

## 5- MATRIMONY AND HOLY ORDERS: The Sacraments of Service & Communion

‘How can I ever express the happiness of the marriage that is joined together by the Church strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels and ratified by the Father?’

...How wonderful the bond between two believers with a single hope, a single desire, a single observance, a single service! They are both brethren and both fellow-servants; there is no separation between them in spirit or flesh; in fact they are truly two in one flesh and where the flesh is one, one is the spirit.’ (Tertulian – early Christian writer, 160- 220 AD)

God our Father, we give you thanks  
for the gift of marriage: the bond of life and love, and the font of the family.  
The love of husband and wife enriches your Church with children,  
fills the world with a multitude of spiritual fruitfulness and service,  
and is the sign of the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, for his Church.  
May your Holy Spirit enlighten our society  
to treasure the heroic love of husband and wife,  
and guide our leaders to sustain and protect  
the singular place of mothers and fathers  
in the lives of their children.  
We ask all these things through Christ our Lord,  
Amen. (US Catholic Bishops)

In many ways this session is unrealistically ambitious. We seek to discuss the topic of Marriage and of Holy Orders. These matters have been discussed continuously for a very long time –one might say since Adam was a lad. But the subject matter is awesome – some would say terrifyingly so. A fair quantity of reading material is included herewith for consideration as may be of interest.

### Video Links:

The Sacrament of Marriage - Bishop Baron (8 mins) <https://youtu.be/JDBhaeus3Sg?si=-vDd11tgu0w0uq4P>

The Truth about Annulments – Fr Mark-Mary - Ascension Presents (8 mins)  
[https://youtu.be/TKslRnWjRj4?si=D71PhqiBJ\\_JBCOJQ](https://youtu.be/TKslRnWjRj4?si=D71PhqiBJ_JBCOJQ)

Why Marriage is not a Contract (It’s a Covenant) – Fr Mike Schmitz – Ascension Presents (9 mins)  
<https://youtu.be/qcnBS9JNXH4?si=E3XFVTx8X92aX0lf>

**Suggested Scripture readings:** John 2:1–11; Genesis 2:22–24; Mark 10:6–9

## Reading:

In the commentary below we seek –

1. To consider first how we might reflect on the appropriateness or not of any particular human endeavour. Possibly controversial, quite possibly wrong, but hopefully not so much.
2. Look briefly at Priestly Orders.
3. Consider marriage looking briefly at the topic of Love and then a little more closely at the Church's aspiration for its members who choose such path. In this section we have also included an inadequately developed bridge topic – whilst it may well be that there is a Divine plan for the way we order our social constructs, marriage and relationships - the evidence of the world we see before us seems defective, some may say in crisis.
4. This bridge leads to two hot topics in the church at the moment, which are challenges we need to be able to engage with in an informed and constructive way:
  - a. How is it charitable or loving to deny Holy Communion to the Divorced and remarried?
  - b. Is it charitable and loving to oppose same sex marriage?

We also want to try and introduce three thematics that are driving contemporary social changes:

- A thought as to what is the basic unit of mankind (the individual or the family)
- Gender theory and
- the feminisation of the Church.

The aim with all of this is to strive for the language of Christ and deflate misguided conflict (I am certain I have much to learn in this regard). The Hope is that we will all be motivated to read more on the Church's guidance and work as leaven in the world, evidencing to those with whom the Holy Spirit brings us into contact that there is a gospel, there is good news, there is a better way.

## Discernment

From its very beginnings the Church has been asked to discern between the rights and wrongs of human behaviour. This is not taken lightly and in its deliberations the Church seeks carefully to discern God's will.

St Paul says

*"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Phil 1:9)*

Christ says

*So you should pray like this:*

*"...Thy kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". (Mat6:9)*

Yahweh God says:

*God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves'. (Gen 1:26)*

*"Now, the snake was the most subtle of all the wild animals that Yahweh God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God **really** say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?'" (Gen 3:1)*

As Catholics our inner yearning is to do what Christ wants of us; to follow His will (on earth as it is in heaven) and not to be deceived by the subtle deceptiveness of the father of lies. We want to live up to His creation of us as beings in His image and likeness.

