**Efficacious Sign and Efficacious Model in the Marital Covenant**

**Efficacious Sign**

Imagine a young person, coming from a broken family, staying at another family’s home for a summer—the young person obtained a good out-of-state job, and has found a nice place to stay. Not having had a good family experience, this young person really doubts whether there is any ultimate meaning to life, really doubts the existence of a loving God. This person is somewhat amazed at the love he finds in this family—something not experienced before. Whether he is explicitly aware of it or not, he is actually seeing another bond as well, imaged by the couple, namely, the bond between God and mankind. After experiencing spousal and familial love throughout the summer, the young person begins to reconsider: maybe there is such a thing as love, meaning, and God. For he has seen that very love dwelling right within the marriage and family life he is experiencing. He may or may not be fully conscious of this connection.

The Bible is filled with texts that capture the very phenomenon the young person experienced, the idea that spousal love is a great image or sign of the covenant between God and man. For example, look at Isaiah 62:4-5.

For the Lord delights in you,  
and makes your land his spouse.  
As a young man marries a virgin,  
your builder shall marry you;  
And as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride  
so shall your God rejoice in you.

The most important quality in a solid marriage is fidelity to the permanent bond that God has created between the spouses. This permanence—or indissolubility—is likewise found in God's relationship with man: the Israelites called this God’s ‘emeth or fidelity (cf. Exodus 34: 5-7). The permanent bond between spouses, when respected, “echoes” the covenant between God and man.

Consider too these additional texts:
Hosea 2:21, and indeed the entire message of Hosea, who illustrates Israel's infidelity by taking a harlot for a wife. The Song of Songs (see especially 4:12) which is a love poem meant to symbolize the covenant between God and man.
Jeremiah 7:34.
Revelation 21:2.

One can view these texts as *metaphorical* descriptions of the covenant: God's relationship with mankind is *like* a marriage between spouses. The imagery goes much deeper, however, than the level of metaphor. It doesn’t just point to the covenant, it isn’t just a sign of the covenant, it is a pointer or a sign that *actually makes present that which it points to*. Right inside of marriage we actually find God’s faithful permanent covenantal love. This is what married people get themselves into.

Consider two texts from *Familiaris Consortio* (FC): “The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful *expression* in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman” (FC 12).

And this:

For this reason the central word of revelation, "God loves his people," is likewise *proclaimed through* the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love.
Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant which unites God and his people. And the same sin which can harm the conjugal covenant becomes an image of the infidelity of the people to their God: Idolatry is prostitution, infidelity is adultery, disobedience to the law is abandonment of the spousal love of the Lord. But the infidelity of Israel does not destroy the eternal fidelity of the Lord... (FC 12).

A sign, image or pointer that makes its object present is obviously of a unique kind. It is called a sacramental image, an image which makes present that which it signifies, or causes what it signifies. Something that “does a good job at causing” is called “efficacious.” For example, a pain reliever that gets the job done is an “efficacious” pain reliever. If the medicine is too old, and doesn’t have any “power” any more, we say “this pill has lost its efficacy.” Likewise, a sacramental image is an efficacious image. It does what it is supposed do—it makes something present. Therefore, it is called an efficacious sign, an efficacious image.

To capture the unusualness of an efficacious sign, imagine yourself driving your car and seeing a typical sign that points to something else—a Stop Sign is an indicator that you are supposed to come to a stop. It tells you something, and you respond. Now imagine if the sign were to actually reach out, somehow, and put the breaks on, or somehow bring your car to a safe stop. The sign would have caused what it signified—it would be an efficacious sign. Odd as the example is, it gives a sense of how mighty is the idea of an efficacious sign. With the sacraments we have right in our midst a set of signs that really are mighty, that really cause what they signify.

If this is true—and Catholics firmly believe that it is—then we have come upon the most marvelous thing that could possibly exist after the Incarnation. We have come upon a set of signs that make the Incarnation—the person of Jesus Christ—present in our midst. Since marriage is such a reality, in marriage we are caught up in a huge mystery. We don’t “get married.” Marriage “gets” (captures) us.

**Efficacious Model**

Now “flip this relationship around.” Instead of asking what the covenant is like, and finding an image of it in marriage, ask what marriage is like. We discover what marriage is by looking at the covenant between God and man. That covenant is a model for marriage. And interestingly, it is not any ordinary model. It is an efficacious model in that it causes the very realities contained in it. God’s covenantal love, existed as his grace infused in us, gives married couples to capacity to live out the demanding nature and meaning of marriage.

To grasp the full impact of the notion “efficacious model,” use an example from sports or music. Imagine yourself an amateur golfer trying to model your game after, say, Ernie Els or Tiger Woods, or imagine yourself as a classical guitarist trying to model yourself off of Christopher Parkening (fill in some other examples that suit your own interests). There will always be an in-built frustration in have such professionals as models, because you know you’ll never match their abilities. Nonetheless, they remain excellent models. Now imagine something incredible: you find out that the person after whom you model yourself is going to actually give you his skill. You receive his actual talent. No ordinary model! You now have an efficacious model.

Of course, that is a pipe dream when it comes to sports or music. But when it comes to marriage, that efficaciousness really happens. God’s grace gives the married couple that capacity to live the marital adventure in its truth and fullness.

Now we can come full circle: it is precisely because God’s grace so capacitates you that marriage can be properly ordered, and as such, can be a true image of the covenant. The two phenomena, image and efficacious model, mutually condition one another.

While examining this fascinating “mutual conditioning,” and focusing on how it can clarify the full meaning of sacramental marriage, we will do a textual study of Magisterial texts that focus on one or
another of the two facets. Included here is a thesis about the theology of marriage: more often than not, the idea of efficacious model is eclipsed by the idea of sacramental image. The texts themselves will ultimately make manifest this somewhat hidden treasure in Catholic marital doctrine. In the texts that follow, we have italicized the phrases that most specifically refer to the concepts at hand.

Sign and Model Texts

Four Magisterial texts in particular would appear to confirm our thesis. Rather than focusing on either the sign element or the model element, they mention both “in one breath” as it were, distinguishing the two elements but at the same time bringing them into unity—both are necessary for a full grasp of marriage’s sacramentality.

Pius XI notes in Casti Connubii:

1. This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and the union between Christ and the Church, evidently requires that those about to marry should show a holy reverence towards it, and zealously endeavor to make their marriage approach as nearly as possible to the archetype of Christ and the Church.¹

Pius emphasizes that special reverence is due to marriage, given what it signifies, and that reverence can be manifested precisely by making sure that the marriage is modeled off of that which it signifies—its archetype.

