

INTRODUCTION: MARRIAGE: THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS



In view of the upcoming Extraordinary Meeting of the Synod of Bishops addressing the theme of “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization,” the present issue of *Communio* focuses on the questions of the nature and pastoral care of marriage and the family.

Cardinal Angelo Scola, in “Marriage and the Family Between Anthropology and the Eucharist: Comments in View of the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family,” explains the need for an adequate anthropology when addressing the reality of marriage. He writes that such an anthropology is directly connected to the gospel of the family, which in turn is fertile ground for an understanding of the profound connection between the sacraments of marriage and the Eucharist, the development of which the Church has cared for throughout its history. These two sacraments, the Cardinal says, are intrinsically related in and through the nuptial dimension of love, a mystery only perceivable within a true anthropology of the human being. In addressing the recent pastoral concerns about the predicament of married and divorced people within the Church, the Cardinal first asks us to keep in mind that the eucharistic

sacrifice quite simply is the definitive condition within which matrimonial consent exists, and second suggests that the bishop be given a greater direct interest in pastoral issues involving individual marriages.

In his article, "Marriage and the Family Within the Sacramentality of the Church: Challenges and Perspectives," **Cardinal Marc Ouellet** explores and gives a theological basis for a renewal of the pastoral care of the family. Christian spouses receive a real participation in Christ's love for the Church and are intimately associated with the permanent sacramental celebration of this nuptial mystery, the Eucharist. The Cardinal explores the wide reach of non-sacramental mercy while clarifying the sacramental reason for the Church's discipline regarding civilly divorced and remarried Catholics. The latter's abstention from Holy Communion is a witness to Christ's indestructible Covenant and an acknowledgment of God's mercy, which remains active in their lives. The truth of the Covenant is a source of healing and pastoral renewal, which places the family at the heart of the Church's mission.

José Granados, DCJM, in "The Sacramental Character of Faith: Consequences for the Question of the Relation Between Faith and Marriage," argues that faith and sacraments are connected, not only because the sacraments are sacraments of faith, but also because faith has a sacramental structure. This perspective, which enriches our understanding of the act of faith, sheds light also on the role of faith in the celebration of marriage. The comparison between sacrament and faith helps us to see that the faith has a strict relation too, both with the original, creaturely experience of man and woman, and with their membership in the Body of Christ in the Church. Three elements appear necessary, then, in order to explain the role of faith within matrimonial consent: the acceptance of the creaturely truth of marriage, baptism as incorporation in the spousal body of Christ and the Church, and the free acceptance of this fact of belonging to the Church's faith, expressed in the acceptance of the canonical form. In keeping with the essence of matrimonial consent, the pastoral approach will take care to insist on the truth of human love as a journey of initiation into the faith, and to reinforce the ecclesial membership of the bride and groom (as opposed to the modern privatization of

marriage), assuring them above all of follow-up pastoral care in their first years of marriage.

Antonio López, FSCB, reflects on the question, “Marriage’s Indissolubility: An Untenable Promise?” In it, he explores the nature of indissolubility while recognizing the many challenges married couples face in his article. Whereas an understanding of the person as self-originating freedom sustains the prevalent view of marriage as a negotiable contract, “only an anthropology informed by the gift-character of man’s . . . being can adequately account for marriage as an indissoluble union.” As a sacrament, married love discovers its source and fulfillment, for “spouses are given the grace to love . . . with the unconditional, gratuitous love of Christ.” Affirming through sacrifice the truth of their vocation to marriage and thus welcoming each other anew, spouses allow their indissoluble communion to be a sign of God’s enduring mercy in the world.

In “The Merciful Gift of Indissolubility and the Question of Pastoral Care for Civilly Divorced and Remarried Catholics,” **Nicholas J. Healy, Jr.**, reflects on the proposal of Cardinal Walter Kasper to allow civilly divorced and remarried Catholics to receive the Eucharist. After recalling the recent history of this question, Healy summarizes Kasper’s arguments as set forth in his address to the Extraordinary Consistory in February of 2014. Interpreting John Paul II’s account of indissolubility as “grounded in the personal and total self-giving of the spouses” (*Familiaris consortio*, 20), Healy suggests that Kasper’s proposal fails to consider adequately the sacramental bond itself as an abiding source of forgiveness and mercy.

