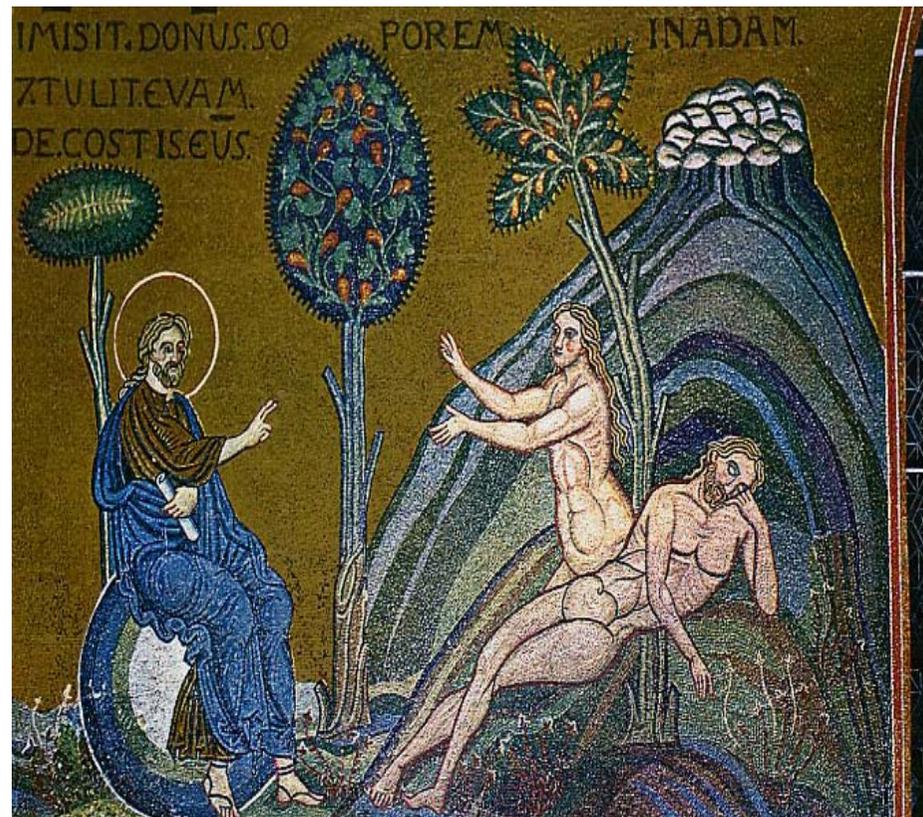


Your Marriage Made in Heaven



Imprimatur: Archbishop Cyril S. Bustros, Eparch of Newton, 25 January 2011.

A Marriage Made in Heaven

Are you not looking for true love?

Every man, woman and child who has ever lived has longed for true, faithful, permanent, unconditional love. That is the deepest desire of every human heart.

For most men, this longing includes a longing for the exclusive love of one woman. For most women, this longing includes a longing for the exclusive love of one man. But today, throughout the world, there is widespread confusion, as many men and women doubt that it is possible, or even normal, to be happily united to one man or one woman for life. This, in turn, has led to endless misery—since people who do not believe that a thing is possible rarely invest enough time and effort to do that thing, even when it is perfectly feasible. The purpose of this pamphlet is to show that the ideal of “one man for one woman united in love for life” is true and that the first step to attaining that ideal is to believe in it.

Origins of the Marriage Ideal

In examining any subject, it is good to start at the beginning. Where did the idea of one man being united to one woman for life originate? Was it a man’s idea? A woman’s idea? Or something else?

In most schools all over the world—in Africa, Asia, and Oceania, as well as in Europe, and North and South America—children are taught that human beings and apes evolved from a common ancestor somewhere in Africa hundreds of thousands of years ago. According to this view, the union of man and woman is little different from the union of a male and female monkey or chimpanzee. It is something that developed as part of the struggle for survival. And people who hold this view are quick to point out that there are many places in the world where it was normal for one woman to have many men or for one man to have many women, providing evidence, so they say, that “one man for one woman” is one of many arrangements that have been tried in the

Even then, you can have a marriage made in Heaven—a marriage between your soul and God: a marriage between you and Jesus Christ, your Heavenly Bridegroom. It is He who longs to be the Bridegroom of your soul—and of every soul.

Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).

May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, bless you and give you peace!

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Your Marriage Made in Heaven

No doubt you are thinking, “What does all of this have to do with me?” But it has everything to do with you. Don’t forget that Louis and Zelig did not come together in marriage—nor did they remain faithful and fruitful unto death—through their own strength. They would be the first to testify that all of these blessings were purely the grace of God. There is nothing that God did for them that He will not do for you—if you let Him—if you remove the obstacles in His way.

Let’s examine your situation and see how easily you can begin your path to a marriage made in Heaven.

If you are a young person, who has not yet been married, the path is wide open to you. If you are not yet a member of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church that Jesus founded, we can show you how to become a member. First, you must repent of your sins, and ask Jesus to give you the grace to follow Him and to do His Will all the days of your life. You will need to learn the basic truths of the Catholic faith, and then you will be able to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. Once you are a member of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church, dedicating yourself to doing God’s perfect Will each day, ask Him to show you His plan for your life. And, if He has called you to Holy Matrimony, He will send you your perfect match. He will give you your “marriage made in Heaven.”

If you are already married, the path is wide open to you, too. You need only follow the same steps, but have your marriage sanctified in the Church, to receive the grace to be faithful and fruitful together as long as you live.

If you are married and divorced and have married again, a good priest can still help you to discover God’s Will for your life. Contact us, and we will be happy to help you.

And what if you are too old, too sick, or too broken-hearted to marry?

struggle for survival, and not necessarily better or worse than any of the other arrangements. People who hold this view often look at animal behavior and determine what is normal or natural for human beings by studying what is normal or natural for animals in the world today. If baboons practice homosexual play, then that must be normal for humans. If a male sea horse takes care of the baby sea horse, then that must be a normal role for a male human being—and so on.

In the future people will look back at these ideas in amazement that intelligent human beings could have placed such faith in them. Yes, it is a matter of faith—because, in reality, there is no proof whatsoever that man has evolved from a common ancestor with apes. All of the evidence that has been touted for human evolution has failed to prove any link between human beings and sub-human ancestors. Since this is a book about true love and not about evolution, I will not be able to present all of the evidence against the hypothesis of human evolution here.¹ Instead, I have included a link to a website that exposes the flagrant errors of the hypothesis of human evolution so that you can examine the evidence and judge for yourself. But what can be stated unequivocally here is that according to virtually all of the cultural traditions in the entire world, the idea of one man for one woman for life was not a human invention. It was God’s idea.

Male and Female He Created Them

And the Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise

for pleasure, to dress it, and keep it.

16 And he commanded him, saying: Of every tree of paradise

thou shalt eat:

17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt

not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.

¹ <http://www.restoringtruthministries.org/images/ScienceTearSheet4.pdf>

18 And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone:

let us make him a help like unto himself.

19 And the Lord God having formed out of the ground all the

beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air, brought them to **Adam** to see what he would call them: for whatsoever **Adam** called any living creature the same is its name.

20 And **Adam** called all the beasts by their names, and all the

fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field: but for **Adam** there was not found a helper like himself.

21 Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon **Adam**: and when he

was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it.

22 And the Lord God built the rib which he took from **Adam**

into a woman: and brought her to **Adam**.

23 And **Adam** said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of

my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken

out of man.

24 Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall

cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.

25 And they were both naked: to wit, **Adam** and his wife: and

were not ashamed.

