20 - Sacraments of Service

“What God had joined together let no man put asunder.” - Matt. 19:6

I. Marriage in God’s Plan

 A. The Catholic Church recognizes a spiritual element in the matrimonial bond beyond the simple fact of biological union, and therefore recognizes it as a great work of God’s grace.

 B. Scripture tells us that marriage was instituted at the very Creation of mankind by God. This truth excludes any naturalistic or anthropological speculations on the origin of marriage that would reduce it to a social convention created by man.

 C. The Catechism says that marriage has been “established by the Creator and endowed by Him with its own proper laws” (CCC 1603). The fact that marriage has taken different forms throughout history should not cause us to lose sight of its common and permanent characteristics.

 D. Marriage comes from the fact that God created man out of love and calls Him to love. Love is the innate vocation of every human being (CCC 1604), since man is made in the image of the God Who is love.

 E. The mutual love between man and woman is an image of the enduring love of God, and this love is blessed by the Creator to become fruitful.

 F. Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for each other, and that in the enduring bond of man and wife man finds his fulfillment on the natural level: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:23).

 G. In the Old Testament

 1. Like everything else pertaining to man, the institution of marriage suffered when man fell from God’s grace after Creation

 2. In this state, marriage takes on a remedial aspect

 3. The bond became polluted and used for other ends besides the good of the spouses and the procreation of children (political, economic, social reasons). In many places, polygamy became the norm.

 4. Jesus says that polygamy, as well as divorce, were tolerated in the Old Testament because of “hardness of heart” on the part of the Israelites (Matt. 19:8).

 H. Marriage in the Lord

 1. In the Old Testament, God had used the analogy of marriage to describe His relationship with His people. The Church is called His Bride, and our heavenly reward with Him called “the wedding feast of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7).

 2. Christ’s first miracle was performed at a wedding, and the Church has always attached great importance to Jesus’ presence at the wedding of Cana

 3. The matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble: God himself has determined it "what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder”

 4. There is a deep spiritual connection between Christ’s sacrificial love for the Church and the love of a man for his wife.

 5. The grace of Christian marriage is the fruit of Christ’s cross, which is what St. Paul means when he says, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her”

 I. The Ends of Marriage

 1. According to the Church, marriage exists for two ends:

 a. The procreation of children and the rearing of a family

 b. The mutual good of the spouses

 2. Conjugal love requires fidelity by its very nature, as a consequence of the total gift of self-made by the spouses.

 3. Fidelity is also demanded for the good of the children.

 4. Marriage, specifically the conjugal act, is ordered towards procreation by its very nature

 J. Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom

 1. Though marriage is lofty, Church tradition affirms that there is a higher calling.

 2. The bond with Christ takes precedence over all other bonds.

 “For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it” (Matt. 19:12).

 3. Virginity for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven is a powerful unfolding of baptismal grace and a sign which recalls that marriage is a reality only of this present age which shall pass away and shows forth, in the bodies of consecrated virgins, the mystical presences of that Kingdom to come where we “are neither married nor given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). Consecrated virgins participate now in the life to come by their witness that the bond with Christ is supreme over any earthly bond.

 4. Though both marriage and virginity comes from God, the Church, following St. Paul, has always affirmed that virginity is a superior calling to marriage, for the two-fold reason that marriage is earth-bound whereas virginity is not, and virginity more fully enables one to serve God without distraction:

 K. “According to Latin tradition, the spouses as ministers of Christ's grace mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church” (CCC 1623). This is a unique aspect of Matrimony apart from the other sacraments: that the spouses themselves act as the ministers of the sacrament, which is witnessed and blessed (but not conferred) by the Church.

 L. Like all other sacraments, marriage consists of form and matter, joined with intention and proper minister. There has been much debate throughout the centuries as to in what exactly the form and matter of marriage consists in. Some said the form was the consent, others claimed that this was the matter. What we can say for certain is that two things are necessary for a marriage to occur: one man and one woman (matter), coupled with a free and public consent (form).

-not being under constraint (like a “shotgun wedding”)

-not being impeded by natural of ecclesiastical law

-given by each of the parties, not one only

This consent is vital to the marriage. If it is not given, there is no marriage. The priest or deacon presiding over the marriage ceremony receives the consent of the spouses in the name of the Church and gives the blessing of the Church. The presence of the Church’s minister, and of the witnesses, visibly expresses the fact that marriage is an ecclesial reality.