We want to avoid trying to make God into our image and likeness.

All too readily we want to be the arbiters of God's intent – better we should seek guidance through prayer and reference to the Saints and Holy men and women of God.

The Catholic Church acts with caution seeking earnestly to ensure that it has authority to approve or not any particular human endeavour. If Christ gives us an example to follow, or the gospels give us such example or the early Church, then such can be approved. If not then the Church proceeds with caution – if at all.

## Priestly Orders

The Priest is the representative of the Bishop in the local community. Through the Priest we are connected to the universal Church. The Priest's role has changed emphasis through the ages, but the following have always been reserved:

Consecration of the bread and wine

Granting of absolution in confession

Anointing of the sick, and on occasion

Confirmation of catechumens/candidates into full Communion with the Church

The Priest's authority over his local community is not one of domination, but one of service. Catholics most often are disposed to a deep appreciation and reverence of their Parish Priests. Not merely because of all they have given up to be of service, several years of study, and celibacy. But more because the Priest stands in Persona Christi – feeding us "the bread that is come down from heaven", healing and empowering us through the sacrament of reconciliation to transcend human nature, receive forgiveness and supernatural power to overcome sin – without our Priest we feel as orphans. It is also our inner certainty that despite any failings we may observe in our all too human Priest they non the less are empowered to act in Persona Christi.

## Marriage

### The Word love

The English word for love is too broad – we say I love ice-cream and we say I love my wife/husband. But we mean very different things in each case. The Greek language has a much richer range of words more appropriately defining what we mean:

Phileos – friendship, brotherly love

Storge – affection, love of family – strong bonds as in a tightly knit sports team or even a group of soldiers.

Eros- romantic, intimate, sexual love

Agape – unconditional love, the kind of love that a mother has for her child. The kind of love God has for us. The Latin word here is Caritas

When we speak of love it can help much to reflect on which meaning/s of love is/are intended.

Cardinal George Weigel states .... the

*... idea of permanent and fruitful marriage, .... makes for happier marriages, happier families, happier children, and more-benevolent societies than does the deconstruction of marriage and the family that is inundating the West like a tsunami. In teaching the truth about marriage, about love, and about the complementarity of the sexes, the Catholic Church is proposing the path to happiness and human flourishing, not the road to repression and misery. It should make a bold.... case in defense of that teaching, which is a defense of the dignity of the human person.*

*(BETWEEN TWO SYNODS AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE OF THIS PARTICULAR CATHOLIC MOMENT by George Weigel January 2015)*

### Bridge

We believe that God does have a perfect design intention for us and for how we should order our lives so that we can live life and live it to the full:

*'Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh.'* (Mat 19:4)

*'But no helper suitable for the man was found for him. Then, Yahweh God made the man fall into a deep sleep. And, while he was asleep, he took one of his ribs and closed the flesh up again forthwith. Yahweh God fashioned the rib he had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She is to be called Woman, because she was taken from Man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and they become one flesh. Now, both of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they felt no shame before each other.'* (Gn 2:20)

Woman completes man – God delights in this and so did man.

Now this was before the fall. Adam and Eve were naked but they lived in paradise perfectly happy and at harmony with God and creation. Only after the fall did Adam and Eve realise that they were naked. What can this mean?

Joy of joys – the Catholic Church proposes that through Christ and His grace it is possible for Man and Woman to approach the original state of perfection that existed in the garden – there is a way and this is what the Church desires for those who marry. In marriage we can experience the fullness of all the different forms of love and more we can participate in the generation of new life – flesh of our flesh, and all in accord with what the Catholic Church holds to be in perfect alignment with God's original plan for His creature.

