

Magister
A Journal to Discuss Magisterial Documents

Vol. II, No. 1 (December 2014)

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Magister: A Journal to Discuss Magisterial Documents

Magister seeks contributors from all disciplines and practitioners in all fields. It is produced at minimum annually and provides a specialized forum for the promotion and better understanding of the documents of the Magisterium, particularly the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other neglected documents. Articles should be submitted to MarisStellaInstitute@gmail.com for consideration. The journal's articles are open-access, available at www.marisstella.com and permission is granted to contributors to republish or adapt articles in other publications provided that *Magister* is cited as the first appearance of the article.

There are three major genres desired: (1) research; (2) teaching; (3) and practical application of any and all documents of the Magisterium.

RESEARCH ARTICLES: These are articles that contribute to evaluation of ecclesial documents and/or engage in current discussions. Research articles include developing new insights to assist the Church in theological developments, philosophical issues, and/or catechetical teaching. Research articles should narrow its scope by including and substantially using at least one magisterial document and/or primary theological source. Double-space format preferred.

SHORT TEACHING ARTICLES: These articles focus more on expository writing, insight and synthesis so as to disseminate the main ideas of Magisterium documents to a wider readership and busy audience with perhaps little time for extended reading of lengthy Church documents. Articles may focus on an entire Church document or expound on a section of a document. Double-space format preferred.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION ARTICLES: These articles creatively apply magisterial documents to concrete settings. These articles reflect more of a grassroots voice that sees in the teachings of Church documents a joyful and dynamic living of the Catholic faith. This genre combines the academic-popular writing style. Double-space format preferred.

BOOK REVIEWS (maximum 1000 words): Reviews of primary and secondary sources pertaining to magisterial documents are welcome in single-space format.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (maximum 500 words): Responses to the articles are welcome in single-space format.

OTHER: Other submissions (such as homilies, sermons, outlines, workshop presentations, poetry, literary works, etc.) related to magisterial documents are welcome.

Catechesis, Catechesis, Catechesis—And Then More Catechesis

Deacon Dennis Purificacion, Ed.D.

According to Italian moral theologian Cardinal Carlo Caffara, the cardinal himself received a letter from Sr. Lucia. In the letter, which is stored in the archives of the pontifical institute where Cardinal Caffara served as president, Sr. Lucia wrote, “The final battle between the Lord and Satan will be about marriage and the family.”¹ Today, we see much debate and turmoil over marriage and family.

This battle over marriage and family is not just the secular external culture *outside* the Church but involves the deplorable situation of catechesis *within* the Church’s catechetical culture. The lay faithful – from elementary catechesis to youth Confirmation parish programs, to young adult and engaged couples, and to adults with children after celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony – have not been comprehensively and systematically catechized in God’s plan for marriage, sex and family life. Our situation today is compounded since many *in her own ranks* do not believe or simply neglect to hand on the faith of the Church on marriage and family. It is no wonder that the lay faithful cannot defend against assaults on married and family life.

To illustrate, in an average youth Confirmation program, perhaps two or three sessions are devoted to the issue of marriage catechesis. A parish youth ministry program, by contrast, which has a corps of youth with perhaps a higher degree of commitment than the average youngster, will probably hear a catechesis on marriage and family issues once or twice. Then,

¹ Carlo Cardinal Caffara, S.T.D., is the Archbishop of Bologna. He taught moral theology at the University of Milan and served as President of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Rome. He is the author of several books, including *Living in Christ: Fundamental Principles of Catholic Moral Teaching*, trans. Christopher Ruff (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), which is part of a three-volume series entitled *Brief Presentation of Catholic Doctrine*.

for a parish blessed enough to have a high school catechetical program, the catechesis on marriage comes up in likely two or three chapters of even a solid catechetical text book. Next, young adults and engaged couples perhaps would amass a total of, say, two to three sessions on the nature of Christian marriage throughout their many years of young adulthood. And for the average married couple that is not part of a small faith community where they try to live the Church's teachings on marriage and family and encourage one another, they will hear about marriage a few times. As one can see, an average parish does not – or perhaps cannot – provide the necessary infrastructure for a more in-depth catechesis on marriage. After all, an average Sunday homily throughout a given year would, at best, mention marriage and family once or twice in a typical liturgical year. All of these, from elementary and the teen years to young adulthood and post-Sacrament of Matrimony, have an aggregate total of less than perhaps 50 contact hours of instruction on marriage and family over a two to three decade period. These 50+ or so hours are equivalent to one mere college class! The system is not enough to prepare Catholics for this sacrament. Catholics must learn in other ways (e.g., Catholic media, retreats, CDs, talks, and example) and not rely solely on the current parish religious education system.