John Paul II says in his Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem:

2. The covenant proper to spouses “explains” the spousal character of the union of Christ with the Church, and in its turn this union, as a “great sacrament”, determines the sacramentality of marriage as a holy covenant between the two spouses, man and woman.²

The same Pontiff, of happy memory, says in his Letter Gratissimam Sane:

3. The family itself is the great mystery of God. As the “domestic church”, it is the bride of Christ. The universal Church, and every particular Church in her, is most immediately revealed as the bride of Christ in the “domestic church” and in its experience of love: conjugal love, paternal and maternal love, fraternal love, the love of a community of persons and of generations. Could we even imagine human love without the Bridegroom and the love with which he first loved to the end? Only if husbands and wives share in that love and in that “great mystery” can they love “to the end”. Unless they share in it, they do not know “to the end” what love truly is and how radical are its demands. And this is undoubtedly very dangerous for them.³

¹ Pius XI, Encyclical Letter Casti Connubii (31 December 1930), 81: AAS 22 (1930), 570.
Quae religiosa matrimonii indoles, celsaque eius gratiae et coniunctionis Christum inter et Ecclesiam significatio, sanctam ab sponsis postulat erga christianum connubium reverentiam sanctumque studium, ut matrimonium quod ipsi inituri sunt, ad archetypum illud ipsum quam proxime accedat.

Pactum coniugum proprium naturam “explanat” sponsalem coniunctionis Christi cum Ecclesia; haec vicissim coniunctio, uti “sacramentum magnum”, proprietatem sacramentalem statuit ipsius matrimonii tamquam foedus sanctum duorum coniugum, viri et mulieris.

Magnum Dei mysterium ipsa est familia. Instar “domesticae ecclesiae” sponsa est Christi. Universalis quidem Ecclesiae, in eaque particularis Ecclesia omnis, citius sese Christi praestant sponsam in “domestica ecclesia”, necnon in amore quem agunt in ea: est conubialis amor, amor paternus ac
And finally, Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, has perhaps the sharpest and most succinct expression of the two elements:

4. Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the *icon* of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the *measure* of human love.4

**Texts on Efficacious Sign**

**Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium**

5. Finally, Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, whereby they *signify and partake of the mystery of that unity* and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church, help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children. By reason of their state and rank in life they have their own special gift among the people of God.5

**Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes**

6. Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage *as a reflection of the loving covenant* uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participation in that covenant, *will manifest to all men* Christ's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church.6

7. Thus, following Christ who is the principle of life, by the sacrifices and joys of their vocation and through their faithful love, married people can become *witnesses of the mystery of love* which the Lord revealed to the world by His dying and His rising up to life again.7

**Papal Documents**

**Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter Arcanum Divinae**

8. Christ our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament; that to husband and wife, guarded and strengthened by the heavenly grace which His merits gained for them, He gave power to attain holiness in

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maternus, fratrum amor atque amor communitatis personarum et aetatun. Cogitari hominum forsitan posse amare sine Sponsus et sine amore, quod Ipse in primus usque ad finem dilexit? Tum solum, cum talis consortes sunt amoris talisque etiam “mysterii magni”, coniuges valent amare “usque ad finem”: etemem aut participes eius evadunt aut ad imum usque non intellegunt quid sit amor quamque gravia ipsius sint postulata. Iis sine dubitatione hoc magnum infert periculum.


Matrimonium, quod in amore unico ac definito fundatur, imaginem efficat Dei necessitudinis cum eius populo ac vicissim: ratio qua Deus amat mensura fit humani amoris.


7 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 52.8: AAS 58 (1966), 1074. Ipsi denique coniuges, ad imaginem Dei vivi facti et in vero ordine personarum constituti, affectu comparari, mente consimili et mutua sanctitate adunati sint, ut Christum, vitae principium secuti, in gaudiis et sacrificiis vocationis suae, per suum fidelem amorem, illius testes fiant mysterii dilectionis, quod Dominus morte et resurrectione sua mundo revelavit.
the married state; and that, in a wondrous way, *making marriage an example of the mystical union* between Himself and His Church.

**SIGN**?9. Marriage, moreover, is a sacrament, because it is a *holy sign which gives grace, showing forth an image of the mystical nuptials of Christ with the Church*. But the form and image of these nuptials is shown precisely by the very bond of that most close union in which man and woman are bound together in one; which bond is nothing else but the marriage itself.

**Pius XI, Encyclical Letter Casti Connubii**

But this accumulation of benefits is completed and, as it were, crowned by that blessing of Christian marriage which in the words of St. Augustine we have called the sacrament, by which is denoted both the indissolubility of the bond and the raising and hallowing of the contract by Christ Himself, whereby *He made it an efficacious sign of grace*.

For, as the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Ephesians, *the marriage of Christians recalls that most perfect union* which exists between Christ and the Church: “Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico, in Christo et in ecclesia;” which union, as long as Christ shall live and the Church through Him, can never be dissolved by any separation. (The indissolubility of the sacramental bond is rooted in the perfect union between Christ and the Church.)

May the Father, “of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named,” Who strengthens the weak and gives courage to the pusillanimous and fainthearted; and Christ Our Lord and Redeemer, “the Institutor and Perfector of the holy sacraments,” Who desired marriage to be and *made it the mystical image of His own ineffable union with the Church*; and the Holy Ghost, Love of God, the Light of hearts and the Strength of the mind, grant that all will perceive, will admit with a ready will, and by the grace of God will put into practice, what We by this letter have expounded concerning the holy Sacrament of Matrimony, the wonderful law and will of God respecting it, the errors and impending dangers, and the remedies with which they can be counteracted, so that that fruitfulness dedicated to God will flourish again vigorously in Christian wedlock.

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8 Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter Arcanum Divinae (10 February 1880), 9: *DS* 3142.


10 Pius XI, Encyclical Letter Casti Connubii (31 December 1930), 36: *AAS* 22 (1930), 552.


(A Trinitarian reflection asking each person of the Trinity aid us in both understanding and practicing the true nature of the sacrament, in which the prayer to Christ notes that He instituted the sacrament as a mystical image.)

Paul XI, Encyclical Letter Humanae Vitae

Married love particularly reveals its true nature and nobility when we realize that it takes its origin from God, who “is love,” the Father “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.”… Marriage, then, is far from being the effect of chance or the result of the blind evolution of natural forces. It is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect in man His loving design. As a consequence, husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives. … The marriage of those who have been baptized is, in addition, invested with the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, for it represents the union of Christ and His Church.¹³

(A review of God’s natural design for marriage, as known through the natural law, with a quick reminder that Revelation adds to this natural dignity by raising marriage to the level of a sacrament.)

John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio

The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman.¹⁴

For this reason the central word of Revelation, “God loves His people,” is likewise proclaimed through the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love. Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant which unites God and His people. And the same sin which can harm the conjugal covenant becomes an image of the infidelity of the people to their God: idolatry is prostitution, infidelity is adultery, disobedience to the law is abandonment of the spousal love of the Lord.¹⁵ (This text shows how sinful use of sexuality is a “negative” sign, a sign a broken covenant.)

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¹⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (22 November 1981), 12.2: AAS 74 (1982), 93. Quapropter primarium Revelationis verbum <<Deus suum populum amat>> enuntiatur etiam verbis vivis et concretis, quibus vir et mulier inter se coniugalem permutam amorem. Vinculum eorum amoris imago fit et signum foederis, quod Deum eiusque populum coniungit. … Ipsum, contra, peccatum, quod coniugale potest laedere pactum, imago fit populi infidelitatis erga Deum eius:
This revelation reaches its definitive fullness in the gift of love which the Word of God makes to humanity in assuming a human nature, and in the sacrifice which Jesus Christ makes of Himself on the Cross for His bride, the Church. In this sacrifice there is entirely revealed that plan which God has imprinted on the humanity of man and woman since their creation; the marriage of baptized persons thus becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ. 