*"John Paul II approached every marriage, even broken ones, as Moses approached the burning bush on Mount Horeb. He did not enter into their homes without first taking the sandals from his feet, because he saw present in them the "centre of history and of the universe." [...] This is why he did not bend himself to their circumstances and adapt his pastoral practice to them. [...] At the risk of being criticized, he insisted on the fact that it is not circumstances that give form to marriage and the family, but it is instead these that give form to circumstances."*

## The state of Marriage today

Many maintain that marriage today is in crisis and by extension the family and society is in crisis. What do we mean by this crisis?

- Young people don't want to get married, they don't get married or they live together
- The prevalence of divorce is very high even among Catholics!
- Children are seen as an economic burden, not as a gift. The WHO classifies pregnancy as a disease. Abortion is approved on grounds of mental anguish, or even at whim sufficient to ingest RU486.
- Elderly and infirm parents are seen as candidates for euthanasia.
- Marriage is in crisis, and so the family is in crisis. I don't want us to fall into this casuistry of "can we" or "can't we?" (Pope Francis speaking in relation to the Synod on the Family)

### How is this rational

#### **Aside one:**

The contemporary world defines the individual as the basic unit of humankind. The Catholic Church would define the family to be the basic unit of humankind (the tightest nucleus of the family being the pairing of a male and a female). One's worldview of which is the basic unit of humankind has consequences for the moral order, social constructs and laws we develop.

Defining the individual as the basic unit of humankind, one will develop social rules, logic and laws to defend the singular interests of individuals. For example it would be logical to conclude that an unborn child dependent on its mother is not an individual and that consequently such child's right to thrive is a private matter for the individual it relies upon. The family unit on the other hand sees the very core of its purpose to be to nurture such child even to the extent of such choice resulting in the death of the mother. Opposite but rational outcomes relative to the premised world view.

Pope Francis in opening the Synod of the Family (Oct 2015) pleaded that the bishops avoid casuistry and re-proclaim a language of love/charity caritas.

It was always the pope's intention that the 2014 extraordinary synod be a wide-ranging discussion of the crisis of marriage and the family. For he believes that only if the nature of the crisis is understood in full can the Church proceed to think about how it can propose its understanding of marriage in ways that can be more readily heard and lived in today's Gnostic culture.

When the media kept trying to focus things on the divorced and remarried proposal to the exclusion of everything else, Francis said, on his way home from the Holy Land:

"Second, thank you for your question about the divorced. The synod will be on the family, the problem of the family, the treasures of the family, the present situation of the family. The preliminary talk which Cardinal Kasper gave had five chapters: four of them were on the family, the beauty of the family, its theological foundations, and problems facing families; while the fifth chapter dealt with the pastoral issue of separations, declarations of marriage nullity, divorced persons.

Part of this issue is that of communion. I have not been happy that so many people—even church people, priests—have said: "Ah, the synod will be about giving communion to the divorced," and went straight to that point. I felt as if everything was being reduced to casuistry. No, the issue is bigger and wider. Today, as we all know, the family is in crisis, it is in crisis worldwide. Young people don't want to get married, they don't get married or they live together. Marriage is in crisis, and so the family is in crisis. I don't want us to fall into this casuistry of "can we" or "can't we?" . . . So I thank you so much for this question, because it gives me the opportunity to clarify this."

So to the two questions posed:

- a. How is it charitable or loving to deny Holy Communion to the Divorced and remarried?

This topic is covered most eloquently and with a great deal of precision in:

Canon 915: The Discipline Regarding the Denial of Holy Communion to Those Obstinate Persevering in Manifest Grave Sin

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/canonlaw/burkcompol.htm>

However, the language and idiom used is completely incomprehensible to today's scandalised world (more on this shortly).

The three points of charity proposed are paraphrased as follows:

- i) There is such thing as Sacrilege and out of due deference to God we cannot see it as charitable or loving to God that we unite His Holy body in communion with those living in a state described by Christ Himself as objectively sinful.
- ii) It is possible to partake of the body and blood of Christ unworthily to the extent that it can cause condemnation:

*Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment\* on himself.*

In charity and love the Catholic Church does not want to be bringing condemnation of anyone.