D.C. Schindler, in his article, “The Crisis of Marriage as a Crisis of Meaning: On the Sterility of the Modern Will,” proposes that one of the root causes of the crisis of marriage today is an impoverishment in our sense of the will. In the modern conception of freedom, the will is essentially a power to choose, which, as a power, retains a certain sovereignty over its object even in the choices it has made. As a contrast to this, the essay presents the classical view of freedom, each act of which is a choice of the good and so analogously a form of self-giving love. Marriage is thus interpreted as the perfect freedom that is essentially generative of a bond that unites spouses beyond the apparent limits of their individual existence.

In “‘What God Has Conjoined, Let No Man Put Asunder’: A Meditation on Fruitfulness, Fidelity, and the Conjugal Embrace,” **Adrian J. Walker** offers a meditation on the conjugal embrace, its signification for marriage, and why contraception already separates the spouses from God, and therefore from each other. Because the body is saturated with “living soul,” the conjugal act—which only truly exists with its twin ends of fruitfulness and fidelity intact—is a symbol both of the spouses’ love for each other, and of their marital bond that is constituted in the love of God. Sexual union that is not open to both fidelity and fruitfulness, argues Walker, drives a wedge of divorce into the very heart of the relationship between the spouses.

David S. Crawford approaches the topic of “Gay Marriage, Public Reason, and the Common Good” from a new direction. He does not ask how “gay marriage” might affect the common good, but rather how our assumptions about the common good give rise to a form of both public reason and sexuality whose clearest expression in fact occurs in “gay marriage.” He argues that our cultural re-conception of the common good has made the Catholic understanding of marriage and the family not only largely unintelligible but has replaced it with a paradigm for marital and sexual love that is already universally “gay.”

Fabrizio Meroni, PIME, in his “Pastoral Care of Marriage: Affirming the Unity of Mercy and Truth,” argues that the mission of the Church is pastoral because of her divine motherhood: the Bride of Christ, pregnant of the Holy Spirit, conceives, gives birth, and nurtures the children she receives gratuitously from God. Marriage can never be simply one among many objects of her pastoral care. Insofar as life in the family of God is the reason for her creation and for her existence in the Cross as Christ’s Spouse, marriage as such becomes the real subject, foundation, and active structure of any serious and true pastoral work of the ecclesial community. Pastoral activity should be molded and structured upon marriage and family since the gift of full life needs to be shared in an essentially personal way. The future of humanity and of the Church thus passes through the family founded on man and woman’s indissoluble and fruitful marriage.

In *Retrieving the Tradition*, we offer **John Paul II’s** address from 1982 on “God’s Gift of Life and Love: On Marriage and the Eucharist.” The pope unfolds the intrinsic sacramental

relation between the Eucharist and Christian marriage. God's Covenant with mankind, culminating in Christ's self-gift to the Church, draws humanity into communion with the Trinity. The Eucharist, which makes this supreme gift accessible to us, is "intimately bound" to the conjugal covenant; for in the spouses' love, transformed by the "gift of God," the new Covenant itself is accomplished. Through a paschal journey of conversion and growth, Christian marriage builds up the Church and becomes a sign to the world of the new and eternal Covenant that dwells in it.

Also in *Retrieving the Tradition*, we recall the renowned patristic scholar **Henri Crouzel, SJ's** article, "Divorce and Remarriage in the Early Church: Some Reflections on Historical Methodology." In this article, written in 1977, Crouzel examines the interpretive principles, hypotheses, and habits of method informing contemporary theologians' attempts to ground a revision of the Church's practice regarding divorce and remarriage in the early Christian tradition. Offering ample textual evidence from the Fathers, including discussions of the most commonly cited texts of Origen and Basil, Crouzel demonstrates that the patristic evidence, when read according to the criteria of adequate historical method, does not support such argumentation. As is evident from the text, Crouzel's article is by no means an apology for the tradition, but rather a forceful argument for the integrity of historical research.

Finally, we print **David L. Schindler's** Eulogy for Stratford Caldecott, delivered at St. Aloysius Church, the Oxford Oratory, on 31 July 2014, the feast day of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Caldecott, a longtime Board Member of the American *Communio* and dear friend of its editors, and well-known to all of its readers, passed away on 17 July, after a protracted struggle with cancer. *Requiescat in Pace.* □

—The Editors