

USCCA Chapter Notes

USCCA Chapter/Title: 21 - The Sacrament of Marriage.

CCC Paragraph Reference: [CCC #1601-1666](#) – Marriage.

Doctrinal Premise. *What is the underlying truth behind the doctrine of this chapter? Connecting it to Christ, summarize the chapter in 1-2 sentences.*

Reflecting Christ's spousal relationship with the Church, the Sacrament of Matrimony unites a husband and wife in a permanent covenant broken only by the death of a spouse.

Three questions adults might have about this topic. *What life-issues do I need to connect with in the people at my session?*

1. Why is the Catholic Church against divorce?
2. Given the difficulties of married life, are there any acceptable situations for divorce?
3. What is the purpose of marriage?

Three Points from the Story of Faith/Testimony. *How is the underlying truth taught in this chapter brought to life?*

Person of Faith: [St. Thomas More](#)

1. St. Thomas More was born in London on February 7th, 1478, the son of a middle class knight and local judge. He studied at Oxford University and then went on to study law in London. His faith was influenced by the Franciscans and Carthusians, and Thomas eventually married Jane Colt in 1505. They had four children before she died in 1511, after which he married Alice Middleton. He lived a life in pursuit of virtue and union with Christ.
2. St. Thomas was elected to Parliament in 1504, and eventually became Lord Chancellor of England in October of 1529. Within three years, St. Thomas More came into conflict with King Henry VIII. The King wished to annul his first marriage, but was denied by the Pope. In order to receive the annulment, Henry formally broke from the Catholic Church and established himself as the head of the church of England. The bishops of England, except for St. John Fisher, submitted to Henry as their new head.
3. In 1534, Parliament passed the Act of Succession, which denied the succession of the offspring of Henry's first wife. St. Thomas refused to take the oath that upheld the act. He was executed on July 6, 1535, referring to himself as "the king's good servant, but God's first." He was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1935.

Essential Points from the Teaching Section. Add in sub-points as needed. *What points need to be made explicit and cannot be left to chance?*

1. God is the author of marriage.
 - a. God created man and woman and commanded them to imitate His love in their relations with each other.
 - b. Man and woman were created for each other.
 - c. Man and woman are equal in dignity.
 - d. Marriage unites man and woman in an unbreakable bond.
 - e. The permanent and exclusive fidelity of marriage is a reflection of God's love for Israel and God's love for the Church.
2. Jesus taught that marriage is unequivocally indissoluble, that no person can divide what God unites.
3. The love of husband and wife reflects Christ's love for the Church. Christ has transformed marriage into a sacrament.
4. The celebration of marriage is a public, liturgical act of the Church, especially appropriate to be celebrated at the Eucharist.
 - a. The couple is required to give their free consent to marry each other.
 - b. This exchange must happen in the presence of the Church's minister, two witnesses and the congregation.
 - c. In the Latin Church, the couple confers the sacrament on each other; in the Eastern Church, the priest's blessing confers the sacrament on the couple.
 - d. The exchange of rings symbolizes the consent between the husband and wife.
5. Christ's grace in the Sacrament of Matrimony is for the good of the couple and for the generation and education of children. These are the unitive and procreative purposes of marriage.
 - a. Once a marriage has been consummated physically, it is indissoluble.
 - b. The Sacrament obliges marital fidelity between spouses, as Christ is faithful to the Church.
 - c. The family is the domestic (or home) church.
 - d. The bond of marriage lasts until the death of one of the spouses.

- e. Married couples are always to be open to bringing forth new life into the world. Not all married couples are able to have children, but they can still radiate fruitfulness of charity, hospitality and sacrifice.
6. Preparation for marriage begins in childhood, taking added focus during the time of engagement.
7. While divorce is contrary to the teaching of the Church, the Church recognizes that couples may have good reasons for separation and civil divorce.
 - a. The Church continues to support those involved in divorce and encourages them to partake of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
 - b. In cases where a divorced person has remarried without having the first marriage annulled, the Church continues to support the person, even though the person cannot receive the Eucharist.
8. A declaration of nullity (annulment) by the Church means that the conditions for a valid marriage were not present when consent was given.
 - a. The Church always presumes a marriage to be valid, even after the marriage has broken down.
 - b. The examination of the validity of a marriage is undertaken by a Church tribunal or court.
 - c. Grounds for annulment include:
 - i. Flaws in the rite (ceremony)
 - ii. The legal capacity of the parties to marry, that is, if they have an impediment to marriage
 - iii. Inability to give consent, such as:
 - Lacking in discretion or maturity of judgment
 - Being forced to be married
 - Not having the intention to be faithful
 - Not intending to be married for life
 - Placing unacceptable conditions on the marriage.
 - d. Once an annulment has been granted, each of the parties is free to enter into sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church.
 - e. Children from an annulled marriage are considered legitimate.
9. A mixed marriage is a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, baptized Christian.
 - a. Permission for a mixed marriage is granted by the bishop.

- b. Difficulties in mixed marriages can arise because of separation in the Body of Christ.

10. An interfaith marriage is between a Catholic and a non-baptized person. An interfaith marriage is not a sacramental bond.

Scriptural Foundation. List the two to three primary Scripture passages that support the teaching. *How is this teaching rooted in the saving events of Scripture?*

1. Genesis 2:18-25.

¹⁸ The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." ¹⁹ So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. ²¹ So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, ²³ the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." ²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. ²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.

2. John 2:1-11.

¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ [And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. ⁹ And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

3. Ephesians 5:21-33.

²¹ Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. ²⁴ As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her ²⁶ to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, ²⁷ that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. ³³ In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

4. Matthew 19:3-6.

³ Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" ⁴ He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

Summary of the Sidebar material.

1. The family is the domestic or home church because it is the first place where the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed in the life of the person.
2. Essential to the consent given by each of the persons in marriage is that they are free to marry, not being under any constraint or impeded by any natural or ecclesiastical (Church) law.
3. Marriage preparation is essential for the couple because it provides the foundation for a solid and lasting marriage. Marriage preparation also helps the couple give free and responsible consent.

Relationship to Culture. *What does the USCCA both challenge and affirm in our culture?*

- **Affirmations of US Culture:**

One of the blessings in the Church in our country has been the many marriage preparation and enrichment programs. This has helped couples grow in married love in spite of many cultural difficulties.

- **Challenges to US Culture:**

The sexual revolution has done widespread damage to marriage. The sexual revolution has separated sexual activity from the commitment of marriage. As a result, society is attempting to redefine marriage at its very core understanding of a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman.

Additional Questions for Discussion. *Given what the USCCA has in its discussion questions, are there other questions to add to further the discussion?*

1. The Sacrament of Matrimony reflects Christ's love for His bride, the Church. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. How does St. Paul describe Christ's love for the Church?
2. Society is attacking the fundamental definition of marriage, that being between one man and one woman. What action, political, spiritual or otherwise, can you take to promote the Church's understanding of marriage?
3. What forces in society make it difficult for families to live as a domestic Church?

Action/Ritual to add with the meditation/prayer. *How can you help the participant respond to Christ's invitation given in this chapter?*

End the meeting by having a priest pray the blessing for families, on page 292 of the USCCA.