This account of the creation of the first man and woman is taken from the book of Genesis, the first book of the Holy Scriptures of Christians and Jews. But the idea that the first marriage was made in heaven is not unique to Christians and Jews. All over the world, countless cultures

Zelie also sought to dedicate herself to God as a religious sister. Eventually, both Louis and Zelie were refused admission to the monasteries where they had sought to consecrate their lives. Now it was God's turn to play the Matchmaker—as He had done for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden:

Zélie had decided that if God did not want her as a religious she would marry and have many children who would all be consecrated to Him. She turned to Our Lady and asked her how she should earn her dowry. On December 8, 1851 she received her answer in the form of an interior voice which said, 'Make Alençon point lace'. Zélie went to a professional school to learn her craft; she quickly excelled and left to start her own business.

One day when she was crossing the Bridge of St. Leonard, Zélie noticed a man passing by and again heard that interior voice. It said, 'This is he whom I have prepared for you.' The man was Louis Martin, whose mother had noticed Zélie at the lace making school. On July 13, 1858 Zélie and Louis were married; she was nearly 27. <http://www.sttherese.com/Parents.html> *A Short Life of Venerable Zélie Martin Mother of St. Thérèse J. Linus Ryan, O. Carm.*

The marriage of Louis and Zelie had its full share of sufferings, but it was abundantly blessed by God. By the grace of God that they received in the Sacrament of Holy Marriage, Louis and Zelie remained faithful to God, to each other and to their children as long as they lived—and fruitful with children and works of charity both in and beyond their family circle. Of their nine children, four died in infancy. But of the five surviving children, four became religious sisters, and one of them, St. Therese of Lisieux, became one of the greatest saints of modern times. Zelie died soon after having her ninth child, and Louis never married again. Today, the Catholic Church honors them both as models of holiness.

Contraception has contributed greatly to a sexual revolution that has made many young men and women lose faith in the possibility of a “marriage made in Heaven.” Once the sacred one-flesh union between husband and wife is reduced to a sterile thrill shared briefly by two selfish individuals, the very possibility of a permanent, exclusive and fruitful union between one man and one woman begins to fade. The Internet and media are full of advertisements by dating services promising to connect their customers with the “perfect match.” But most of these end up being nothing more than glorified prostitution services. Only Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom holds the key to a marriage made in Heaven, and only those who follow His ways and obey His commandments can find that key.

The Key to a Marriage Made in Heaven

God revealed the key to a marriage made in Heaven in the book of Genesis. First, He created Adam in His image and likeness, in a state of glorious holiness, so that Adam’s every thought, word, and action was animated by the Holy Spirit and gave glory to God. While Adam was in that state, God placed him into a deep sleep and formed the body of Eve from his side. In short, God was able to provide Adam with a perfect help-mate, even delivering her to him while he slept, simply because Adam was intent on doing the Will of God. The lesson is crystal clear. Men and women who want a marriage made in Heaven—and who want God to be their Matchmaker—need only be mindful of one thing: the perfect Will of God. God has given us His pledge in His revealed Word—that those who are called to the state of Holy Marriage and who stay focused on doing the perfect Will of God will receive their “marriage made in heaven” from the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Louis and Zelig Martin

Louis Martin was a watchmaker in Alencon, France, in the nineteenth century. Louis was baptized, confirmed and made his Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. He studied and practiced his faith, and, wanting to serve God above all things, he sought entrance to a monastery. In Louis’ home town, meanwhile, a young woman named

have handed down accounts of the creation of the first human beings. Although they differ in details, most of these agree in recounting the creation of one man and one woman who became the ancestors of all of mankind. Under normal circumstances, the integrity of a packet of information will deteriorate during transmission. In the light of this truth, it is all the more remarkable that many accounts of the origins of man and the universe that agree substantially with the Genesis account have been preserved until recent times without Jewish or Christian influence. For example, one of the first Christian missionaries to modern-day Myanmar (formerly Burma) was a Baptist named Adoniram Judson. According to one account:

Judson canoed down the Salween River back into the jungle to a tribe called the Karen, whose pagan traditions were strangely amenable to the gospel—they had a Creator of man, and woman from his rib; an ancient temptation and fall; expectation of a white man’s appearance with a sacred parchment . . . When Adoniram Judson died, there were 8,000 believers and 100 churches in Burma, which today, known as Myanmar, has the third-largest population of Baptists in the world, mostly the Karen and Kachin tribe. (Andree’ Seu, “Gospel Cyclone,” *World* (May 31/June 7, 2008).