In the two articles that appear here, the authors emphasize the need for formation in marriage, sex and family. Their thoughts are timely in light of our preparation for the upcoming Synod on the Family in Rome this October. In Cardinal Caffara's letter, Sr. Lucia did not leave us on a worrisome note. She continued, "Don't be afraid...anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and family will always be fought and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue." Sr. Lucia, confident of victory over Satan's onslaught against marriage and family, concluded, "Our Lady has already crushed its head." Thus, we are not alone in our task of catechesis. She, the woman who helped at the marriage in Cana, will help in our dark times, too.

Catechesis on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

Hydie Basco

Prior to the 21st century, marriage was mostly depicted as a picture perfect family, a husband, wife, son and daughter standing side by side in front of their four-bedroom home surrounded by a white picket fence with their golden retriever running around the front yard. As society moves forward in the 21st Century, this image of marriage is being challenged and redefined. Statistically, marriages have only a 50% chance of surviving past 13 years before ending in divorce (*The Economist*, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2014/02/daily-chart-10>). Statistics and personal traumatic experiences are leading young adults today to view marriage as merely an expensive wedding followed by pain, burdens, and heartbreak which they will ultimately regret. Marriage becomes a pointless “contract” that is unnecessary for happiness.

Divine Perspective

However, the current world-view of what marriage is (and/or becoming) is far from what God the Father intended. One could argue that the current world-view of marriage is a product of original sin. In the story of creation, not only did God create man, He also, in His great wisdom, created woman out of a bone from the side of man to be a “helpmate” for God knew that “it is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). From the beginning, God's plan is clear: man and woman were created for one another in unity “so they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Mt. 19:6). God's plan for marriage was both unitive and procreative: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). A gift of life and unity, a divine vocation, is inscribed in the natures of man and woman; however, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter CCC)

states, since the fall of man, “their union has always been threatened by discord, a spirit of domination, infidelity, jealousy, and conflicts that can escalate into hatred and separation” (CCC 1606). The fall of man quickly turned the gift of God's creation of mutual attraction into one of domination and lust. The beauty of the vocation of man and woman to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth turned into pain in childbirth and a burdensome toil and labor (cf. CCC 1607).

Fortunately, although human nature is wounded by sin, God the Father continues to pour out His grace and healing mercy to those who seek Him, specifically through Jesus Christ. Through Divine Revelation, God reveals to us His immense love for all of mankind by the manifestation of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself (*Dei Verbum*, no. 2).” God the Father did not simply send Jesus to live among us, but to release all of mankind from the chains of original sin by His death on the cross. Christ’s sacrificial act of love allows us to share in the life and love of God the Father as He originally intended. It was Christ who gave Himself fully to His bride the Church, leading her to a new life in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “through our Baptism, men and women are transformed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into a new creation in Christ” (USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 30).

Through Christ, marriage is restored to the Creator’s original intention from the beginning. Thus, “Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant” (CCC 1617). For this reason, the sacrament of marriage is much more than what the secular view of marriage is becoming. The sacrament of marriage is a “visible embodiment of [Christ's] love for the Church” (USCCB, *Marriage*, no. 30).

Essentials

In today's society, a couple preparing for marriage will likely be inundated with contracts, whether it is for purchasing a new home, preparing for the wedding, personal bills, etc. The last page of these contracts often contain fine print “terms and conditions” that, if violated, would nullify and void the contract. In contrast with standard contracts, the sacrament of marriage is a covenant, the total giving of self where both parties agree to uphold their commitment, regardless of their spouse's actions. In the Gospel of Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus asserts, “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.” Therefore, before God, the covenant of the marriage is meant to last “until death do us part.”