 M. The fact that marriage is a sacrament and an ecclesial reality is why the Church requires that the faithful contract marriage under a certain form. Several reasons converge to explain this requirement:

 Sacramental marriage is a liturgical act. Therefore, it ought to be celebrated in the public

liturgy of the Church, subject to the Church’s liturgical norms.

Marriage introduces one into an ecclesial order, and creates rights and duties in the Church between spouses and their children.

Since marriage is a state of life in the Church, certainty about it is necessary (hence the obligation to have witnesses).

 The public character of the consent protects the "I do" once given and helps the spouses remain faithful to it.

 N. Effects of the Sacrament

 Two new realities arise as a result of this sacrament: the marriage bond and the grace of the sacrament. The bond that arises through the consent of the spouses is sealed by God Himself. The marriage bond has been established by God in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved and remains until the death of one of the spouses. Neither the Church nor civil government has the power to contravene this reality.

 Like all sacraments, marriage has its own special grace proper to it. The grace of matrimony is intended to perfect the couple’s love and strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they help each other on the path to holiness in their married life and in the education of children.

 O. Separation

“Yet there are some situations in which living together becomes practically impossible for a variety of reasons. In such cases the Church permits the physical separation of the couple and their living apart. However, the spouses do not cease to be husband and wife before God and so are not free to contract a new union. In this difficult situation, the best solution would be, if possible, reconciliation. The Christian community is called to help these persons live out their situation in a Christian manner and in fidelity to their marriage bond which remains indissoluble” (CCC 1649). Tradition calls this “separation from bed and board.”

 P. Divorce Divorce refers to the dissolution of the marriage bond, and taken as such, it is impossible. A valid, sacramental and consummated marriage can never be dissolved except by death. The Church follows the teaching of Jesus, Who said, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commit adultery” (Mark 10:11-12):

 1. Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ - "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. For the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities. Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, and who are committed to living in complete continence.

 2. Civil Marriages A civil marriage is a situation arising when the state declares a man and woman husband and wife, claiming thereby to make them such. The state has no power to do this with regards to baptized persons; its only job is to register such marriages once they have taken place. Catholics are bound to have their marriages civilly registered after the fact, but recognizing that the state of marriage does not arise from the civil law. A civil marriage is invalid if one or both of the parties are Catholics. Baptized non-Catholics can validly marry under civil law, not because the civil government has any power to marry, but because non-Catholics are exempt from having to use the Church’s form.

 3. Annulments - An annulment is a declaration of nullity, which is a canonical declaration that a union that was reputed to be a marriage has proved not to be so under closer examination. It is a declaration that a union was “null”; i.e., that no marriage ever existed.

 Whether a marriage is declared null or not has to do solely with circumstances leading up to and at the time of the marriage. Nothing that happens afterwards affects the nullity of a marriage. Thus, it frequently happens that unions of 20 years with many children are found to be null. This happens because whether or not a marriage is null has to do only with what occurred at the time of the exchange of vows.

 Nullity is declared when it can be demonstrated that the marriage could not be contracted because of an impediment (Lat. impedimentum, baggage, burden). Impediments are of two kinds: diriment impediments and impeding impediments.

• Insufficient age

• Existing prior marriage

• Consanguinity (blood relation within prohibited degree)

• Affinity (marriage to the relatives of one you have had sexual intercourse with.Thus, a man cannot marry his wife’s sister after the wife dies.)

• Spiritual Relationship (godparent, sponsor, etc.)

• Adoption

• Public Honesty (cannot marry the relative of one you have been engaged to without a dispensation)

• Solemn Vows

• Holy Orders

• Disparity of Cult (Catholic and a non-baptized person)

• Crime (killed one spouse to marry another)

• Impotence

• Error (married one twin instead of the other)

• Imbecility

• Violence & Fear

• Abduction

• Clandestinity (no witnesses)

• Lack of Consent

• Defect of Form

• Previous engagement subsisting

• Forbidden times (marrying during Lent)

• Simple vows

• Mixed Religion (marriage of a Catholic to a baptized non-Catholic)

