



Opening Question:

When was the last time you attended a wedding?

Have you ever been to a wedding anniversary celebration? People gather to celebrate a loving couple who have remained faithful for twenty five or even fifty years of marriage. Many times, the couple is surrounded by children and grandchildren. Family and friends gather to toast qualities that seem distant in modern society: love and friendship, stability, and life long commitment. But, there is another quality that's unspoken but present: a bond that creates a union transcending two individuals. A bond that can produce children. A bond that reflects the power of God.

For Catholics, marriage is more than a legal contract. Matrimony as a sacramental covenant between the couple and God. As a covenant, it is more than an agreement. It is a lifelong relationship where the couple promises to be faithful to each other and to God. In turn, God will be faithful to them. It is creative and Christ-centered.

Image and Likeness of God

The first few chapters of Genesis detailed the creation. It reached its peak with the appearance of humans.

God created humans in his image and likeness; he made men and women. God blessed them and said:

Have many children and fill the earth with people.

Genesis 1:27-28a

Note God made us humans to reflect his creative power and his love for his work in the context of the family. It's not just the birthing of children where we can reveal the image and likeness of God. We show those qualities within the family through our love and self-sacrifice for the good of those we live with.



Equality of the Married Couple

God intended the couple to be equal partners in their life long journey.

The Lord God said, "It isn't good for the man to live alone." So, he made the man fall into a deep sleep, and the Lord made a woman out of one of the man's ribs. The Lord God brought her to the man, and the man exclaimed, "Here is someone like me!"

She is part of my body,

my own flesh and bones.

She came from me, a man.

So I will name her Woman!"

Genesis 2:18, 21-23

While each of the partners might have different roles in their marriage, they are meant to work in unison for the common good.

Sign of Christ and the Church

The married couple should strive for togetherness. This unity should be based upon compassion and care that will lead to permanence.

A husband should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He should love his wife as much as he loves himself. The Scriptures say,

"A man leaves his father and mother to get

married, and he becomes like one person with his wife."

This is a great mystery, but I understand it to mean Christ and his church.

Ephesians 5:25, 28, 31-32

In other words, the married couple should strive to live a life together that reflects the unity of Christ and the Church. In this way, the lifestyle of the couple points to something greater than themselves.

Celebration of Matrimony

In the Latin rite, the spouses are the ministers of the sacrament. They confer it on each other with freely consented vows in public. Because it's a sacrament, it needs an ordained minister to act as a witness for the Church. It also requires a liturgical setting. Since the unity of couple reflects that of Christ and his Church, it's preferred that it be in the context of the Eucharist.

Effects of Matrimony

Living out the sacrament of Matrimony places Christ at the center of the couple. The glue of their relationship is a shared faith and living out the challenges of that faith day by day.

If anyone wants to come with me, he must stop being selfish. He must pick up his cross, carry it, and follow me.

Matthew 16:24

Married life requires self-giving for the good of each other, a constant pledge of permanence and faithfulness, even an openness to the future including children. The end result is the Domestic Church, the "Family of God" in miniature where Christian values are lived out.

Why do we celebrate married couples for their long lives together? Because they represent the best of us. Mutual love, a lifelong commitment even through the tough times, care for each other and for children. The importance of family. But far more than those qualities, they point to something greater than themselves. Their relationships reflect the qualities of God's love for us.

Closing Question:

Who do you know has a solid marriage? What qualities make it so?

Reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraphs CCC 1601-1666

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