

## THE CATHOLIC SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

The Church believes that marriage is the bedrock of society. In Catholic belief, marriage cannot make a man and woman real family. They only become a family when the woman carries a new life put there by her husband.

The view that marriage is a contract means that it is God's choice that it will be lifelong. He could make it temporary if he wished. But in the Bible, marriage is more than just a contract but unites man and woman into a warm intimate combination. That is the logic behind making marriage unbreakable. Marriage by default in this light implies that same sex unions are wrong. That is what we find in the Book of Genesis in reference to Adam and Eve's union,

Jesus in the gospels draws on that to speak of man and woman becoming one flesh in marriage. Becoming one flesh is a metaphor for merging. It is man and woman becoming inseparable in marriage. The metaphor is that as you can no longer separate two eggs that you have scrambled you cannot separate man and wife. Realistically man and woman cannot merge that much so it is the law merges them. It is about law. For Catholics it is about divine law. Only a God doing miracles could merge two people who are not that merged! The judgementalism of Catholicism is apparent when it says that people fail not marriage for marriage is a sacrament, a channel of help from God that helps you transcend the flaws of your human nature.

Jesus commands that man and woman must not be put asunder in marriage for the language of sex is becoming one body. This amounts to a command for heterosexual marriage to be lifelong and not to recognise any other kind of marriage.

The Church regards marriage or Holy Matrimony as one of the seven sacraments. Marriage is a union of hearts and bodies for life according to the definition used by the Church. But yet the Church regards a man and woman who are married and who hate each other as married! It's a legal union yes but that doesn't make it a real one. It is unfair to proclaim it a real one. If laws are just and fair, no just and fair law can make a marriage where there is none.

The Church says that Christ raised marriage from being a natural contract between a baptised man and baptised woman to the dignity of a sacrament. That is to say, the marriage confers grace or God's supernatural presence and help on the couple. This supernatural help binds them together and keeps them united. They are bound together not just in law but by God. They are united by being attached to God for they are granted supernatural receptiveness to God not as two individuals but as a couple. Their openness to God makes the contract more binding. So sacramental marriage only takes place between two baptised people of the opposite sex.

The Church speaks of natural marriage and sacramental marriage. Both are real. But does that make sense? If we need God's grace to be truly good, and if nobody is truly good unless they love God, then a marriage can't be real if it is not sacramental.

But the Church says it is real.

In reality, this amounts to saying that baptised people are more married than a baptised and unbaptised person or two people who are not baptised.

The Church even allows divorce where one partner is not baptised or if both are not baptised. It argues that a sacramental marriage only ends at the death of one spouse. When the Church fights against divorce, it is really about plotting to get the state to treat Catholic marriage as a sacrament that cannot be dissolved. It is about protecting Catholic sacramental marriage and not marriage as such. People who think they are protecting marriage by challenging divorce are being misled. They think they are not defending only a religious understanding of marriage but they are.

The Church cares primarily if not only about sacramental marriage. So it looks down on other forms of marriage as inferior or less binding or less of a marriage. It is as bizarre as saying an employment contract between an employee and employer is more of a contract if they are baptised or if they are really happy in their contract.

If death can end a sacramental marriage it is possible for God to make other grounds for ending it. The Church however strangely makes out that it is logically impossible! This is really about trying to force marriage on people. If a marriage ends and the couple is told they are still husband and wife and will be until death that is enforced marriage. Marriage is not what people do on the wedding day but the wedding day is the start of marriage. They marry daily. It is continuous.

The Church marries people in ceremonies that are not real marriages in the eyes of the state. The Church proves that it does

not really believe that marriage is the foundation of the nation and society when it claims that it has the authority to solemnise marriages that are not protected or validated by the state. It even claims the right and authority to disregard marriages conducted by the state. For example, if two Catholics marry in a register office the Church will say that no genuine marriage has taken place. The Church says Protestants can validly marry that way but not Catholics. In other words, Catholics are so special their marriages in register offices degrade them and thus are useless.