The idea of one man and one woman united in love forever is God’s idea, not man’s (or woman’s) idea. And, because it is God’s idea, and He created us, we reject it at our peril. The great Christian Father of the Church St. John Chrysostom expressed the common conviction of the Christian community when he commented on Moses’ words, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” arguing that God

gave this command that the one man should be joined to the one woman. But if it had been His will that he should put this one away, and bring in another, when He had made one man, He would have formed many Women. But now both by the manner of the creation, and by the manner of lawgiving, He showed that one man must dwell with one woman continually, and never

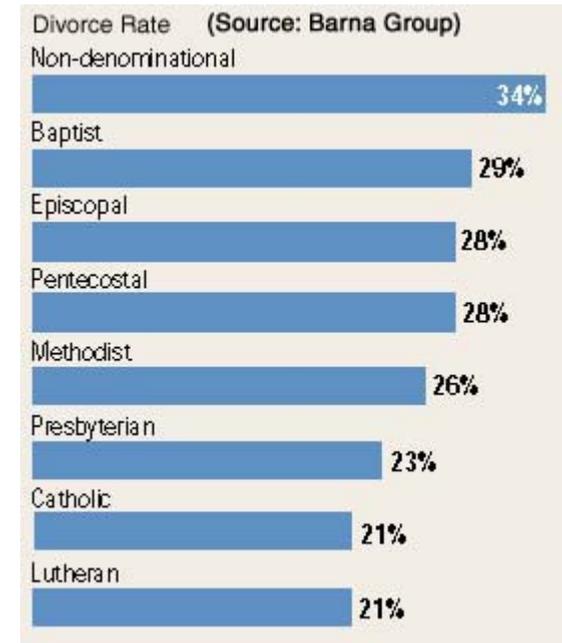
break off from her." On Matthew, 62:1 (370 CE), in NPNF1,X:382

The book of Genesis makes clear that God created man and woman for each other—equal in dignity but with different and complementary gifts. The great German saint Hildegard of Bingen wrote that:

After God had created Adam, Adam experienced a strong sense of love, when God sent sleep over him. And God created a figure to love for the man out of his rib, and so the woman is the love of man. As soon as the woman was shaped, God gave man the procreative instinct, so that through his love for the woman he would father sons. For when Adam saw Eve, he was completely filled with wisdom, because he saw in front of him the mother through whom he was to father sons. But when Eve saw Adam, she saw him as if she was seeing heaven, and as the soul lifts up desiring the heavenly, for her hope was resting in man. So also only mutual love and no other shall and may be between man and woman.

In this passage St. Hildegard beautifully summarized the complementary callings of man and woman—of the man to be the spiritual leader of his wife and family; and of the woman to be the help-mate of her husband and the nurturer of her family. With the insight of a true mystic, St. Hildegard saw that God had created the union of man and woman for their mutual sanctification (“as the soul lifts up desiring the heavenly”) and for the procreation and sanctification of their offspring. As partners in this union, Adam and Eve enjoyed equal dignity but distinct roles. To Adam in his role as head of the human family, God gave the task of guarding and caring for his wife and their home in paradise. To Adam alone God gave the commandment not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eve received this commandment from God indirectly through her husband. Her obedience to the commandment depended on her faith in the Word of God as she had received it from Adam.

contraception and practice Natural Family Planning have a 0.2% divorce rate, as compared with Christians of communions that allow contraception and Catholics who practice contraception in disobedience to the teaching of the Catholic Church.



www.adherents.com/largecom/baptist_divorce.html

Since it is generally recognized that parental divorce is the greatest tragedy that can befall a child,² the vanishingly small divorce rate among those who follow God’s law as it was understood by all of the Fathers and handed down to us from the Apostles is a good indication that much of the scandalous or mediocre behavior one sees in professing Christians is actually the fruit of their failure to accept the whole Christian Faith as it has been received and handed down to us from the Apostles.

