholic faith tradition, a man and woman pledging their lives together in marriage has been a part of human history in every culture. From the beginning, marriage between one man and one woman has been a vital building block of human society.
- Marriage benefits the man and woman, the children they may conceive and society as a whole. Marriage between a man and a woman serves a unique place in society by allowing for the procreation and education of children within the context of a family. While recognizing with sensitivity that some husbands and wives are unable to bear children, the ideal of the family must still be promoted for the common good of society.
- This experience of self giving love in marriage and family life is more than a private matter; it is a public institution that has public significance and fruitfulness.

Today we are being called to defend the significance of marriage in the public sphere and the implications that any change to marriage would have for religious institutions and the personal exercise of one's freedom to live and act according to one's faith. Adoption of new laws may force people to cooperate with morally evil acts to which they are opposed (see *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, #399). The concern in the areas of health care and marriage is that groups are advocating restricting and limiting the free exercise of conscience that is guaranteed in civil law. This would impact our churches, hospitals, schools and all church institutions.