Because of this, during marriage preparation, both man and woman must “not [be] under constraint; [and] not impeded by any natural or ecclesiastical law (CCC 1625).” This exchange of consent, upheld by the Church, is the indispensable element that “makes the marriage” without which there is no marriage. This consent consists of a “human act by which the partners mutually give themselves to each other” (CCC 1627) and “an act of will of each of the contracting parties, free from coercion or grave external fear” (CCC 1628).

In this covenant, husband and wife are called to give totally of themselves to their spouses. This conjugal love “aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in a definitive mutual giving; and is open to fertility” (CCC 1643). This conjugal love is not only present in the consummation of the marriage, but, by its very nature, is present in “the unity and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life” (CCC 1644).

Christ's death on the cross serves as an example of a true self-giving that all marriages are called to emulate. By giving Himself entirely for the salvation of the world, Jesus obtains true redemption for the world from sin and gives each person a chance at a new eternal life in Christ, united with God the Father. “The deepest reason is found in the fidelity of God to his covenant, in that of Christ to his Church. Through the sacrament of Matrimony the spouses are enabled to represent this fidelity and witness to it. Through the sacrament, the indissolubility of marriage receives a new and deeper meaning (CCC 1647).”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in the pastoral letter that “marriage, then, is nothing less than a participation in the covenant between Christ and the Church.... Marriage is a call to give oneself to one's spouse as fully as Christ gave himself to the Church” (USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 31). Married couples are invited to share in the deep mystery and love of God through their vocation to one another by the same sacrificial love that Christ gave the Church. Christ's love for the Church serves as an example to married couples of true unconditional love. Christian marriage aspires both natural human love, but importantly to Christ's love for the Church, as St. Paul states in his letter to the Ephesians, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

The Church teaches that there are two purposes in marriage: unity and procreation. And that these are inseparable. The previously discussed unitive aspects of marriage in the sense of total self-giving are essential; however, it is just as essential that the marriage be procreative and life-giving as commanded by God in Genesis to “be fertile and multiply (Gen. 1:28).” Together

with their family, the married couple is also called to the missionary work of Christ. The fulfillment of this missionary work is seen most in the upbringing of their children into a life with Christ. The Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* states that “authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church, so that this love may lead the spouses to God with powerful effect and may aid and strengthen them in sublime office of being a father or a mother” (GS 48). Not only is marriage a total self-giving covenant, but in marriage the husband and wife work together to raise their children to become the domestic church.

“Children are the supreme gift of marriage.... Without intending to underestimate the other ends of marriage, it must be said that true married love and the family life which flows from it have this end in view: that the spouses would cooperate generously with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will in due time increase and enrich his family” (GS 50). By being open to life and children, the married couple open themselves to a larger role in building up the kingdom of God. Husband and wife partner with each other and God to help a new generation grow in love and communion with Him, raising their children to be true disciples and faithful followers of Jesus Christ. “Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and a school of enrichment” (CCC 1657). By word and example, parents are called to teach their children how to forgive, be charitable, be kind, and most importantly, offer themselves to Christ completely in worship and prayer. For it is in the Christian home that children receive the first proclamation of the faith (cf. CCC 1666).

Commonly Misunderstood

It is a common modern day misconception that the sole purpose of marriage is the personal satisfaction of the other; the next logical step is that marriage is only fruitful if your spouse can offer the other personal pleasure and satisfaction. However, as previously discussed, the two fundamental purposes of marriage are (1) the good of the spouse (i.e., unitive) and (2) procreation of children (i.e., procreative); therefore, the two cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family (cf. CCC 2363). The unitive meaning is distorted if the procreative meaning is deliberately disavowed and the procreative meaning of marriage is degraded without the unitive (cf. USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 30).

In modern society there has been an increase in couples embracing only one of the two fundamental purposes in their relationships for the sake of convenience or personal pleasure, failing to realize the importance and symbiosis of both purposes for a fulfilling marriage. This can be seen in couples who use various forms of contraception, those who cohabit, and even those in same-sex unions. These types of relationships lack the fullness God intended for the gift of marriage.