Indeed, by means of baptism, man and woman are definitively placed within the new and eternal covenant, in the spousal covenant of Christ with the Church. And it is because of this indestructible insertion that the intimate community of conjugal life and love, founded by the Creator, is elevated and assumed into the spousal charity of Christ, sustained and enriched by His redeeming power. (Because baptism places us within the new covenant, the marriage of baptized persons places marriage into Christ’s spousal covenant with the Church. Since the baptismal insertion is indestructible, in turn the marital insertion is indestructible.)

By virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church. (Because marriage is indissoluble, it can image the indissolubility of Christ’s covenant.)

Only in faith can they discover and admire with joyful gratitude the dignity to which God has deigned to raise marriage and the family, making them a sign and meeting place of the loving covenant between God and man, between Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church.

John Paul II, Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota

It is understood, then, how Christ’s love for the Church has been compared to the indissoluble love uniting man with woman, and how that can be effectively signified by that great sacrament which is Christian marriage. That love is destined to develop the Christian family, the domestic Church (see LG, no. 11), in the same way in which the love of Christ and the Church ensures ecclesial communion—visible and bearing already heavenly benefits with it (see LG, no. 8).
(This text reminds us of marriage as a sacramental sing, and goes on to show that the family that develops out of marital love is a sign of the ecclesial family developing out of the love of Christ and the Church.)

**John Paul II, Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem**

The Letter to the Ephesians once again confirms this truth, while at the same time comparing the spousal character of the love between man and woman to the mystery of Christ and of the Church. *Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church - the Church is the Bride of Christ.*

**John Paul II, Letter to Families Gratissimam Sane**

The Church professes that Marriage, as the Sacrament of the covenant between husband and wife, is a “great mystery”, because it expresses *the spousal love of Christ for his Church.*

**Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Deus Caritas Est**

By the power of the sacrament, the marriage bond is intrinsically linked to the eucharistic unity of Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church (cf. Eph 5:31-32). … Indeed, in the theology of Saint Paul, conjugal love is a sacramental sign of Christ's love for his Church, a love culminating in the Cross, the expression of his “marriage” with humanity and at the same time the origin and heart of the Eucharist.

*Up to here, I myself have italicized the key phrases that most directly relate to sign and/or model. For the rest of the handout YOU should do this. Show me your hi-lited pages before class and then participate as we go through the texts*

**Church Documents**

On the threshold of his public life Jesus performs his first sign - at his mother's request - during a wedding feast. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence.

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23 Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), 27. In eo, vi sacramenti, vinculum coniugale intrinsece cum unitate conectitur eucharistica inter Christum sponsum et Ecclesiam sponsam (cfr Eph 5,31-32). … Revera, in Pauli theologiam, amor sponsalis signum est sacramentale amoris Christi erga Ecclesiam eius, amoris qui tamquam in summum evadit ad Crucem, documentum eius cum humanitate nuptiarum et, eodem tempore, origo et culmen Eucharistiae.

24 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1613. Iesus, in Suae vitae publicae limine, Suum primum signum — ob matris Suae petitionem — in quodam matrimonii festo est operatus. Ecclesia magni fecit Iesu praesentiam in nuptiis Canae. Ibi
The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath, which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist. 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.25

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.26

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799).27

**Congregations**

Through marriage, in fact, the love of married people is taken up into that love which Christ irrevocably has for the Church, while dissolve sexual union defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit which the Christian has become. Sexual union therefore is only legitimate if a definitive community of life has been established between the man and the woman.28

Furthermore, the marital union of man and woman has been elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. The Church teaches that Christian marriage is an efficacious sign of the covenant between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:32). This Christian meaning of marriage, far from diminishing the profoundly human value of the marital union between man and woman, confirms and strengthens it (cf. Mt 19:3-12; Mk 10:6-9).29

**Pontifical Councils**

confirmationem perspicit bonitatis matrimonii ibique annuntiari matrimonium exinde signum efficax praesentiae Christi esse futurum.

25 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1617.
   Tota vita christiana signum amoris sponsalis fert Christi et Ecclesiae. Iam Baptismus, in populum Dei ingressus, mysterium est nuptiale: est quasi nuptiarum lavacrum 261 quod nuptiarum praecedit convivium, Eucharistiam. Matrimonium christianum, e parte sua, signum fit efficax, sacramentum Foederis Christi et Ecclesiae. Quia eius significat et communicat gratiam, Matrimonium inter baptizatos verum est Novi Foederis sacramentum.

26 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1647.
   Profundissimum motivum in fidelitate Dei ad Eius Foedus invenitur, Christi ad Ecclesiam. Per Matrimonii sacramentum, coniuges apti fiunt qui hanc representaent fidelitatem eamque testentur. Per sacramentum, indissolubilitas Matrimonii novum et profundiorem accipit sensum.

27 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1661.
   *Text 28 also appears as Text 59 below.*
   Matrimonii sacramentum unionem Christi significat et Ecclesiae. Coniugibus confert gratiam sese amandi amore quo Christus Suam dilexit Ecclesiam; sic sacramenti gratia amorem coniugum perficit humanum, indissolubilem eorum confirmanit unitatem eaque vitam aeternam sanctificat.

   Per matrimonium, enim, amor inter coniuges amori illi inseritur, quo Christus irrevocabili modo Ecclesiam diliget; coitus vero corporum in impudicitia contaminat templum Spiritus Sancti, quod christianus ipse factus est. Coniunctio igitur carnalis legitima non est, nisi consortium vitae inter virum et mulierem perpetuum instauratur.

29 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons (3 June 2003), 3.3.
The starting point for an itinerary of marriage preparation is the awareness that the marriage covenant was taken up and raised to a sacrament of the New Covenant by the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament joins the spouses to the self-giving love of Christ the Bridegroom for the Church, his Bride (cf. Ephesians 5: 25-32) by making them the image of, and sharers in this love. It makes them give praise to the Lord, it sanctifies the conjugal union and the life of the Christian faithful who celebrate it, and gives rise to the Christian family, the domestic church, the “first and living cell of society” (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 11), and the “sanctuary of life” (EV 92 and also 6, 88, 94). Therefore, the sacrament is celebrated and lived in the heart of the New Covenant, i.e. the paschal mystery. It is Christ, the Bridegroom in our midst (cf. Gratissimam Sane, 18; Matthew 9: 15), who is the source of its energies. Therefore, Christian couples and families are neither isolated nor alone.30

Alive in the tradition of the Church and deepened by the Magisterium, the Word of God stresses that marriage for Christian spouses implies a response to God’s vocation and the acceptance of the mission to be a sign of God’s love for all the members of the human family, by partaking in the definitive covenant of Christ with the Church. Therefore, spouses become cooperators with the Creator and Saviour in the gift of love and life. Hence Christian marriage preparation can be described as a journey of faith which does not end with the celebration of marriage but continues throughout family life. Therefore, our perspective does not close with marriage as an act, at the moment of its celebration, but is on-going.31

