

SACRAMENTS OF VOCATION

The Sacrament of Matrimony

1. What is God's plan regarding man and woman?

The book of Genesis tells us that God created man and woman in *His* image. He established the institution of marriage when he blessed Adam and Eve and told them to be fruitful and multiply. Also, because we know that God is love, we know that we are called to love. Marriage however is not an obligation. Some people are called to follow the Lord in a life of virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. When did Matrimony become a sacrament?

When Christ performed a miracle at the wedding feast in Cana, his first miracle, marriage became a sacrament. In this sacrament spouses receive special grace to live out their vocation as a symbol of Christ's love for the Church (see readings for full explanation).

3. What is necessary before the sacrament can take place?

- The bride and the groom must both give their *matrimonial consent*. For a marriage to be valid, both people must act consciously and freely with the intent of living in true Matrimony.
- In the case of a *mixed* marriage (when a Catholic marries a baptized non-Catholic), permission must be obtained from the bishop. A dispensation is required for a valid marriage in the case of *disparity of cult* (when a Catholic marries a non-baptized person). In either of these cases the Catholic party must accept the full obligation of persevering in the faith and baptizing and educating their children in the Catholic faith. They must also both accept the essential ends and properties of marriage (see next question).

4. What are the ends (purposes) of Matrimony?

Marriage has two purposes: the good of the couple and the generation and education of children. These two purposes are never to be separated.

5. What happens during the sacrament of Matrimony?

A perpetual and exclusive bond is formed between the spouses and their consent is *sealed* by God himself. "*What God has joined together, no man must separate*" (Mark 10:9). It is celebrated in the presence of a priest and other witnesses because it establishes spouses in a public state of life in the church.

6. How does sin threaten marriage?

- Because of original sin, marriage is often threatened by discord and infidelity. Because of God's infinite mercy, the sacrament of matrimony provides the grace that is needed to live in accord with His original divine plan.
- Since marriage is an image of both God's love and Jesus' love, sins against marriage are particularly serious. Some of these include: divorce, prostitution, abortion, contraception, premarital sex, artificial insemination, sterilization, pornography... (see reading for more).

7. Does the church allow for physical separation of spouses?

- Only when, for serious reasons, their living together becomes practically impossible, even though there may be hope for reconciliation. A person is not free to marry again so long as their spouse is still living, unless the marriage has been declared *null* by ecclesiastical authority.
- Civilly divorced people are encouraged to live a life of faith, prayer, works of charity and the Christian education of their children. However, they cannot receive sacramental absolution, Holy Communion, or exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities as long as their situation persists.

8. Why is the Christian family called the domestic church?

Each member, in their own role, exercises the baptismal priesthood and contributes toward making the family a community of grace and prayer, a school of Christian virtue and the place where the faith is first proclaimed.

Sacrament of Holy Orders

What is the sacrament of Holy Orders?

It is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time.

Why is this sacrament called Holy Orders?

Orders designates an ecclesial body into which one enters by means of a special consecration (ordination). Through a special gift of the Holy Spirit, this sacrament enables the ordained to exercise a *sacred power* in the name and with the authority of Christ for the service of the People of God.

What are the degrees that make up the sacrament of Holy Orders?

The sacrament of Holy Orders is composed of three degrees: the episcopate (bishop), the presbyterate (priest) and the diaconate (deacon).

What is the effect of Episcopal ordination?

Episcopal ordination confers the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. It makes a bishop a legitimate successor of the apostles and integrates him into the Episcopal college to share with the Pope and the other bishops care for all churches. It confers on him the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling.

What is the effect of ordination to the priesthood?

The anointing of the Spirit seals the priest with an indelible, spiritual character that configures him to Christ the priest and enables him to act in the name of Christ the Head. As a co-worker of the order of bishops he is consecrated to preach the Gospel, to celebrate divine worship, especially the Eucharist from which his ministry draws its strength, and to be a shepherd of the faithful.

How does a priest carry out his proper ministry?

A priest, although ordained for a universal mission, exercises his ministry in a particular Church. This ministry is pursued in sacramental brotherhood with other priests who form a “presbyterate”. In communion with the bishop, and depending upon him, they bear responsibility for the particular Church.

What is the effect of the ordination to the diaconate?

The deacon, configured to Christ the servant of all, is ordained for service to the Church. He carries out this service under the authority of his proper bishop by the ministry of the Word, of divine worship, of pastoral care and of charity.

How is the Sacrament of Holy Orders celebrated?

The sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred, in each of its three degrees, by means of the *imposition of hands* on the head of the ordinand by the Bishop who pronounces the solemn prayer of consecration. With this prayer he asks God on behalf of the ordinand for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for the gifts of the Spirit proper to the ministry to which he is being called.

Who can confer this sacrament?

Only validly ordained bishops, as successors of the apostles, can confer the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Who can receive this sacrament?

This sacrament can only be validly received by a baptized man. The Church recognizes herself as bound by this choice made by the Lord Himself. No one can demand to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, but must be judged suitable for the ministry by the authority of the Church.

Is it necessary to be celibate to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders?

It is always necessary to be celibate for the episcopacy. For the priesthood in the Latin Church men who are practicing Catholics and celibate are chosen, men who intend to continue to live a celibate life “for the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:12). In the Eastern Churches marriage is not permitted after one has been ordained. Married men must be ordained to the permanent diaconate.

What are the effects of the sacrament of Holy Orders?

This sacrament yields a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which configures the recipient to Christ in his triple office as Priest, Prophet, and King, according to the respective degrees of the sacrament. Ordination confers an indelible spiritual character and therefore cannot be repeated or conferred for a limited time.

With what authority is the priestly ministry exercised?

Ordained priests in the exercise of their sacred ministry speak and act not on their own authority, nor even by mandate or delegation of the community, but rather in the Person of Christ the Head and in the name of the Church. Therefore, the ministerial priesthood differs essentially and not just in degree from the priesthood common to all the faithful for whose service Christ instituted it.

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