Both contraception and cohabitation close the door to a couple giving of themselves fully to one another. Contraception deliberately blocks a couple from being fully united to one another and bringing life into the world. Some would argue that using contraception can relieve the tensions that can accompany the responsibilities of raising a child and save a child from being raised in a financially and/or emotionally unstable household. However, this deliberate separation of the procreative and unitive purpose of marriage has the potential to damage or destroy the marriage entirely because an essential pillar of the marriage is absent.

Cohabitation is also a dangerous practice/lifestyle because “this belief reflects a misunderstanding of the natural purpose of human sexual intercourse, which can only be realized in the permanent commitment of marriage. Sexual intercourse is meant to express the total and unrestricted gift of self that takes place in married love” (USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 26). In practicing the use of contraception and cohabitation, the couple expresses a physical commitment to one another without the indissoluble fidelity.

Same-sex unions have been heavily discussed and challenged at large especially within the last decade. Cases have been brought to the courts seeking to redefine marriage and validate same-sex unions. Redefining the meaning of marriage to allow same-sex relationships excludes the essential complementarity between man and woman as well as the ability to procreate. “The true nature of marriage, lived in openness to life, is a witness to the precious gift of the child to the unique roles of a mother and father. Same-sex unions are incapable of such a witness” (USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 22). The Church repeatedly promotes and upholds the dignity of homosexual persons to be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity (cf. CCC 2358); however, homosexual acts are contrary to natural law and are closed to the gift of life.

Related Doctrine

God’s love for humanity has been revealed time and time again throughout salvation history. It is through Christ’s sacrificial life-giving love that Christ manifests the Father’s love through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the communion of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God reveals to us the inner workings of the Trinitarian life and love.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is called to model this Trinitarian love as well as participate in it (cf. USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 35). It is in the mystery of the

Trinity that we see from the beginning the the Father gives Himself entirely to the Son in the love of the Holy Spirit. In that continuous cycle of the love of the Father and the Son through the power and love of the Spirit that the mutual and total self-giving love of God is revealed. Married couples are called to live out their vocation to one another striving to imitate this Trinitarian life-giving exchange of love.

The Trinitarian image of marriage and family life can be seen in two ways. First, just as the Trinity consists of co-equal Persons in which “everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship” (CCC 255), so too must the marriage be one communion of love between persons with no opposition. An example of this communion is seen in the relationship between the husband and the wife and then extended to their children and other members of the family. “The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 2205). The second way the Trinitarian image in the family life is reflected is through the life-giving communion in relationship to one another. Married couples share the same life-giving Trinitarian love by their openness in procreating children in their conjugal act of love (cf. USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 37).

Liturgy

“[The Eucharist is] the memorial of the love with which [Christ] loved us ‘to the end,’ even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us” (CCC 1380). Christ gives Himself fully to us through His body, soul, and divinity in the form of bread and wine at the Eucharistic feast. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI says, “the imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now

realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood" (DCE 13).

Jesus emphasizes in John 6: 53-56, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." In this wedding feast of the Lamb, Christ calls the faithful to eat and drink His flesh and blood to be united full in Him so that He can live fully through them. The life of a married couple is called to the same unity with one another, that in giving completely of themselves to one another in complete unity, new life will into the marriage both in the literal and spiritual sense.

In the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Catholic married couples meet the one who is the source of their marriage and are more closely united through Christ and all the faithful in the Body of Christ. In the Eucharist, spouses encounter the love that animates and sustains their marriage, the love of Christ for His Church (cf. USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, no. 54). This encounter with the Eucharistic Lord reminds the couple that in their marriage and upbringing of their family, they are not isolated units but are part of the larger Body of Christ. Christ offering Himself totally and freely in the form of the Eucharist came at the price of suffering on the cross out of self-less love. Similarly, suffering and pain will appear within the lifespan of any marriage. Couples may experience hardships and suffering but to carry the cross together is the true act of self-less love.

It is in the union with the Body of Christ through frequent reception of the sacrament that the marriage truly becomes one of life-giving gratitude to God for His gift of one spouse to another,

but more importantly in the gift of the new life in the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. In this Thanksgiving prayer, in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church becomes more fully of what she is (cf. CCC 2637). In the celebration of the Eucharist, the married couple becomes fully of what they are—a reflection of the Trinitarian union. “Just as Christ once proclaimed the greatness of marriage by his presence at the wedding feast in Cana, so now, at the heavenly wedding banquet, marriage and all the blessings of the Holy Spirit, given to us by the Father through Christ, his Son, will find their ultimate consummation because we will be in perfect union with God” (USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, nos. 56-57).