However, the center of this preparation must be a reflection in the faith on the sacrament of Marriage through the Word of God and the guidance of the Magisterium. The engaged should be made aware that to become “una caro” (Matthew 19:6) in Christ, through the Spirit in Christian marriage, means imprinting a new form of baptismal life on their existence. Through the sacrament, their love will become a concrete expression of Christ’s love for his Church (cf. LG 11). In the light of the sacramentality, the married acts themselves, responsible procreation, educational activity, the communion of life, and the apostolic and missionary spirit connected with the life of Christian spouses are to be considered valid moments of Christian experience. Although still not in a sacramental way, Christ sustains and accompanies the journey of grace and growth of the engaged toward the participation in his mystery of union with the Church.32

But the light of the faith itself teaches that the reality of the sacrament of marriage is not something subsequent or extrinsic, or just an external “sacramental” addition to the spouses’ love; it is the natural reality of conjugal love that has been assumed by Christ as a sign and means of salvation in the order of the New Law. Consequently, the problem of de facto unions can and must be faced from the viewpoint of right reason. It is not a question primarily of Christian faith but of rationality. The tendency to oppose denominational “Catholic thought” on this matter to “lay thought” is erroneous.33

In the same way, from the beginning the Christian community has held that the constitution of Christian marriage is a real sign of Christ’s union with the Church. Marriage was elevated by Christ to a saving event in the new order set up in the economy of the Redemption: i.e., marriage is a sacrament of the New Covenant, an essential aspect for understanding the content and importance of the marital community between baptized persons. The Magisterium of the Church has also pointed out clearly that “the sacrament of Matrimony has this specific element that distinguishes it from all the other sacraments: it is the sacrament of something that was part of the very economy of creation; it is the very conjugal covenant instituted by the Creator ‘in the beginning’” 34

The early Church did not succeed while in making sacred or Christianizing the Roman concept of marriage, it did not restore this institution to its origins from creation, as explicitly willed by Jesus Christ. It is certain that in the conscience of the early Church it was already understood clearly that the natural essence of marriage had been conceived originally by God the Creator as a sign of God’s love for his people, and

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32 Pontifical Council for the Family, Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage (13 May 1996), 47.
when the fullness of time came, of Christ’s love for his Church. But the first thing the Church did, guided by the Gospel and the explicit teachings of Christ, was to bring marriage back to its beginning.\textsuperscript{35}

God wanted the conjugal covenant from the beginning, the marriage of Creation, to be a permanent sign of Christ’s union with the Church and thus a real sacrament of the New Covenant. The problem lies in understanding properly that this sacramentality is not something that is added or extrinsic to the natural essence of marriage, but that it is the same indissoluble marriage willed by the Creator that was elevated to a sacrament through the redeeming action of Christ, without this implying any “de-naturalization” of the reality. By not understanding the particular feature of this sacrament compared to the others, some misunderstandings can arise that obscure the notion of sacramental marriage. This is especially important in marriage preparation: the praiseworthy efforts to prepare the engaged to celebrate the sacrament can vanish if there is no clear understanding of what the absolutely indissoluble marriage is which they are about to contract. Baptized persons do not present themselves to the Church just to celebrate a feast with some special rites, but to contract a lifetime marriage which is a sacrament of the New Alliance. Through this sacrament they share in the mystery of the union of Christ and the Church, and they express their intimate and indissoluble union.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Holy See}

Pastors of souls are obliged to take care that their ecclesiastical community offers the Christian faithful the assistance by which the matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit and advances in perfection. This assistance must be offered especially by: … 3/ a fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage which is to show that the spouses signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church;\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Texts on Efficacious Model}

\textbf{Ecumenical Councils}

1. Christ the Lord abundantly blessed this many-faceted love, welling up as it does from the fountain of divine love and structured as it is on the model of His union with His Church. For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.\textsuperscript{38}

2. 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. For this reason Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a

\textsuperscript{35} Pontifical Council for the Family, \textit{Family, Marriage and “De facto Unions”} (26 July 2000), 32.

\textsuperscript{36} Pontifical Council for the Family, \textit{Family, Marriage and “De facto Unions”} (26 July 2000), 35.


kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state. By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligation, they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, which suffuses their whole lives with faith, hope and charity. Thus they increasingly advance the perfection of their own personalities, as well as their mutual sanctification, and hence contribute jointly to the glory of God.  

**Papal Documents**

3. Since the husband represents Christ, and since the wife represents the Church, let there always be, both in him who commands and in her who obeys, a heaven-born love guiding both in their respective duties.

4. For matrimonial faith demands that husband and wife be joined in an especially holy and pure love, not as adulterers love each other, but as Christ loved the Church.

5. By the very fact, therefore, that the faithful with sincere mind give such consent, they open up for themselves a treasure of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holly, perseveringly even unto death. Hence this sacrament not only increases sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life, in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle (obex) in its way, but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers. By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding, but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice, those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them in fine right to the actual assistance of grace, whomever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.

6. These parties, let it be noted, not fettered but adorned by the golden bond of the sacrament, not hampered but assisted, should strive with all their might to the end that their wedlock, not only through the power and symbolism of the sacrament, but also through their spirit and manner of life, may be and remain always the living image of that most fruitful union of Christ with the Church, which is to be venerated as the sacred token of most perfect love.

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39 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.3: AAS 58 (1966), 1069. *Germanus amor coniugalis in divinum amorem assumitur atque virtute redemptiva Christi et salifica actione Ecclesiae regitur ac ditatur, ut coniuges efficaciter ad Deum ducantur atque in sublimi munere patris et matris adiuvantur et confortentur.* Quapropter coniuges christiani ad sui status officia et dignitatem peculiari sacramento roborantur et veluti consecrantur; cuius virtute munus suum coniugale et familiare explentes, spiritu Christi imbuti, quo tota eorum vita, fide, spe et caritate pervadat, magis ac magis ad propriam suam perfectionem mutuaque sanctificationem, ideoque communiter ad Dei glorificationem accedunt.