- iii) If divorced and remarried Catholics are seen to be partaking of communion, then others who are weakly catechised may conclude that it is OK to divorce and remarry and receive communion. This surely is uncharitable and unloving to such people.

Whilst all of this is logical in context the language is bewilderingly impenetrable to contemporary society. This is where Pope Francis seems to call for a recapturing of the language of love, of mercy. Casuistry risk relying on inadequately developed legalism – this is not to say that the conclusion is not correct (the consistency of this practice down through many centuries counters an over turning of the doctrine). However, what is the language of love and of mercy that can be brought to this topic. The Pope seems to be calling for us to rebalance the pastoral and doctrinal so that those who are in irregular relationships can still find a place within the Catholic Church. Of course all this requires that we do not unintentionally make an uninformed judgement on the first marriage. The Church needs to avoid implying a judgement on the legitimacy of the first marriage.

b. Is it charitable and loving to oppose same sex marriage?

The same situation applies here. The language proclaiming love and charity – although most certainly true as understood by those within the Catholic understanding, it remains impenetrable to those whose worldview derives from the primacy of the individual as a basic unit of humankind.

### **Aside two.**

Gender theory is a new concept that is being promoted in the contemporary world. Gender theory proposes that the concept of gender is subjective and fluid as opposed to objectively determined. Gender theory proposes that an individual may identify more with the opposite of their physical sex. The proposition is that how a person identifies is more real for such person than their physical characteristics. Such fluidity adds to rationality of Same Sex Marriage, gender reassignment and defends the right of adolescents by proclaiming such identity to dress accordingly and or use designated gender facilities accordingly. Whilst this may seem bemusing, it is a more substantial force than many may realise.

*Pope Francis has strongly criticized modern theories that consider people's gender identities to exist along a spectrum, saying such theories do not "recognize the order of creation."*

*Speaking of gender theory in an interview in a new book released in Italy, the pope even compares such theories to genetic manipulation and nuclear weapons.*

*Gender theory is a broad term for an academic school of thought that considers how people learn to identify themselves sexually and how they may become typed into certain roles based on societal expectations.*

*Asked in the book about how important it is for Christians to recover a sense of safeguarding of creation and sustainable growth, the pope first speaks of the duty of all people to respect and care for the environment.*

*But he then says that every historical period has "Herods" that "destroy, that plot designs of death, that disfigure the face of man and woman, destroying creation." (Pope Francis Feb 2015).*

**Aside three.**

Feminisation of the Church –the key here is to recognise that we must strive for balance. Male and female bring authentic attributes that should be equally valued – males typically are vertical and directive, striving to move purposely to goal without regard for the effect of their actions on others around them. Females are horizontal and inclusive very concerned to be aware of our actions on others around and keeping everyone together and in harmony. These are important concepts to reflect on as they will form part of the solution for decline in priesthood, church attendance and crisis in family life.



## Pope Francis: Casuistic Thought Is A Trap Against God and Us Reflects on the Beauty of Love, Marriage and the Family During Homily

Vatican City, February 28, 2014 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))

The use of unsound reasoning to answer moral questions, or casuistry, is a trap against us.

The Holy Father reflected on the nature of marriage, drawing from today's Gospel from St. Mark which recalled Christ's response to the Pharisees on the question of divorce. The Pharisees, he said, tried to take Jesus moral authority through the use of casuistry. "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" the Pharisees asked Jesus. Behind the casuistic thought of the Pharisees, "there is always a trap."

"Jesus responded, asking them what the law said and explaining why Moses made that law that way," the Pope explained. "But he doesn't stop there: from casuistry He goes to the centre of the problem and here he goes directly to the days of Creation."

"This reference of the Lord is very beautiful: 'From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh.'"

The Pope went on to say that Christ refers to the "masterpiece of Creation": man and woman. Describing between Adam and Eve as a "poetic moment", the Holy Father said that Jesus confronts this casuistic thought with the initial plan of love by God.

"The Lord takes this love as the masterpiece of Creation to explain the love He has for his people," the Holy Father said. "And [He goes] a step further: when Paul must explain the mystery of Christ, he does it in relation to, in reference to His Spouse, because Christ is married, Christ was married, He married the Church, his people."