Upon understanding the true role and nature of God’s purpose and intention for marriage, marriage is no longer seen as a picture-perfect family or a set of grim statistics; rather, marriage is a manifestation of Christ’s sacrificial love and an integral part of the missionary work of Christ. Husband and wife embrace the call to create and foster the development of a true Christian family, a domestic Church that grows in a love that is deeper than a mere romantic feeling. Modern day practices of contraception, cohabitation, and same sex unions fall short of the fullness God intended for the gift of marriage. Marriage is a divine vocation that is characterized in the unitive and total self-giving love a man has for his wife, and vice-versa, through the power and guidance of the Trinitarian God, who is Love itself and serves as an ideal “family” to emulate. The heart of the vocation of marriage is a heart that longs for holiness and a commitment to leading each other and their family to a deeper union with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wiping Away the Tears: Catechesis to Dispel the Confusion Surrounding Matrimony

Jeremy Mallett

Bishops around the world were called to convene in a synod to discuss the family. Pope Francis' speech to conclude the synod thanked the synod fathers, the bishops called to the synod, and encouraged them to take this year until the next time they convene again, "to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families."² The core and foundation of a family as the Church has taught through the centuries is the married couple. Thus, a synod to discuss the family by necessity had to consider the crucial aspect of matrimony. From the beginning of his pontificate, it was generally known that Pope Francis' papacy would be marked with a particular emphasis on pastoral care. Indeed, that is really the issue about which the synod was convened. It was not to "change" or "redefine" the sacrament of matrimony as some media and news outlets might lead its viewers to believe, nor was it to review and edit any of the Church's doctrine on matrimony. The theme that this synod was convened to address was, "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization."³

Those that hope that the Church will soon allow for the marriage of same-sex couples or will relent in its teaching on the indissolubility of marriage have their hopes misplaced. The Church has always taught and reaffirmed what Christ himself spoke concerning marriage and divorce. It is part of the Church's mission to teach the teachings of Christ with fidelity. Christ

²http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/18/pope_francis_speech_at_the_conclusion_of_the_synod/11089

³<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/2014-2015-synods-of-bishops-on-the-family.cfm>

sent his disciples forth with the command, “[M]ake disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*”⁴ It is clear that Christ has taught that divorce was not part of the plan. The concession given in Mosaic law was simply because of the hardness of the human heart.⁵ Marriage “from the beginning” was meant to be an indissoluble bond, a sign and image of Christ’s fidelity to the Church and the means by which mankind carries out the divine command to “be fruitful and multiply.”⁶ This is what Jesus taught his disciples concerning marriage. As such, the Church will not change in her proclamation of Christ’s teaching. If this is the case what is there to discuss? What question or problem is the synod trying to find an answer for? What are the pastoral challenges – the “tears of their faithful people” – that pastors must find ways to wipe away in Christ’s name?

A dear friend of mine, a faithful and devout Catholic woman, shared with me her story that after three decades of marriage her husband was leaving her. He had “fallen in love with someone else.” They filed for a civil divorce, but sacramentally they are still married--something my friend wholly concedes to. A young priest who did not know the difference pronounced to her in confession that she was now barred from the Eucharist, though, according to the commentary of the *Code of Canon Law*, “If a divorce is obtained, the spouses are prohibited from a subsequent marriage since the marriage bond is presumed to perdure even though common life has been definitively terminated.” It continues, “On the other hand they are neither excommunicated nor prohibited from receiving the sacraments or fully participating in the

⁴ Matthew 28:19-20 (emphasis mine).

⁵ Cf. Matthew 19:8.

⁶ Genesis 1:28.