40 Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Arcanum Divinae* (10 February 1880), 11. *Text 41 also appears as Text 5 above.*

41 Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii* (31 December 1930), 23: AAS 22 (1930), 548. *Postulat praeterea matrimonii fides ut vir et uxor singulares quodam sanctoque ac puro amore coniuncti sint; neque ut adulteri inter se amemt, sed ut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam;* Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii* (31 December 1930), 40: AAS 22 (1930), 554-5. *Cum igitur sincere animo fideles talem consensus praestant, aperiunt sibi sacramentalis gratiae thesaurum, ex quo supernaturales vires hauriant ad officia et munera sua fideliter, sancte, perseveranter ad mortem usque adimplenda. … Hoc enim Sacramentum, in iis qui obiciem, ut aiunt, non opponunt, non solum peramans vitae supernaturalis principium, gratiam scilicet sanctificantem, auget, sed etiam peculiaria addit dona, bonos animi motus, gratiae germina, naturae vires augendo ac perficiendo, ut coniuges non ratione tantum intelligere, sed intime sapere firmiterque tenere, efficaciter velle et opera perficere valeant quidquid ad statum coniugalem eiusque fines et officia pertinet; ius demique iis concedit ad actuale gratiae auxilium totes impetrandum, quotiescumque ad munera huius status adimplenda eo indigent.*

42 Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii* (31 December 1930), 42: AAS 22 (1930), 555-6. *Idem vero coniuges, aureo Sacramenti ligamine non constrixti sed ornati, non impediti sed robarati, omnibus viribus ad hoc nitantur, ut suum connubium no solum per Sacramenti vim et significationem, sed etiam per ipsorum mentem ac mores sit semper et maneat viva imago fecundissimae illius unionis Christi cum Ecclesia, quae est venerandum profecto perfectissimae caritatis mysterium.*
7. This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and the union between Christ and the Church, evidently requires that those about to marry should show a holy reverence towards it, and zealously endeavor to make their marriage approach as nearly as possible to the archetype of Christ and the Church.44  
8. There is this also to be considered that in these mixed marriages it becomes much more difficult to imitate by a lively conformity of spirit the mystery of which We have spoken, namely that close union between Christ and His Church.45  
9. But the challenge presented by the “ethos” of the Redemption is clear and definitive. All the reasons in favour of the “submission” of woman to man in marriage must be understood in the sense of a “mutual subjection” of both “out of reverence for Christ”. The measure of true spousal love finds its deepest source in Christ, who is the Bridegroom of the Church, his Bride.46  
10. But the infidelity of Israel does not destroy the eternal fidelity of the Lord, and therefore the ever faithful love of God is put forward as the model of the of faithful love which should exist between spouses.47  
11. The communion between God and His people finds its definitive fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom who loves and gives Himself as the Savior of humanity, uniting it to Himself as His body. … He reveals the original truth of marriage, the truth of the “beginning,” and, freeing man from his hardness of heart, He makes man capable of realizing this truth in its entirety.48  
12. The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us. Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross.49  
13. The celebration of the sacrament of marriage is the basic moment of the faith of the couple. This sacrament, in essence, is the proclamation in the Church of the Good News concerning married love. It is the word of God that “reveals” and “fulfills” the wise and loving plan of God for the married couple, giving them a mysterious and real share in the very love with which God Himself loves humanity. Since the sacramental celebration of marriage is itself a proclamation of the word of God, it must also

45 *Text 45 also appears as Text 9 above.  
46 Quae religiosa matrimonii inodes, celsaque eius gratiae et coniunctionis Christum inter et Ecclesiam significatio, sanctam ab sponsis postulat erga christianum connubium reverentiam sanctumque studium, ut matrimonium quod ipsi inituri sunt, ad archetypum illud ipsum quam proxime accedat.  
47 Pius XI, Encyclical Letter Casti Connubii (31 December 1930), 83: AAS 22 (1930), 571.  
48 Illud etiam accedit quod in mixtis nuptiis multo difficilior reddatur viva illa animorum conformatio, mysterium, quod diximus, arcanae nimirum Ecclesiae cum Christo coniunctionem, imitatura.  
49 Sed provocatio ipsius “ethos” redemptionis clara est ac decretoria. Cunctae enim rationes pro “submissione” mulieris in matrimonio viro intellegendae potius sunt cum intellectu “mutuae subditionis” utiusque “in timore Christi”. Originem suam altissimam reperit modus veri amoris sponsalis in Christo qui Ecclesiae, suae Sponsae, est Sponsus.  
48 Dei fidelis semper Dei amor proponitur ut exemplum necessitudinum fidi amoris, quae inter coniuges intercedere debent.  
50 Spiritus autem, quem Dominus effundit, cor novum largitur aptosque facit virum ac mulierem ad se amandos, quemadmodum, nos Christus amavit. Coniugalis amor illam attingit plenitudinem, ad quam intrinsecus ordinatur, caritatem scilicet coniugalem, quae peculiari propriisque est modus, quo coniuges participant ipsam Christi caritatem, qui se donat in Cruce, et vocantur ut vivant ex ea.
be a “profession of faith” within and with the Church, as a community of believers, on the part of all those who in different ways participate in its celebration.\\n
14. Christian marriage, like the other sacraments, “whose purpose is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God,” is in itself a liturgical action glorifying God in Jesus Christ and in the Church. By celebrating it, Christian spouses profess their gratitude to God for the sublime gift bestowed on them of being able to live in their married and family lives the very love of God for people and that of the Lord Jesus for the Church, His bride.\\n
15. The Eucharist is the very source of Christian marriage. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, in fact, represents Christ’s covenant of love with the Church, sealed with His blood on the Cross. In this sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed. As a representation of Christ’s sacrifice of love for the Church, the Eucharist is a fountain of charity.\\n
16. This is unquestionably a new presentation of the eternal truth about marriage and the family in the light of the New Covenant. Christ has revealed this truth in the Gospel by his presence at Cana in Galilee, by the sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacraments of his Church. Husbands and wives thus discover in Christ the point of reference for their spousal love.\\n
17. The family itself is the great mystery of God. As the "domestic church", it is the bride of Christ. The universal Church, and every particular Church in her, is most immediately revealed as the bride of Christ in the "domestic church" and in its experience of love: conjugal love, paternal and maternal love, fraternal love, the love of a community of persons and of generations. Could we even imagine human love without the Bridegroom and the love with which he first loved to the end? Only if husbands and wives share in that love and in that "great mystery" can they love “to the end”. Unless they share in it, they do not know "to the end" what love truly is and how radical are its demands. And this is undoubtedly very dangerous for them.\\n
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50 John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (22 November 1981), 51.4: AAS 74 (1982), 143. Praecipuum temporis momentum, quo sponsi fidem suam commonstrent, est matrimonii sacramenti celebratio, quae suapte intima natura est proclamatio in Ecclesia Boni Nuntii de coniugali amore: qui est Dei verbum, quod <<revelat>> et <<perficit>> sapiens amansque consilium Dei de coniugibus, ad arcnam ac veram participationem ipsius Dei amoris erga homines admissam. Si sacramentalis matrimonii celebratio per se est verbi Dei pronuntiatio, in cunctis, qui vario nomine praecipui actores sunt et celebrantes, eluceat oportet <<profession fidel>> in et cum Ecclesia, communitate credentium, prolata.

51 John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (22 November 1981), 56.4: AAS 74 (1982), 149. Christianum matrimonium, perinde ac sacramenta cuncta, quae <<ordinantur ad sanctificationem hominum, ad aedificationem Corporis Christi, ad cultum denique Deo reddendum>>, in se ipso est liturgicus actus glorificationis Dei in Christo Iesu et in Ecclesia: eo celebrando profitetur coniuges christiani gratum erga Deum animum suum de praecepslo dono sibi concesso ut iterum vivere valeant suin existentia coniugali ac familiaris ex ipso Dei amore in omnes homines et in Domini Iesu Ecclesiam, ipsius Sponsam.


