

# INTRODUCTION: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY



The Summer 2022 issue of *Communio* is dedicated to the theme of “Marriage and Family.” While it is apparent that our culture has largely lost touch with what it means to be a family, let alone how to live out this meaning, the effect of this loss is not limited to moral confusion or transgression. Marriage, as a culminating mystery of creation, concretely symbolizes in itself God’s bond with the world, so that widespread failure to respect marriage’s form both expresses and leads to a cultural misunderstanding of being itself, with perilous repercussions. The authors gathered in this issue exemplify how dwelling with the truth of marriage in both its nature and its sacramentality can, conversely, yield ever-deeper affirmations of the world, the human person, and God himself. This issue also remembers Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, a beloved defender of the Church’s teaching on marriage as a source of culture, five years after his death in 2017.

**Gerhard Ludwig Müller**, in “What May We Expect from the Family?” discusses the hope the Church offers to families, and the hope that families in turn can offer to the world. Christ’s love so orders and radiates from the form of sacramental marriage itself that the Church must always take safeguarding this given form’s realization as the measure of her pastoral care for families and their members. “In the bond, the individualism of the spouses or the couple is overcome and there arises a culture of the family, a realm in which love can flourish, Noah’s ark.” By supporting the bond, the Church extends God’s mercy, which both judges sin and renews life in Christ, life that can abound for the life of the world.

In “The Natural Supernaturality of Marriage,” **D.C. Schindler** reflects on the sacred character of natural marriage that is presupposed and perfected by the sacrament of matrimony. Drawing principally on two of John Paul II’s addresses to the Roman Rota, Schindler attends to how this sacrament is peculiarly marked by being placed at the service of fulfilling natural ends. “What is unique in this particular sacrament is that the *locus* of the mystery it signifies coincides with the *created nature* of the spousal union, so that their union is not transformed into something radically different, like the bread into the Body, but rather the sacramental grace enters into and enriches the natural institution itself.” This paradox, Schindler goes on to argue, distinctively brings to light the self-transcendence relative to God’s giving that is proper to nature as nature.

**Adrian J. Walker** contemplates how the meaning of being, both created and divine, is expressed in the nuptial act in “*Nexus indissolubilis*: A Balthasarian-Augustinian Meditation on the Spousal Embrace.” Human fecundity reveals how the desire for life is always fulfilled in an interpersonal life-giving that images and mediates God’s self-communication to his creature. “It is precisely by resting in the given-awayness of the gift, as it were, that the couple experience the causal fruitfulness proper to sex, whose principle is a kind of virginal renunciation of fruitfulness—into the hands of the Creator who alone gives being and raises the dead to new life.” This eucharistic figure of nuptial love, Walker shows, is rooted in the generative life of the triune God.

In “The Family as an Image of the Trinity in Aquinas,” **Michael Joseph Higgins** presents Thomas’s rejection of a familial image for the Trinity as more nuanced than many commentators have recognized. Indeed, Higgins argues that Thomas’s understanding of the “psychological image” and his theology of the eternal procession of the Son from the Father can bolster in significant ways an account of the family as *imago Trinitatis* that we find, for instance, in the teaching of John Paul II. “We image God,” Higgins affirms in light of Thomas, “insofar as we give and receive existence in begetting and in being-born.”

**Livio Melina** celebrates the legacy of the late Carlo Caffarra by considering his dramatic theology in “Carlo Caffarra: Teacher and Witness of Love’s Truth.” “Caffarra interprets

human history as a struggle between the attractiveness of truth, rooted in the heart of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, and the power of Satan, who builds a culture of lies." As Caffarra saw, this struggle is especially expressed in our own time in the manifold ways in which the intelligibility of marriage has been threatened and eclipsed by dominant ideology. This situation calls the Church more urgently to contemplate and to live in accord with Christ as the personal centerpoint of being, and through him to revere the natural realities he redeemed by taking on flesh.

**Carlo Caffarra**, in "The Crisis of Ethics in the West," approaches the essential features of the human person that belong to any ethical reflection, features that contemporary society has hardened itself against countenancing. What is at stake in this rejection? "At its core, it is a crisis of our vision of man: it is a conflict of anthropologies." Only if we acknowledge the gravity of the alternative between these worldviews, Caffarra holds, can we begin to serve the rehabilitation of a genuine culture of life that fosters interpersonal flourishing.

In "Augustine and the Catholic 'Form' of Scripture," **Colin Miller** explores how Augustine situates Scripture within his ontology of creation, according to which the world is a body of signs focused on Christ as the divine *res* become *signum*. Miller argues that Scripture can only be understood if it is received as arising from within the ecclesial body that is the fruit of the Word's Incarnation, for it is this same Church whose form Scripture communicates to the believing Christian. "The *verba* of Scripture are not important merely because they are a set of words that happen to be divinely inspired, but they are divinely inspired because they are part of the Church: they are Catholic words that teach nothing but the Catholic faith."

In "*Othello*: Iago's Dark Powers and the Empiricist Mindset," **Robert Alexander** discusses how Shakespeare's Venice represents a precursor to liberal society in its diabolic fragmentation of man from truth and, therein, from himself. This setting, a social order that obscures the meaning of being through inculcating a rationality cut off by design from the goodness of reality, presents the conditions in which the tragic action that destroys Othello's and Desdemona's marriage can unfold. For, as Alexander suggests, "if Iago is a person in whom exists a principle inimical to love, a principle whose terms or orientations are shaped

by the commercial regime, we have to ask if there is not some way in which the Venetians around him share in that principle.”

In *Notes & Comments*, we feature **John M. Rist**’s “Jerome and the Lord’s Prayer: Some Philological Observations.” Rist weighs in on and contributes to the scholar Eckhard Nordhofen’s treatment of the Lord’s Prayer in the synoptic gospels, referring especially to an essay by Nordhofen published in the Spring 2012 issue of *Communio*. Nordhofen has drawn attention to how the Greek *epiousion*, a polyvalent *hapax legomena* that Jesus uses to describe the bread we ask from the Father, was rendered into Latin by St. Jerome as *supersubstantialem*, which calls the Eucharist to mind in a way that is lost in most translations. Commenting on Jerome’s decision, Rist notes, “Apart from more general ancient practice, his willingness to gloss the original is wholly in line with the principles of translation he lays out in letter fifty-seven: we should aim at the intended sense, avoiding slavish literalism.” □

—The Editors