² See “Children of Divorce: All Kinds of Problems” at <http://www.divorcereform.org/all.html>

family member or neighbor, or they have been exploited by boyfriends, or they have felt sexually inadequate because of the sexual saturation of the media. She said she had been sexually abused by a family member but that her husband's willingness to use NFP had made her feel revered by him. This I have heard countless times from women, that the use of NFP makes them feel that their husbands greatly respect and cherish them and value them for much more than their sexual availability.

Males have also spoken to me of the healing power of NFP. Our culture attempts to turn males into sexual predators. Rather than cultivating the natural propensity of males to protect women and children, our culture serves to suppress that instinct and to give full range to the baser tendency to be sexually self-indulgent and exploitative.

Males in our culture are made to feel sexually deficient if they value chastity and are made to feel super-masculine if they are out of control sexually. The use of NFP assists males in recapturing the sexual self-mastery that promotes their self-esteem and allows them to become truly self-giving attentive spouses to their wives -- and they are delighted by the rewards they reap.

For nineteen hundred years, from the Resurrection of Jesus until 1930, all Christian leaders—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant—condemned contraception as a crime against God and the sanctity of marriage. In 1930, the Anglican Church became the first Christian community to allow contraception to married couples, and since then virtually every major Christian community outside of the Catholic Church has reversed its historic position and allowed contraception. The devastating effects of contraception were predicted with great accuracy by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* and have been well summarized by Dr. Janet Smith, among others. But perhaps the greatest testimony to God's wisdom in forbidding contraception can be found at the Physicians for Life website <http://www.physiciansforlife.org/content/view/193/36/> which cites the results of studies showing that couples who abstain from

The Fall of Adam and Eve

The Bible teaches that God created everything in the universe for man—man, made in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. Not only did God make every kind of material creature for mankind; He also made a host of spiritual beings to serve Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word and the men made in his image. The Bible teaches that a great angel named Lucifer, or the light-bearer, rebelled against God. According to the Fathers of the Church, the foremost commentators on Holy Scripture, Lucifer rebelled because he—a great spirit—did not want to serve creatures of flesh and blood. In his rebellion against God, Lucifer dedicated his angelic intelligence and energies to driving a wedge between God and His human creatures, so as to drag as many of them as possible to eternal damnation in hell. Lucifer's first attack was directed against Eve, since she had received the Commandment of God indirectly through her husband and was more vulnerable to Satan's clever manipulation of the Word of God.

The Bible tells us that Satan did not immediately tempt Eve to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead, he twisted God's words so as to make them appear unreasonable and self-contradictory, and only then, after he had sowed a seed of doubt in Eve's mind concerning the goodness and trustworthiness of God, did he appeal to her pride and selfish delight in the appearance of the fruit. In this way, her selfish delight in the appearance of the fruit overwhelmed her reverence for the Word of God and for the authority of her husband through whom she had received God's commandment. According to Genesis:

- 1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God made. And he said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?
- 2 And the woman answered him, saying: Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat:
- 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of

paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die.

- 4 And the serpent said to the woman: No, you shall not die the death.
- 5 For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.
- 6 And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat.

God had set Adam over his wife as her protector and guide. According to the Fathers of the Church, if Adam had corrected Eve and brought her to repentance, she could have been restored to God's grace. But Adam failed in his duty toward her, and, by placing her will above the Will of God, he followed her into disgrace and disobeyed God.

And to **Adam** he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life.

- 18 Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou eat the herbs of the earth.
- 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.