54 John Paul II, Letter to Families Gratissimam Sane (2 February 1994), 19.8: AAS 86 (1994), 912. *Text 55 also appears as Text 22 above.\n
Magnum Dei mysterium ipsa est familia. Instar “domesticæ ecclesiae” sponsa est Christi. Universalis quidem Ecclesia, in eaque particularis Ecclesia omnis, citius sese Christi praestant sponsam in “domestica ecclesia”, necon in amore quem agunt in ea: est conubialis amor, amor paternus ac maternus, fratrum amor atque amor communitatis personarum et aetatum. Cogitari hominum forsitan
18. Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love.\textsuperscript{55}\textsuperscript{*}

**Church Documents**

19. The various liturgies abound in prayers of blessing and epiclesis asking God's grace and blessing on the new couple, especially the bride. In the epiclesis of this sacrament the spouses receive the Holy Spirit as the communion of love of Christ and the Church. The Holy Spirit is the seal of their covenant, the ever available source of their love and the strength to renew their fidelity.\textsuperscript{56}

20. *Christ is the source of this grace.* “Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony.” Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another’s burdens, to “be subject to another out of reverence for Christ,”\textsuperscript{57}

21. The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799).\textsuperscript{58}\textsuperscript{*}

**Pontifical Councils**

22. As spouses, parents and ministers of the sacramental grace of marriage, they are sustained from day to day by special spiritual energies, received from Jesus Christ who loves and nurtures his Bride, the Church.\textsuperscript{59}

23. Since Christian love is purified, perfected and elevated by Christ's love for the Church (cf. GS 49), the engaged should imitate this model and develop their awareness of self-giving which is always connected with the mutual respect and self-denial that help this love grow. Reciprocal self-giving thus implies more and more the exchange of spiritual gifts and moral support in order to make love and responsibility increase. “The indissolubility of marriage flows in the first place from the very essence of that gift: the *gift of one person to another person.* This reciprocal giving of self reveals the *spousal nature of love*” (Gratissimam Sane, Sane, 11).\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{56} Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1624.

\textsuperscript{57} Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1642.

\textsuperscript{58} Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1661.

\textsuperscript{*Text 56 also appears as Text 23 above.


\textsuperscript{60} Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* (13 May 1996), 40.

possit amor sine Sponso et sine amore, quo Ipse in primis usque ad finem dilexit? Tum solum, cum talis consortes sunt amoris talisque etiam “mysterii magni”, coniuges valent amare “usque ad finem”: etenim aut participes eius evadunt aut ad imum usque non intellegunt quid sit amor quamque gravia ipsius sint postulata. Iis sine dubitatione hoc magnum infert periculum.
24. The final result of this period of proximate preparation should be a clear awareness of the essential characteristics of Christian marriage: unity, fidelity, indissolubility, fruitfulness; the conscience of faith regarding the priority of the sacramental Grace which associates the spouses, as subjects and ministers of the sacrament, to the love of Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church; the willingness to carry out the mission proper to families in the educational, social and ecclesial areas.\textsuperscript{61}

A Pastoral Application

There is a particularly poignant pastoral application of the idea that the covenant is an “efficacious model.” A couple tends naturally to think that their marriage will be a glamorous experience, perhaps the ultimate solution to all life’s difficulties. Of course, everyone is aware that there will be problems, but when two people are in love, that realism fades, as is appropriate, behind the wonderful drama of that heartfelt love. If the couple were to fully confront the real difficulties that lie ahead, they might back out of their engagement! Being in love is a marvelous phenomenon and it is meant to assist the couple in making such an incredible commitment.

Now consider one of the most challenging moments that occurs in a marriage: the spouses become aware of each other’s finitude--faults, foibles, neuroses, etc. They knew of such things all along, but the drama of being in love graciously overshadowed them. Now reality hits hard. The couple become aware of just how challenging their marital commitment is going to be. They become aware that they will not find perfect happiness in each other.

This could, and often does, lead to a tragic break-up. But it is precisely here that the covenant as an efficacious model is of great help. Instead of the mutual difficulties becoming a source of embitterment, they become a reminder the spousal relationship is not an end in itself, an immanent source of happiness, but participates in something greater--namely, the covenant itself. The couple recognize that they need to suborder their own spousal life under something higher in which they participate. Only then will they find happiness, and it will be a much deeper and profound happiness than their earlier fleeting happiness. By participating in this transcendent reality, they receive untold graces to live their marital commitment in a profoundly faithful way. Each characteristic of their marriage--permanence, exclusivity, openness to life, heterosexuality--takes on a more profound meaning because each characteristic participates in something transcendent.

A qualifier: A faithful couple, caught up in the ups and downs of daily family life, can easily get the impression that they probably fall very short of the lofty sentiments and ideals presented by John Paul II. They probably feel as if they are not really tapping in to the wonderful efficacious covenantal model. True enough, most couples have areas wherein their marriage could use a growth spurt. But by and large, these ideals are operative. A good exercise: think of what your marriage would be like without the presence of grace.

Additional items—tell me where in the handout (or footnotes)) these would best belong

\textsuperscript{61} Pontifical Council for the Family, \textit{Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage} (13 May 1996), 45.
“Marriage and the Eucharist” Marriage is a liturgical act. If marriage is an efficacious sign of the covenant, then it proclaims the covenant loud and clear. As such it is a liturgical act. Consider this tremendous insight of John Paul II in FC 56: Christian marriage, like the other sacraments, whose purpose is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God, is in itself a liturgical action glorifying God in Jesus Christ and in the Church. By celebrating it, Christian spouses profess their gratitude to God for the sublime gift bestowed on them of being able to live in their married and family lives the very love of God for people and that of the Lord Jesus for the Church, his bride...And consecrate the world itself to God.

In the New Testament, Paul speaks of the covenant between Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:31-32, where he begins by quoting Genesis 2:24: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be made into one." Paul then makes a crucial point: "This is a great foreshadowing: I mean that it refers to Christ and the Church.” The word “foreshadowing” here emphasizes that marriage, instituted at creation, is a sign, but a sign of something to happen in the future—the covenant. Now that the covenant has definitively happened—in Christ’s redemptive work—marriage is not a sign of something to come but a sign of something that exists already.

The word “foreshadows” is a good attempt to translate Paul’s original Greek word mysterion, or mystery, which includes the notion of foreshadowing, but also much more. It includes the entire notion of a sacramental image, or an efficacious image. St. Jerome seems to have grasped just that when he translated the Greek text into Latin (the Vulgate) using the word sacramentum, or sacrament. He was right in the midst of the powerful reality of sacramental imaging. The word sacrament, then, has behind it the word “mystery,” for it is a tremendous mystery that: 1) a human reality like marriage is a sign of the covenant, and 2) such a sign is efficacious. Catholics living within the sacramental life of the Church are living their lives in the midst of a huge, marvelous mystery. The more you learn about it, the better you appreciate it and the better you are able to take advantage of it. Still, no matter how much you know and study, the reality itself always exhausts anyone’s grasp and articulation of it.

#2 In his “Theology of the Body,” John Paul II noted that marriage is the “primordial sacrament.” What could this mean? Think of what all the sacraments do. They nurture and deepen and intensify the relationship between us and God. God’s very life dwells in our being, and the sacraments allow that life to grow and deepen. Marriage, however, signifies that relationship itself, which all the other sacraments deepen. In that sense, it is foundational to the other sacraments.