"Like the Father married the People of Israel, Christ married his people. This is the history of love, this is the history of the masterpiece of Creation! And in front of this journey of love, this icon, casuistry falls and becomes sorrow."

When love fails between a man and woman, the Pope stressed the importance of accompanying those who suffer, not condemn them or "not be casuistic with their situation."

In looking at God's original plan of love, the Holy Father stressed that one begins to see the beauty of marriage, the beauty of family. This view should also bring us to come closer to "the brothers and sisters who in life have had the misfortune of a failure in love."

Concluding his homily, Pope Francis called on the faithful to be attentive that love does not fail by recalling the image of the love of Christ to his spouse: the Church.

"Even here we should be attentive that love does not fail! To speak of a bachelor Christ: Christ married the Church!" he exclaimed. "And Christ cannot be understood without the Church and the Church cannot be understood without Christ. This is the great mystery of the masterpiece of Creation. May the Lord give us all the grace to understand and also the grace to never fall in this casuistic attitude of the Pharisees, of the doctors of the law." (J.A.E.)

[THURSDAY, 9 OCTOBER, 2014](#)

## Synodalia: the deeper crisis of marriage and family

At the beginning of the Synod of Bishops on the Family and Married Life, an Australian married couple, the Pirolas, [addressed the Synod Fathers](#). It was not terribly helpful except in that it gave voice to the world and the secular viewpoint, and perhaps even the sentimental one.

In a breathtaking display of apparent partiality, a Polish married couple involved with the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family were not invited to speak. Indeed it seems *no one* from that worldwide Institute (founded in 1982) was invited to speak to the Synod, [Sandro Magister](#) has revealed (see update note below).

Thankfully Ludmila and Stanislaw Grygiel were invited to address the pre-synodal meeting of the Council of Episcopal Conferences of Europe. Magister quotes extracts from their speeches. Do read them at Magister's blog page. For now, a few quotes are worthy of highlighting.

From **Stanislaw's** speech:

*John Paul II approached every marriage, even broken ones, as Moses approached the burning bush on Mount Horeb. He did not enter into their homes without first taking the sandals from his feet, because he saw present in them the "centre of history and of the universe." [...] This is why he did not bend himself to their circumstances and adapt his pastoral practice to them. [...] At the risk of being criticized, he insisted on the fact that it is not circumstances that give form to marriage and the family, but it is instead these that give form to circumstances. First he accepted the truth, and only afterward the circumstances. He never allowed the truth to be left out waiting in the wings. ...*

*One evening at his home, during the 1960's, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla had been listening in silence for a long time to the talk of some Catholic intellectuals who were predicting the inevitable secularization of society. [...] When they had finished speaking, he said only this: "Not even once did you use the word 'grace.'" What he said then I remember now every time I read the statements of theologians who speak of marriage with no awareness of the love that comes about in the beauty of grace. Love is grace, it is a "gift of God." ...*

*If this is the way things are with love, inserting into theological arguments the adage, full of pity but opposed to mercy, nemo ad heroismum obligatur, no one is obliged to be a hero, is demeaning to man. It demeans him by contradicting Christ, who on the mountain of the beatitudes says to all men: "So be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).*

*With broken marriages and families, we must com-patire [suffer with] and not have pity. In that case, pity has within itself something disparaging for man. It does not help him open himself to the infinite love to which God has oriented him "before the creation of the world" (Eph 1:4). Pitying sentimentalism is a forgetting of what the things of man are like "from the beginning," while compassion, suffering along with those who have gotten lost "in the dark forest," reawakens their memory of the Beginning and indicates the way back to it. ...*

Basing his insights not only on his personal experience but on the truth of Christ, especially as elaborated by St John Paul II, he reminds us that to leave truth and grace out of human marriage is to direct such unions towards failure. Marriage, a gift from God and a grace, involves a commitment to truth that should shape the lives of the married couple – their fallible life choices should not shape their marriage. It is another way of saying that Christians have a mission to transform the world with God's grace, not to be transformed by the world.