II. The reason a priest exists, in whatever religion, is to offer sacrifice. Though God is capable of hearing the prayers of any person directly,

 A. Three amdounts/degrees/parts/etc.

 1. Deacon – ordained for service, assist the Bishop and Priest

 a. Blessings of objects for private devotion

 b. Blessings of people

 c. ordinary minister of Communion, Viaticum, blessings, weddings, funerals, special minister of the Gospel

 2. Priest – Ordained to offer sacrifice (the Mass)

 a. Blessings of objects for public wdevotion

 b. Can’t bless the holy oils, but can bless anything or anyone else

 c. Ordinary minister of everything but Confirmation and Ordination

 3. Bishop – successor to the Apostles, has the fullness of Holy Orders

 B. biological lineage of the family of Levi (and the High Priesthood among the descendants of Aaron). They offered bloody, animal sacrifices for sins at the one Temple of God in Jerusalem.

C**.** Jesusdid not come to abolish the Old Testament priesthood, but to take it up into Himself, transform it, and empower it with the graces of the New Covenant, won by the shedding of His blood.

 1. From the earliest times, Catholic Tradition attests to the existence of a hierarchical priesthood in the earliest Christian communities:

"Even here in the Church the gradations of bishops, presbyters, and deacons happen to be imitations, in my opinion, of the angelic glory and of that arrangement which, the scriptures say, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the apostles and who have lived in complete righteousness according to the gospel" (St. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6:13:107:2 [A.D. 208]).

 2. Following Scripture and Apostolic Tradition, the Church distinguishes three grades of Holy Orders: the deaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate (deacons, priests, bishops). These ought not to be confused with the previous seven degrees of Holy Orders from the pre-Vatican II period, which were preparatory steps to the priesthood and usually more of an office than an order.

 3. the bishop alone possesses the power the confer all seven of the sacraments, as only one who has the fullness of Holy Orders has the capability of giving it. Hence, only bishops can consecrate other priests and bishops.

The indelible character of Holy Orders

 4. Holy Orders, like Confirmation and Baptism, confers an indelible mark on the soul of the recipient. The Catechism says, “This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king. As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation this share in Christ's office is granted once for all. A priest becomes a priest not just because he is authorized to do a certain job, but because he becomes a different sort of person. The change is substantial, a change in kind, not in degree. He is altered in his very being.

 5. The priest is not given the power to administer sacraments in a magical or mechanical sort of way, but because the sacrament of Orders unites him in a special way with Christ, which enables Jesus to act through the priest whenever the priest administers the sacraments. When a priest so acts, he is acting *in persona Christi capitis*, the person (or place) of Christ the head.

 6. Reserved to males alone

*“Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful”* (OS, 4).

* Argument from Tradition. “Priestly ordination, which hands on the office entrusted by Christ to his Apostles of teaching, sanctifying and governing the faithful, has in the Catholic Church from the beginning always been reserved to men alone” (OS, 1).
* The example of Christ taken as the norm. “[T]his call [to ministry] was made in accordance with God's eternal plan; Christ chose those whom he willed (cf. Mk 3:13-14; Jn 6:70), and he did so in union with the Father, "through the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2), after having spent the night in prayer (cf. Lk 6:12). Therefore, in granting admission to the ministerial priesthood,(6) the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord's way of acting in choosing the twelve men whom he made the foundation of his Church (cf. Rv 21:14). These men did not in fact receive only a function which could thereafter be exercised by any member of the Church; rather they were specifically and intimately associated in the mission of the Incarnate Word himself (cf. Mt 10:1, 7-8; 28:16-20; Mk 3:13-16; 16:14-15) (OS, 2).
* A calling, not a right. “No one has a *right* to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed, no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God” (CCC 1578).
1. “The fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them” (OS, 3).

1. Christ did not simply choose twelve men for Apostles because that was the custom of His culture: "In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised the same freedom with which, in all his behavior, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time” (OS, 2).

Created on Holy Thursday alongside the institution of the Eucharist, the priesthood is one of Christ’s greatest gifts to the Church. It is through this sacrament that the Eucharist is possible, and because of the Eucharist that this sacrament exists. Through Holy Orders, Christ’s presence to the Church is perpetuated in a very personal way and He fulfills His words to the Apostles: “He who hears you hears Me” (Luke 10:16).