Church's life."⁷ This is a case among many that exemplifies the great confusion surrounding marriage and the family even among well-meaning Catholics.⁸

In addition to this challenge, there are pastoral questions on how to handle those who decide to illicitly try to remarry having families in the process, the American public who demands the Church to recognize homosexual marriage, and many young people who simply do not believe in Christ and His Church, much less His teachings about marriage. There are husbands and wives who neglect and forget their duties as a married couple, young people no longer believe in the graces and sacramentality of matrimony,⁹ and members of the clergy, like the young priest mentioned above, who have not been properly formed in what is such a pastorally delicate and epidemically obfuscated situation for all members of the Church. It is in the face of such "tears" and myriad others much like it in which the faithful must ask themselves and the Lord, "What are we to do?" The complexity of the problem must be answered with a multi-faceted response which cannot all be covered here but we shall focus on one facet pertinent to the mission of the *Magister*.

One of the root causes of confusion is a lack of education--catechesis. Coming to knowledge is held in high regard in our faith. Knowledge is a gift of the Holy Spirit, an image by which God reveals and proclaims salvation,¹⁰ and is an image for Christ himself who is the Truth, the *logos*, that we come to know. Applied to this situation, the Church is in desperate need of a catechized laity that hold and live what the Church has understood about marriage from the beginning. And so this paper will outline a basic catechesis on marriage that all faithful would

⁷ *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, Canon 1155 (commentary) p. 822.

⁸ It is in times of and in response to great confusion that the Church will convene synods and councils so as to make the correct pronouncements in the hope of dispelling such confusion.

⁹ This disbelief is also linked to a general disbelief; that is, not even having faith which will be examined further below.

¹⁰ Cf. John 17:3.

benefit to know but is absolutely necessary for those who minister to married couples and those themselves who are married. Firstly, a catechesis on marriage should include an understanding of marriage as it relates to Christ and His Church, namely that matrimony is a great mystery in which the love of Christ for his Church ought to be manifest and visible. Secondly, a marriage catechesis should include an understanding of its sacramentality--that God is conferring a grace and that the man and woman are entering into a covenant. Lastly, the catechized should be educated on the three goods of marriage. While the Church's teaching on the sacrament of matrimony is vast and interconnected with all other parts of the faith, these three points are part of the core principles of her understanding.

Numerous Church documents reference Ephesians 5, not just as an ecclesiological revelation by Paul, but also as a revelation of the divine intent for marriage. Paul writes at length to show the parallels between a married couple and Christ with the Church, revealing how great a mystery the union of man and woman is. He then asks his readers to extrapolate, if the mystery of the union of man and wife is so great what more the mystery of the union of Christ with the Church.¹¹ What Paul was getting at was trying to use the familiar Jewish understanding of marriage to help his readers understand the relationship that Christians corporately have to Christ as his mystical body. This is not an unusual method of reasoning since a common image for sinfulness in the Old Testament is marital infidelity. However, what is crucial to understanding marriage properly as it reflects the love of Christ is how, even if we are unfaithful, Christ remains faithful. Christ gave himself to his disciples and to the Church as a whole in the forming of the "new and eternal covenant." He did so knowing full well that those whom he called friends would betray, forsake and doubt him. But, faithful to this covenant, their sins would not

¹¹ Cf. Ephesians 5:32.

be strong enough to dissolve the bond he had forged between God and man in His person. Christ formed a covenantal bond, the same bond a couple forms in marriage. What this means is there is a mutual giving, or exchange of persons that leads a couple into the experience of a “relational ‘uni-duality.’”¹² An understanding of the love Christ has for the Church and the communal covenant “in his blood” is necessary for couples to understand the kind of relationship and covenant they themselves signify when they become married.

A second point that a catechesis of marriage must include is the sacramental and sacred nature of the marriage union. There is a great deal of confusion surrounding this point because of Protestant, civil and secular procedures that are so common to popular experience. Weddings according to popular culture often involve any venue as long as it is meaningful to the couple, a minister or judge whose authority comes from the state, a ritual according to the design of the couple to include or exclude any words or actions according to the whims of the couple, and an undue emphasis on the reception as the celebratory component of a wedding. A catechesis on marriage should address these common misconceptions while bringing to mind not only what the Church teaches about marriage but that marriage itself is a divine institution the authority of which has been given to the Church to instruct on and confer. As a sacrament, God is present, active and giving a special grace that confers special Christian responsibilities upon the couple as a couple within a larger Christian community and upon each spouse toward the other. The act of making the marriage contract is the act by which God confers the grace. But the act itself has to have special characters. This is the primary reason the Church does not allow for the couple to write their own vows. As poetic and personal as any given set of vows may be, unless particular vows are made to the other the marriage is not valid. The vows are freely willed and consented to

¹² John Paul II, “*Letter to Women*” 29 June 1995, 8 in AAS 87 (1995), 808-9.

while without impediment to marriage,¹³ or material or socially advantageous motives. The vows promise indissoluble unity, exclusive fidelity and openness to fertility.