The Church does not honour and protect all marriages and it has the nerve to pretend it really cares about the family and that is why it values marriage.

Suppose there is such a thing as undergoing a rite or doing something that binds you to your partner for life. By what law has it to be done the Catholic way? Who says you need a Church ceremony where vows are exchanged, need legal papers signed and need to have sex at least once to consummate the marriage? The couple can't feel totally committed all the time - that is human nature. Many couples feel the maximal commitment when they have sex and only then.

Marriage cannot be validated by any Church. It can only be valid in the eyes of the law. It is the law that has to look after the family and create regulations for it. A marriage that is not recognised by the law is not a marriage at all. The Church needs to provide amazing evidence that it has the power to validate marriages. Where is it?

The Church says that Catholics who have a sacramental marriage that breaks up may have a divorce as long as they don't believe it really dissolves marriage. This is really enabling divorce law to exist and this is hypocrisy for the Church says divorce law is a slippery slope and damages marriage. Oh the hypocrisy!

Marriage is only a legal construct. It is like adoption which declares a baby to be really the son or daughter of the adopting parents. The child is only their son or daughter in the sight of the law and not in reality. The husband and wife are strictly speaking not really related. Marriage cannot make them really related. It declares them related but that is only a legal fiction. Those who do not want marriage re-defined and who want the Christian understanding retained choose to forget that marriage is not real anyway. It is useful for some but not real.

The Church provides pre-marriage courses. It is telling how it doesn't have parenting courses instead. The Church has more concern for the rules being explained and kept than for the couples or the children.

Marriage does not belong to the Church but to the people. Therefore the Church has no right to discriminate against same-sex couples or pagan couples who have made the marriage contract.

Catholics say that lifelong marriage is an ideal. This is an arrogant claim as it takes no account of how different people and their needs are. An ideal that cannot be lived up to is not an ideal at all. And it oppresses those who who fall short. Ideals deter many people from trying to better their lives. They make people get disillusioned and resentful. They make people feel inadequate. No two people are alike. For some, the ideal marriage lasts a few years. For others, shacking up is the ideal that is right for them.

The Iona Institute argues that children from married couples have better outcomes in life than children reared by unmarried or single parents. It then insists that taxpayer cash should be used more in aid of the traditional family to keep it surviving. This proves that Iona wants to put non-traditional families at a distance. It wants to punish them for not being good traditional Catholic families. It is clear that this is about supporting religious rules even if it hurts people. It is not about genuine concern for families at all. It ignores other factors. It ignores the fact that even if we see that children whose parents are unmarried don't do well, that might change in a few years and ignores the fact that the reasons for the problems might be complicated and nothing to do with the parents being unmarried. It might not be single parenting for example that causes problems for the child so much as the way the parenting is done. For example, a mother who is inadequately interested in being a mother and who prefers the child to be raised by family and the crèche is not an argument against single mothers.

The Church says that sex should only take place between a husband and wife who are validly married. If a couple trust one another completely then why can't they have sex whether married or not? Marriage does not mean that the partners will have a complete trust in one another anyway. Also, even if a couple is united by trust that trust might be small one day and huge the next. It is ridiculous to say that people should only have sex if they are married. That is saying that this law is what matters most and not the level of trust that they have for one another. It is anti-personal. It is anti-respect.

If a wife does not trust in the Church's teaching that bans contraception and tries to force her good Catholic husband to put a condom on, the Church says the marriage could well end. They will say the reason is because the wife was being so unfair to the husband and not showing him any respect. She was not acting as a wife. In reality, the marriage is damaged by stupid Catholic teaching about contraception being a sin.

The Catholic teaching on marriage is utter nonsense and irresponsible nonsense. Strangely for a religion that says you must hate the sin or hate the evil but love the person responsible it does not insist that one must never refer to people as husband and wife who are not validly married in the eyes of the Church! It says God's is love and he is truth for the two go together which means that if you put God first you must always call a spade a spade. You never see many Christians doing that!