Commenting on these words, St. John Chrysostom added:

You are head of your wife, and she has been created for your sake; but you have inverted the proper order; not only have you failed to keep her on the straight and narrow but you have been dragged down with her, and whereas the rest of the body should follow the head, the contrary has in fact occurred, the head following the rest of the body, turning things upside down" (St.

In keeping with the constant teaching of the Church, the Catholic Church allows married couples to practice Natural Family Planning, which involves abstaining from the marriage act during the fertile periods of a woman's cycle, to avoid conception for serious reasons—such as to allow a mother to nurse her baby long enough before becoming pregnant again—but without frustrating the purpose of the marriage act and without hurting the woman's body or reducing her to a sex object. Author Janet Smith tells of the many testimonies she has heard from men and women whose marriages have been resurrected through the practice of Natural Family Planning.

[one woman told] of the miserable childhoods she and her husband had. Hers was marked by repeated, sexual abuse and neglect; her husband's father was a brutal womanizer who eventually divorced his mother. The couple had been sexually active before marriage and had used contraception for the first seven years of their marriage. They had never used NFP, among other reasons, because they "never heard it promoted at Mass, and we were active churchgoers, not infrequent guests." She notes that "priests gave us conflicting opinions on unnatural birth control."

Beginning a family initially helped her recover some appreciation for the meaning of sexuality and helped her cope with suicidal thoughts, but it wasn't until she and her husband started using NFP that her life and marriage was transformed. She allows that it may seem implausible that the use of NFP would be so effective in healing the personal wounds of herself and her husband and in improving their marriage immeasurably. Persuasively she observes, "just as something as simple as not working on the Lord's Day can enrich family life, so can NFP enrich a marriage."

Years ago, a woman challenged me to stress the "therapeutic" power of NFP more strenuously. I asked her to explain what she meant. She said that in her view, most women in our culture have been sexually abused in some way, either literally by some

Jesus can explain how we can love each other ‘more each day than the day before.’”

From the time of the Apostles, the Church has always insisted on the necessity of openness to life within marriage. Genesis 38 tells the story of Onan, who spilled his seed on the ground to avoid having a child, and was struck dead by God. All of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church taught that any attempt to frustrate the natural consequences of the marriage union by actively preventing conception was gravely sinful. According to St. John Chrysostom:

The procreation of children in marriage is the 'heritage' and 'reward' of the Lord; a blessing of God (cf. Psalm 127:3). It is the natural result of the act of sexual intercourse in marriage, which is a sacred union through which God Himself joins the two together into 'one flesh' (Genesis 1-2, Matthew 19, Mark 10, Ephesians 5, et. al.). The procreation of children is not in itself the sole purpose of marriage, but a marriage without the desire for children, and the prayer to God to bear and nurture them, is contrary to the 'sacrament of love.'” 19

In a homily he preached in 391 as the Patriarch of Constantinople, St. John added:

Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit, where there are medicines of sterility [oral contraceptives], where there is murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well... Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God and fight with his [natural] laws?... Yet such turpitude... the matter still seems indifferent to many men; even to many men having wives. In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife.¹⁸

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 17:17*, English version, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 74, p. 231).

As long as Adam and Eve remained in the grace of God, they were able to love each other unselfishly with His divine love. But as soon as Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they lost His divine grace and lost control over their thoughts and passions. The light of God’s glory, which had shone around their bodies from the moment of their creation, now dimmed, and exposed their nakedness. The husband and wife who had been created in union with God, with each other, and with creation, now found themselves alienated from God, from each other, and from all created things. The Original Sin of Adam had brought divorce into the world.

The Memory of Eden

Virtually every culture on earth retains a memory of the first marriage made in heaven and of the misery that entered the world through the first couple’s disobedience. In spite of the sadness that followed their sin of disobedience, most of the traditions concerning Adam and Eve teach that they remained faithful to each other for the rest of their lives—some 900 years or so! Considering that Adam lived 930 years from his creation, it is likely that his marriage to Eve was the longest-lasting marriage in the history of mankind. And there is no doubt that it established the pattern of faithful, exclusive, monogamous love that all of their descendants have aspired to.