Stanislaw also puts before us the true meaning of compassion, a brave and painful "suffering with", not some quick-fix sentimentalism, or worse, condescending pity. Pity would ignore the truth to make the sufferer feel better; compassion involves walking with the sufferer and leading him or her back to the right path of truth, and to the reason for our creation.

Stanislaw is warning the Church not to enthrall itself to a purely worldly, temporal, humanistic view of human living and suffering, but to embrace the Christian concept of the centrality of the Cross in the life of all disciples, a Cross that leads from this short life to the eternal life of heaven, where the suffering of this short life finds its meaning and its resolution. The Church needs again to preach courage!

**Ludmila** came at the issue from a different angle entirely, but perhaps even more powerfully.

*Chesterton said that we do not want a Church that will move with the world, but a Church that will move the world. Paraphrasing his words, we could say that families today, those in crisis and those that are happy, do not need pastoral care suited for the world, but pastoral care suited for He who knows what the heart of man desires. ...*

*Christ agrees to speak with a woman who is living in sin. Christ is not capable of hating, he is capable only of loving, and therefore he does not condemn the Samaritan woman but reawakens the original desire of her heart, which is obfuscated by the experiences of a disordered life. He forgives her only after the woman has confessed that she does not have a husband.*

*In this way the Gospel passage recalls that God does not make a gift of his mercy to one who does not ask for it, and that recognition of sin and the desire for conversion are the rule of mercy. Mercy is never a gift offered to someone who does not want it, it is not a product on sale because it is not in demand. Pastoral care requires a profound and convinced adherence of pastors to the truth of the sacrament. ...*

*lack of confidence in the family on the part of pastors is among the main causes of the crisis of pastoral care for the family. This cannot ignore the difficulties, but must not dwell upon them and admit discouragement and defeat. It must not conform to the casuistry of the modern Pharisees. It must welcome Samaritan women not to hide the truth about their behavior, but to lead them to conversion. .... in spite of the hardness of heart of his contemporaries [Christ] re-proposed a model of marriage as God had wanted it from the beginning.*

*I get the impression that we Christians talk too much about failed marriages, and too little about faithful marriages, we talk too much about the crisis of the family and too little about the fact that the community of marriage and the family assures man not only earthly happiness but also that of eternity, it is the place in which the laity's vocation to holiness is realized. ...*

Ludmila joins her husband in reminding the Church that marriage has a supernatural and eternal end, above and beyond its temporal and natural end. God's mercy is something only the repentant can receive, and our mercy must always be directed not to indulgence, but to gently leading the sinner to repentance, and thus to God. God *might* be present to us in the depths of our sin, but only that we might move from sin to holiness.

Yet she is most striking in her bold challenge to the clergy of the Church: marriage must not be defined by its failures but by its essential truth. Moreover, the clergy must have confidence in the family and marriage; if they do not, they undermine the people's confidence. This clerical crisis of confidence, this lay woman says, is "among the main causes of the crisis of pastoral care for the family". Many clergy obsess so much about the pastoral care of those who have failed to commit to marriage in times of trial (for whatever reason, some of them profoundly sad, some of them strikingly selfish), that they leave to themselves those married couples struggling to endure times of marital crisis. Concern for those who have divorced (in civil terms that is) must never preclude the duty to support married couples and families as the Christian norm.

If pastors will not commit 100% to the truth about marriage and family life, and thus about the role of human sexuality, is it any wonder so many Catholics are in a crisis of living, and a crisis of faith. Perhaps the implication of Ludmila's speech needs to be stated clearly: the modern crisis in human sexuality and marriage is in large measure

due to the failure of clergy to speak the truth in love. With Ludmila and Stanislaw we can truly say we hear the voice of God's faithful people, the *sensus fidelium* so often misidentified. This couple should be at the Synod. They have more to say that is from God than the Pirolas.

**[Update March 14 2015 Father José Granados vice president of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Rome will now be an attending consultor].**