The last point of catechesis should discuss the three goods of marriage, a formula going back as far as St. Augustine and the Patristic Age of the Church. The Church formally pronounced these goods to the Armenians in the Council of Florence in 1439 and then again by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* (*On Chaste Marriage*). The three goods of marriage flow from the vows or essential characters of marriage. The three goods of marriage are children, fidelity, and the indissolubility of the sacrament itself.

Pius XI writes about that in regard to children, Christian parents are to follow the bidding of God who, to our first parents, said, “Be fruitful and multiply.” The Pope went on to say that parents “should... understand that their duty is not only to propagate and maintain the human race on earth; it is not even merely to rear any sort of worshippers of the true God. They are called to provide children to the Church, to beget ‘fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God’ in order that the people dedicated to the worship of our God and Saviour may increase from day to day.”¹⁴ The duty of a married couple is to raise children – either theirs by nature, adoption or spiritual relationship – to become saints.

By the good of fidelity, spouses “endeavor to bring each other to the state of perfection... as a complete and intimate life-partnership and association.”¹⁵ The fidelity that a married couple enjoys involves an “interior conformation” of each to the other. They form not only a physical bond but, in accord with their nature as human beings, spiritual bond in the image of God.

Tertullian praises this union saying, “How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one

¹³ Some impediments include but are not limited to male impotence, drunkenness, lack of years in age, previous undissolved marriage, too great a disparity of cult or religious vows of chastity and celibacy.

¹⁴ Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, no. 13.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit.”¹⁶ God has called none other than mankind to himself and calls mankind to none other but Himself. Marriage reflects this in fidelity for there should be nothing in the place of God in the lives of Christians.

The third good of marriage is its indissolubility. Christ went to special lengths in teaching about marriage, raising it to a sacrament, and doing away with the Mosaic exception for divorce. Christ says according to Matthew, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.”¹⁷ Our Lord Jesus explains this by reason of man leaving his father and mother to join his wife that the two become one flesh. “So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together no human being must separate.”¹⁸ The emphasis that Christ places upon this revelation is focused on the action of God. It is God who unites in a union that man cannot undo. In matrimony, God touches the man and woman and fashions them into one. And being that God is goodness itself, all God does is good. Therefore the act of matrimony as an act of God must be considered a good.

This is the basic understanding and teaching of the Church on marriage and it is on this understanding that the Fathers of the Synod on the Family will move forward. The ideas which must mature over the next year must give due respect to these teachings that, coming from Christ himself, have been handed down through the centuries to us two millennia later. Again, those

¹⁶ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2,8,6-7:PL 1,1412-1413; cf. FC 13.

¹⁷ Matthew 19:8-9.

¹⁸ Matthew 19:5-6.

who expect these teachings to change have misplaced expectations since what the Church teaches is from Christ; and Christ teaches only goodness and truth. The laity can aid our Synod Fathers by ourselves being educated, not according to the media and our own misconceptions of marriage, but according to the true understanding given us in faith handed on in faithful catechesis.

BOOK REVIEW

***The Hope of the Family: A Dialogue with Gerhard Cardinal Muller*, ed. Carlos Granados, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 86 pages.**

Reviewed by Deacon Dennis Purificacion

This easy-to-read interview of the current prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is a timely conversation that provides insight into the urgent doctrinal priorities for the Synod on the Family in 2015. Against the much often-hype of the secular media and even some Catholic media establishment emphases on removing the prohibition of civilly divorced and remarried Catholics receiving Holy Communion and even redefinition of marriage, Cardinal Muller addresses other pressing issues such as cohabitation, Catholics living with only civil marriages, the urgency of marriage preparation and sound catechesis, and misguided anthropological currents. The book is in a Q-A format of 24 short questions and accessible answers that the reader will find concise and faithful to the Deposit of Faith.