#3 2 texts

FC 13. This revelation reaches its definitive fullness in the gift of love which the word of God makes to humanity in assuming a human nature, and in the sacrifice which Jesus Christ makes of himself on the cross for his bride, the Church. In this sacrifice there is entirely revealed that plan which God has imprinted on the humanity of man and woman since their creation, the marriage of baptized persons thus becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ.

FC 13. By virtue of the sacraments of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the church....

Ignore: 2 texts about “efficacious model”

FC 13. “Indeed by means of baptism, man and woman are definitively placed within the new and eternal covenant, in the spousal covenant of Christ with the Church. And it is because of this indestructible insertion that the intimate community of conjugal life and love, founded by the creator, is elevated and assumed into the spousal charity of Christ, sustained and enriched by his redeeming power.”

FC 13. “The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us. Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ, who gave himself on the cross...”
One more step: the twin concepts are integrally related to one another, inasmuch as they mutually affect or mutually condition each other. After understanding the notion of efficacious model, we can come full circle and return back again to the “image” side: it is precisely because God’s grace so capacitates couples that marriage can be properly ordered. And, as such, it can be a true image of the covenant.

If you have enjoyed watching how FC displays these twin concepts, here is an exercise for you: take the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* 47-52, the section on marriage, and find the same phenomenon at work. That document was probably written by, or at least heavily influenced by, John Paul II before he became pope.

The Eucharist and Marriage. If the covenant is an efficacious model, and if the covenant is made present in the Eucharist, then the Eucharist is a chief source of the grace that allows good marriages to happen. FC 57 captures this in a truly sublime text: The Eucharist is the very source of Christian marriage, the Eucharistic Sacrifice in fact represents Christ's covenant of love with the Church, sealed with his blood on the cross. In this sacrifice of the new and eternal covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed. As a *representation* of Christ’s sacrifice of love for the Church, the Eucharist is a fountain of charity.... [italics added].

Old 44. Baptism and Marriage

a. Introduction

Let's start with the relationship between baptism and marriage. Canon Law teaches us that only baptized individuals can marry in the Church. Why is this? At baptism, a person is literally *grafted onto Christ*. The person's natural existence, already a great good, is now infused with a new vitality, called sanctifying grace. This grace is God's very self, His love, poured into the person's heart.
Of all the philosophies and theologies that describe who man is, this certainly is the most stunning. For according to this view, small, weak and contingent human beings--like you and I--are bestowed with an great dignity: they actually participate in the very divine life itself. While not actually becoming gods, they partake in the very essence of God as they share his divine life.

In Catholic theology, this bestowal of divine grace is made possible to sinful man through the redeeming love of Jesus Christ. And this redemptive love is given to each individual through the sacrament of baptism. While God in His infinite power and wisdom certainly can save people in other ways, baptism is the ordinary means by which the individual person is affected by Christ's redemptive love. And a fitting means it is: water, as literally a cause of death and life, is the perfect symbol for two phenomena that occur in baptism--death to sin, and rebirth into the life of grace.

By Baptism, then, we are grafted on to Christ. Only such a person grafted onto Christ would be ready or fit for sacramental marriage. Marriage as a sacrament signifies the union between Christ and the Church--it would not make sense for a couple not already grafted onto Christ to be capable of symbolizing and making present Christ's covenant. Hence, the Church holds that only a baptized person can contract a sacramental marriage. Those who are not baptized can still have many goods in their marriages--but they have natural, not sacramental, marriages.

b. Protestant Marriage

Having established the relationship between baptism and marriage, several questions and difficulties arise. First, what about the status of someone baptized in a Protestant church? What is the status of Protestant marriages?

The Catholic Church fully recognizes validity of the sacrament of baptism as celebrated in a Protestant denomination, even though Protestants themselves often have a different conception of the meaning and nature of baptism. How can this be? Catholic doctrine holds that the sacraments cause grace not due to something we do, but due to the action of God acting through the sacraments. God will act through the sacrament so long as we do not put an obstacle in the way. The sacrament, then “works” on its own. Baptism causes what it signifies—the healing of our wounded nature—regardless of how fully we understand what is happening. Technically, this idea is called the “efficaciousness” of the sacraments. The sacraments operate ex opere operato—“by the work [not by our efforts] worked [they cause grace].

In this light, the practice of infant baptism makes sense. The infant can place no obstacle in the way of God's grace working through the sacrament of baptism, healing the infant's fallen nature. So long as the sacrament is properly administered, it "works" (that is, God works through it), ex opere operato. Later in life, the individual might place obstacles in the way of God's grace--then, the sacrament received as an infant will not bear its fullest fruit.

Granted the validity of Protestant baptism, what is the status of a marriage that takes place in a Protestant denomination? Through baptism, the Protestant believer is grafted onto Christ, and is actually grafted onto the one Church of Christ, even though he is only partially incorporated into that one Church. Hence, when two Protestant Christians marry, that sacrament also works ex opere operato, assuming they promise to each other a permanent, exclusive union. God creates the sacramental, indissoluble bond between them.

Protestant theology does not recognize the sacramentality of marriage, even though they still take marriage most seriously. So something has happened to the couple--the bond--that they may not be fully aware of. But so long as they put no obstacle in the way, there is a valid sacramental marriage.

c. The Baptized Non-Believer

What we just covered is "happy" news because it means more people are included in the gift of the sacraments than is often supposed. Another difficulty that arises is on the more tragic side, the case of the
"baptized non-believer." What is a baptized non-believer? Someone who, through baptism (usually as an infant) is grafted onto Christ, yet later in life rejects the faith. Then, when it comes time to get married (now we have two baptized unbelievers), two possibilities arise, which we will treat in turn.

First, the couple may decide on a civil marriage. Now we have already noted that a non-Christian couple who believe in the objective nature of marriage have a "natural" marriage with a "natural" bond. Will this particular couple have a natural marriage? They may very well, given their faith crisis, also not hold to the objective nature of marriage, in which case they have a "secular" marriage and the question becomes moot. But could they have a natural marriage?

The Church teaches that this is an impossibility. Due to baptism they are grafted onto Christ. Hence, they are "fit" for sacramental marriage. They cannot undo their baptism and revert to the natural, much less secular, level--any more than a person equipped to go into outer space could change his mind and take a backpacking trip. They are only capable of a sacramental marriage. When you get baptized, it affects your whole being, like it or not! Should they decide on a "natural" marriage, they are contracting something that is metaphysically impossible, even though they may remain under the illusion that they have some type of marriage.

Second, the couple may wish, often for family reasons, to have a Catholic wedding. What is the parish priest to do? On the one hand, they don't really believe in the truths of Christianity, and so he ought to refuse their wish. On the other hand, the fact that they want a Catholic wedding, even if only for social reasons, means that they retain some tie to the Church, and the priest may see their forthcoming marriage preparation as an ideal time to re-evangelize them. What a dilemma! There is no easy answer, but John Paul II gives some wise advice:

"...the faith of the person asking the Church for marriage can exist in different degrees, and it is the primary duty of pastors to bring about a rediscovery of the faith and to nourish it and bring it to maturity. But pastors must also understand the reasons that lead the Church also to admit to the celebration of marriage those who are imperfectly disposed.

