

***The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time***  
***October 24, 2021***  
***Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #41)***

*“Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ and have need of his graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to . . . the full realization of God’s plan”*  
*(Familiaris Consortio – Pope John Paul II)*

As our reflections for this Year of the Eucharist and the Parish continue, we will be looking at the Sacrament of Matrimony over the next two weeks. Note the word Matrimony versus Marriage. The same? Or different? Marriage: a civil, legally recognized union of partners [from Merriam-Webster]. Matrimony: a sacrament; a sacred covenant before God. Notice the key words. The truth can only be found in meaning of the word Matrimony (from the Latin, matrimonium, meaning to make a woman a mother).

When you and your spouse participated in this sacrament, did the priest or deacon hand you a “HOW TO” manual? Does such a book exist? We will soon see, maybe for the first time, that it does. This book, to which I refer is found in most homes. Let’s explore this oft ignored tome [book] regarding this sacred covenant.

As with all the sacraments [the outward signs of inward realities] its meaning—its “HOW TO” instruction—can be found in God’s sacred, inspired word—the Bible. We find detail of this sacrament from cover to cover, from Genesis to Revelation. In the beginning, Genesis, chapter two, *It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.* We all remember that his next actions brought the woman to the man: *This at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.* Adam is in effect saying “we are made of the same stuff.”

This reality, that of man and woman as one, has been seen throughout history in most cultures. Even in Greek mythology we find this mystery. Plato, the Greek philosopher, provided it this way. *“Humans were originally created with four arms, four legs and a head with two faces. Fearing their power, Zeus split them into two separate parts . . . condemning them to spend the rest of their lives in search of the other half. . . and when one of them meets the other half, the actual half of himself . . . the pair are lost in an amazement of love . . . one will not be out of the other’s sight.”* He went on to say, *“Love is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete.”* This same desire for wholeness—completion—opens us to freely and totally give self to another via the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Throughout the Old Testament (i.e., Tobit, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Jeremiah, and Psalms, to name a few), this reality is proclaimed. It continues in the New Testament. Matthew relays the words of Jesus, *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be **joined** to his wife, and the **two shall become one flesh*** [emphasis added]. This continues with St. Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, etc., and comes together in the proclamation of the Marriage Supper in Revelations. Does this sacrament, then, appear to contain some extra significance?

Christ’s first miracle—His first recorded act—occurred at a marriage feast in Cana. Just as by his love the water became wine, so too, when, in the course of the Liturgy, the priest or deacon mixes the water and wine, the

water and wine become one, not separated. Thus, the union of man and wife in this Sacrament given by God is pre-figured in the Holy Eucharist. Matrimony must go beyond the two as one, for without Christ in the lives of the man and the woman, it becomes just a marriage, a civil, legal union. St. Pope John Paul II gave us these words in his first exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* [provided at the top of this handout]. To be *interiorly ordained to fulfillment*, a marriage must be centered on Christ, His Cross and His real presence in the Eucharist. St. Paul told the Colossians *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called to be one body . . .* This is the added reality of the Sacrament; it finds its truth and peace only in and through Christ. It brings the grace and harmony found only in the presence of Christ. Jesus said in John's Gospel, *You can love each other as Father and Son love each other, because Father and Son live in you.* Your lives must become a trinity, a man and a woman and Christ. If one of these is removed or overlooked or forgotten, at any moment, the whole thing collapses, caves-in on itself.