The first notable point from the first set of questions and answers pertained to a correct understanding of the human person. This Christian anthropological grounds the call for strong witness to married and family life. “The sexual revolution destroyed many really important anthropological fundamentals” (30). What is offered to young people today is devoid of transcendent meaning reducing human life to mere animal instinct and replaced God as “new idols” (31). Muller does not neglect the current cultural Marxism that has affected the family.

The second notable point is that “family catechesis” (39) is necessary – not just individual children’s catechesis – along with priestly formation where priests “should be better prepared to minister to families as such and not just to individuals” (40). The formation of new priests and laity should be done in a way that is a “more comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to family” (40) not just in terms of canon law. “For its part, *pastoral theology* studies [the family] under the aspect of promoting it, so that the plan for a family arrives at the right destination: here, too, the question of how to treat those who are divorced as well as divorced and remarried Catholics comes into play” (41). Priests, for Muller, serve entire families in pastoral practice.

The third notable theme is the insistence on the immutable nature of Church doctrine particularly on the indissolubility of marriage, in light of the upcoming Synod in 2015. “Not even an ecumenical council can change the doctrine of the Church, because her Founder, Jesus Christ, entrusted the faithful preservation of his teachings and doctrine to the apostles and their successors” (43). With clear words, Muller taught, “I insist: the absolute indissolubility of a valid marriage is no mere doctrine; rather, it is a divine dogma defined by the Church” (44-45). This hermeneutical lens appears again in the 11th and 13th questions, respectively, where one “cannot declare a marriage defunct with the excuse that the love between the spouses has ‘died’” (50) and, in the case of Holy Communion for civilly divorced and remarried spouses, we have to “be very cautious about an immanentist understanding of the Sacrament of the Eucharist” (57) which is based on an extreme individualism. “The split between life and doctrine is part of the

Gnostic dichotomy” (60). Moreover, to the claim that the Church Fathers tolerated new unions, Muller held that “there is no statement by the Fathers that tends to accept placidly a second marriage while the first spouse is alive” (63). Thus, Muller dismissed the charge that patristic authors, including those in the East, diverged from 21st Century Church teaching on marriage and family and affirmed that the universal Catholic Church has handed down a theological and juridical patrimony in a way that does not take the Fathers of the Church out of context.

Finally, Muller goes to the heart of the Church’s sacramental teaching, “The very notion of sacrament is going through a serious crisis today” (69). Many people today, he observed, “judge marriage exclusively according to worldly, pragmatic criteria” (72); however, he continued citing St. Paul, “Someone who thinks according to ‘the spirit of the world’ (1 Cor. 2:12) cannot understand the sanctity or the sacramentality of marriage! This is a challenge for us, the pastors and the faithful of our time” (72-73). Accommodation to the world’s expectations and a “pragmatic adaptation” (73) bears no fruit and is even counterproductive according to Muller. Rather, Muller’s inspiring words call for the martyr’s “prophetic boldness” (73) instead of this lukewarmness in order to witness to the “gospel of the sanctity of marriage” (73). As “courageous prophets” (74), married couples through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony consequently witness to others around them but bear witness “chiefly for their own children” (74). Looking to models for family, he highlighted St. John Paul the Great as the “pope of the family” (75). Muller also provided constructive criticism on the issue of canonized married couples, “It is true that we do not have many canonized married couples. Perhaps the root cause is not that they are numerically fewer but, rather, that it is more difficult to prove their holiness. It may be that the Church has to work more in this direction” (82).

The book will inform and encourage discouraged readers to promote marriage and reverse the course of the current condition in the world. “The possibility of total collapse looms. We have to change course! The Church’s doctrine on the family is precisely the remedy we need to save us from a predictable disaster” (76). If readers seek hope – the hope of the family – then this dialogue with Cardinal Muller, the Vatican watchdog on doctrine, will be sure to provide that hope so desperately needed in our time. I thought that the book was not too heady and academic yet informative for academics. I highly recommend this book, particularly to the laity and especially to married couples. After reading this work by Muller, I would be interested to read other books and documents by him.