The pope then notes that a couple considering marriage invariably connects them to God's will and to his grace, even if this happens implicitly, in a less than fully conscious way. For marriage is part of the order of creation. "They have thus already begun what is in a true and proper sense a journey towards salvation." Even if their motives are purely social, they can be accepted for matrimony in the Church, for they "at least implicitly consent to what the Church intends to do when she celebrates marriage."

Despite all this, there is a bottom line beneath which the couple ought not be admitted: "...when in spite of all efforts, engaged couples show that they reject explicitly and formally what the Church intends to do when the marriage of baptized persons is celebrated...."

d. Marriages with non-Baptized Persons

What about members of other, non-Christian, religions? What happens when they marry? Not being baptized, they cannot really have a sacramental marriage--even if one member of the couple is baptized. Their marriage can be a natural marriage, with a great many natural goods, not least of which are the children that may issue forth.

At this point, however, we might note that even a natural marriage participates in the one, objective reality of marriage, which ultimately is a sacrament. It helps to see natural marriage as an incomplete portion of the one marital reality. Hence, God's grace can flow into marriages that aren't strictly speaking sacramental, just as God's grace can affect and save someone who is not baptized who still strives to lead a good life on the natural level.

What happens if one member of a non-Christian couple converts to Christianity? Apparently this happened with some frequency in the early Church, for St. Paul answers this precise question in his first letter to the Corinthians (ch. 7). Imagine the non-Christian member wanting to get out of the marriage, now
that the partner has made such a radical change in life; imagine in addition the new Christian wanting a new marriage--a sacramental marriage--with a Christian spouse.

Since there is no sacramental bond, technically, the marriage is dissolvable. But Paul gives sound practical advice. If the non-baptized spouse wants to stay in the marriage, then the believer should oblige. Paul notes that "the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife"--and vice-versa. But if the unbelieving partner wants to divorce, Paul says "let it be so"--again, there is no sacramental, indissoluble bond. This privilege has come to be termed the "Pauline Privilege."

What about the tragic situation, which happens all too often in our secular society, of the couple who are married in the Church, but whose marriage later becomes extremely unstable, to the point that one or both spouses consider divorce? Assuming that the original marriage was valid--that the couple knew what they were promising, and promised freely--then the bond is indissoluble. They may get a civil divorce, but remain married "in the eyes of the Lord." As Christ made explicit, "...what God has joined together, let no man separate...whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery." Hence, it is not civil divorce which is prohibited, but divorce and remarriage.

NEWLY ADDED HERE

Mixed marriages and disparity of cult 1633 In many countries the situation of a mixed marriage (marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic) often arises. It requires particular attention on the part of couples and their pastors. A case of marriage with disparity of cult (between a Catholic and a nonbaptized person) requires even greater circumspection.

1634 Difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for marriage, when they succeed in placing in common what they have received from their respective communities, and learn from each other the way in which each lives in fidelity to Christ. But the difficulties of mixed marriages must not be underestimated. They arise from the fact that the separation of Christians has not yet been overcome. the spouses risk experiencing the tragedy of Christian disunity even in the heart of their own home. Disparity of cult can further aggravate these difficulties. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage, but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children. the temptation to religious indifference can then arise.

1635 According to the law in force in the Latin Church, a mixed marriage needs for liceity the express permission of ecclesiastical authority. In case of disparity of cult an express dispensation from this impediment is required for the validity of the marriage. This permission or dispensation presupposes that both parties know and do not exclude the essential ends and properties of marriage and the obligations assumed by the Catholic party concerning the baptism and education of the children in the Catholic Church.

1636 Through ecumenical dialogue Christian communities in many regions have been able to put into effect a common pastoral practice for mixed marriages. Its task is to help such couples live out their particular situation in the light of faith, overcome the tensions between the couple's obligations to each other and towards their ecclesial communities, and encourage the flowering of what is common to them in faith and respect for what separates them.

1637 In marriages with disparity of cult the Catholic spouse has a particular task: "For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband." It is a great joy for the Christian spouse and for the Church if this "consecration" should lead to the free conversion of the other spouse to the Christian faith. Sincere married love, the humble and patient practice of the family virtues, and perseverance in prayer can prepare the non-believing spouse to accept the grace of conversion.
1. both non-baptized

2. both non-baptized, marry, then become baptized

3. Peters case 27: non-baptized person has marriage and divorce, then re-marriage, then wants to enter the Church—what to do about first marriage? (is considered binding unless nullity proven)

4. Both non-baptized, marry, one becomes baptized, other tolerates this

5. same, but other wants out (Pauline Privilege)

6. going in to marriage, one baptized Catholic, the other not baptized at all

7. ditto, then the non-baptized spouse is baptized

8. two baptized non-believers wish to a) marry in the Church, or b) contract a natural marriage (cannot, and cannot)

9. two baptized Protestants marry (understanding the characteristics of marriage)

10. Catholic and Protestant marry, following due canonical form

11. Same, but granted dispensation from due canonical form, (e.g., due to anti-Catholic sentiment in Protestant family that won’t enter a Catholic Church)

12. Protestant marries a Catholic who defected acc. to 1086

13. two Protestant non-believers marry (either in their church, or courthouse), then convert to Catholicism

14. A Catholic is married outside the Church, divorces, remarries outside the Church, then renews one’s dedication to Catholicism. Original marriage annulled for lack of due canonical form, second needs convalidation (Peters p. 42)

15. Two baptized Protestants marry, divorce, one marries again, then wishes to enter the Church. (If first were to be annulled, second is recognized as valid since not bound by due form, no need for convalidation) (Peters p. 42)

16. Two Catholics marry, are divorced, one dies, the other is curious about the validity of the marriage—can that one file an annulment petition?

17. Married in the Church, divorced, one remarries outside the Church, ex-spouse dies, wants new marriage convalidated. Does first marriage need to be annulled first? (Peters case #30)

18. two Catholics marry, then divorce (no annulment), the two happily reconcile, legally remarry before a justice of the peace. Do they need first marriage annulled, and then have a Catholic remarriage?

19. Peters case # 40: 2 Protestants married a long time, wife wants to convert to Catholicism, husband has no objection but no interest, and was married once before and divorced. Any obstacle to wife entering the Church? Yes, that marriage must be annulled. If husband uninterested in cooperating, absolutely, read Peters pp. 56-58.

20. Peters case # 41: A divorced Protestant wants to remarry in a Protestant church, but respects the Catholic annulment process and wishes to file a case! The answer to this person, haunted by the metaphysical as expressed through the canonical, is “ye
Leo XIII notes in his encyclical *Arcanum Divinœ* that

> Since *the husband represents Christ, and since the wife represents the Church*, let there always be, both in him who commands and in her who obeys, a heaven-born love guiding both in their respective duties.\(^\text{62}\)

\(^{62}\) Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Arcanum Divinœ* (10 February 1880), 11.