The sin of Adam and Eve had devastating consequences for relations between man and God, between man and woman, and between mankind and creation. However, God promised to send a New Adam and a New Eve who would restore these relationships and bring creation to its fulfillment. Over the course of the centuries, God prepared a people for Himself through the descendants of Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so that the Redeemer of the world could ultimately be born of one of their descendants, a virgin, a descendant of King David, who would give birth to Him in the city of David—Bethlehem. During this period of

preparation, God's prophets expressed God's love for His people in the language of a bridegroom. One of the most beautiful love poems ever written, the Song of Songs, described the love of a man and a woman but was also understood to describe the love between God and the soul.

In the fullness of time, Jesus fulfilled God's prophetic words and became a man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jesus described Himself as a Bridegroom and performed his first public miracle at a Wedding by changing water (a symbol of humanity) into wine (a symbol of divinity)—a beautiful symbol of the marriage between God and man. Later, the Apostle Paul compared the union of husband and wife in marriage to the union between Jesus and the Church. As Jesus laid down his life for the Church, joined Himself to her in the Holy Eucharist, and made her fruitful by the gift of His Holy Spirit, so He created man to lay down his life for his wife and children—to be their spiritual head and support. And, just as Jesus loves his Bride the Church unconditionally, endlessly, and without limit, so He expects husbands and wives to love each other in the same way. This is why when asked about divorce, Jesus had insisted that divorce was not a part of God's original plan for mankind and reminded His hearers: "In the beginning it was not so."

Jesus the Bridegroom at the Wedding of Cana

In his letter to the Ephesians St. Paul developed the comparison between the marriage between Christ and the Church and the marriage between a husband and his wife. In the light of this understanding, St. Paul made a remarkable statement in his letter to the Hebrews, exhorting them to keep "the marriage bed undefiled." To the Hebrews, the only place where sacrifice could be offered to God—and, consequently, the only place that could be defiled—was the altar of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. By teaching that the marriage bed could be "defiled," St. Paul identified the marriage bed as a sacred place, like the altar in the Jerusalem Temple. In doing so, St. Paul also acknowledged that the one-flesh union of husband and wife in holy marriage reflected the inner

life of God. In the light of this understanding, St. Paul pronounced God's judgment upon fornication and adultery not just as unlawful or immoral acts, but as acts of sacrilege—as desecrations of a union so holy that it can only be compared to the union between Christ and His Bride the Church.

The Mystery of Fruitful Love

In the mystery of the inner life of God, the Eternal Father eternally generates a perfect image of Himself. God the Son; and the Infinite Love that flows between God the Father and God the Son is so great that It is a Divine Person, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father through the Son. God created Adam and Eve to love each other with divine love so that when they came together and had children the fruit of their union would be a holy child. In this way, the family of Adam and Eve would become a perfect finite reflection of the Most Holy Trinity. In order to reflect this inner mystery of God, a holy marriage must also be permanent, exclusive, and fruitful. Jesus unequivocally condemned divorce—except where a marriage was unlawful to begin with. He and his Apostles and their successors also taught that a holy marriage must be fruitful in two ways—first, through openness to the gift of children and, secondly, through works of charity, both in and beyond the family circle.

When the disciples protested that permanent, exclusive marriage to one spouse was "impossible," Jesus answered that God would give spouses the power to *do* the impossible—to love each other with His divine love. Through the Gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and in the other mysteries of the Church, Jesus gives all of His disciples the power to love as He loves and to live as He lives. When two Christians are joined together in Holy Marriage, Jesus confers a special sacramental grace upon them to give them the power to be faithful and fruitful as long as they live. Married couples who have lived the grace of their marriage sacrament can testify to the divine power that Jesus has given them to be faithful and fruitful—in spite of numerous sufferings, trials, and tribulations. In the words of one husband—married to the same woman for 37 years (with whom he has raised nine children)—"Only