

TopicUntitled #1

- I INTRODUCTION

- A The current Catholic rules can confuse our understanding of the sign of this Sacrament
  - 1 The rules state that Catholics must have a priest present at a wedding
  - 2 But the rules now allow exceptions surprising to older Catholics
    - a Catholic marriages are now permitted without a priest having any part in the ceremony
      - (1) They can be celebrated in Protestant Churches with a minister leading the ceremony
      - (2) Usually permission for this is given if the minister is a close relative of the non-Catholic party
    - b These marriages are recognized as being just as blessed as a marriage performed in the Vatican by Pope
  - 3 Most Catholics never knew that even the old rules actually permitted a Catholic marriage without a priest
    - a But the exceptions were never taught to the people
    - b If two people were unable to obtain the presence of any priest for over 30 days,
      - (1) They were able to perform a marriage recognized as a Sacrament
      - (2) They needed to exchange proper (no reservations) vows
      - (3) And they needed to do this in the presence of at least two witnesses
    - c I visited two Indian villages isolated in the mountains of Mexico where this was a possibility
      - (1) The villagers lived in mountain towns,
      - (2) They were visited every six months by a priest who would remain with them for a week
- B These exceptions are clues to the heart of this Sacrament:
  - 1 They prove that a priest is not needed for a Catholic marriage
  - 2 So a priest is not the minister of the Sacrament, not the one who performs the marriage
  - 3 The couple themselves must be the ministers of the Sacrament
  - 4 The priest is simply one of the official witnesses
- II THE SIGN OFFERS A CLUE TO THE INVISIBLE REALITY REVEALED BY THE SACRAMENT
  - A To understand this invisible reality, we need to learn the precise action that constitutes each Sacrament
    - 1 We need to know what is essential in a marriage ceremony
    - 2 We need to separate this essential part from the other parts of the rite
  - B What the sign is not
    - 1 It is not the giving of a ring
      - a The Catholic ceremony does not include the words "With this ring, I thee wed"
        - (1) The liturgy of some other religions do
        - (2) Each religious group has the power to determine when during the ceremony the wedding occurs
        - (3) For some religions, the giving and receiving of rings seems to be the moment when the couple are wed
      - b If so, this is not true for Catholic marriages
    - 2 It is not the proclamation by the minister that the couple are married: "I now pronounce you man and wife"
      - a These words are not part of the Catholic ceremony
      - b So this proclamation (or one like it) cannot be part of the sign of the Sacrament
  - C What the sign is
    - 1 The sign involves the mutual exchange of vows of love:

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- a These vows express the complete giving of self to each other with no reservations
- b This giving establishes a legal marriage contract and the religious Sacrament
  - (1) So a couple is wed the moment the bride finishes her vows (if, as in the usual Catholic ceremony, the groom offers his vows first)
  - (2) This exchange of vows is the only thing that must be done in a Catholic ceremony
  - (3) Everything else can be skipped
- 2 There is a "death" involved in these vows
  - a Alcoholic friends of mine lived together without marriage
    - (1) They told me that their union was better than marriage because their love must always be given freely since it could be withdrawn at any moment
    - (2) I finally realized that their love was free, but never complete
      - (a) They just "loaned" themselves to each other
      - (b) Each reserved the right to withdraw the gift
      - (c) This kind of loving involved sacrifice but not death
  - b Only complete love, mutual dying, is sufficient to establish the visible sign of the Sacrament of Matrimony
- 3 Since the commitment a bride and groom make to each other is a "sign," the exchange must be publicly witnessed
  - a The sign must be experienced by some minimal community
    - (1) So some witnesses must be present
    - (2) And they must hear the vows exchanged
    - (3) This requirement for a community exists because both the Church and the state communities have a stake in the family being formed
      - (a) It is vital to both of them that this sign be witnessed
      - (b) Of course, the importance to the state and to the Church communities varies considerably
  - b Marriage is more than two people loving each other
  - c Marriage involves the public exchange between two people of an exclusive commitment to love each other
    - (1) They create a new community in society
      - (a) The state has an interest in the creation of the new family
      - (b) Society's security demands there be a public awareness that a new family has been established
    - (2) Others must now respect its rights if the community's peace is to be stable
      - (a) Exodus 20:14
        - [1] "You shall not commit adultery.
        - [2] 15 "You shall not steal. 16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
        - [3] 17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."
      - (b) Remember the Decalogue deals with the minimum requirements for social peace, not personal contentment
  - d However, the Sacrament of Marriage involves more than the social creation of a new family unit
    - (1) An enduring Sacramental Sign of the Church and of Jesus is offered to the world
      - (a) Endless and exclusive love is required
      - (b) For the Sacrament to exist, the love must be offered without the right to quit

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- (2) This public offering of the vows is done as a testimony to both the Church and the world -- that is why the vows must be offered publicly
- 4 **Therefore, the exchange of vows must be witnessed**
  - a Both the state and the Church require such witnessing
    - (1) This witnessing is the role of the priest, or other clergyman
    - (2) And it is the role of the best man and maid of honor
  - b Even a "common law" marriage requires some public witness
  - c In most states they must live together exclusively for some minimum period of time
- D **The New Testament interprets the sign for us:**
  - 1 Ephesians provides a major clue to the Sacramental nature of Marriage
    - a Ephesians 5:22
      - (1) Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.
      - (2) 24 Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.
      - (3) 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word,
      - (4) 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind —yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.
      - (5) 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
      - (6) 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body.
      - (7) 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. .
      - (8) 33 Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.
    - b The text needs comment to correct its horrid misuses
      - (1) Clergymen, including priests, have used it to enslave women
      - (2) Sadly, these clergymen have only read part of what the Scripture says
        - (a) **Wives were not summoned to blind obedience**
        - (b) They were not called to submit
          - [1] To physical abuse
          - [2] To the abuse of their children, sexually, emotionally, physically, spiritually
        - (c) **They were called to submit**
          - [1] To a husband who is loving them
          - [2] To a husband who is loving them as completely as Jesus loves the Church
      - (3) The text tells us about the religious significance of marriage
        - (a) **The woman is asked not to try to find herself**
          - [1] In her career
          - [2] In her wealth
          - [3] In her looks
        - (b) She is requested to find herself in the love she is offered by her husband

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- [1] To base her dignity on being loved
  - [2] Not to base it on her accomplishing, achieving, possessing
- (c) **The same, of course, is true for the man**
  - [1] He is not to find himself through his career, wealth, popularity
  - [2] He is to find himself in loving his wife and in being loved by her
- (4) **This surrender to being loved is what the Church is called to do**
  - (a) It is to discover itself in the Spirit of love Jesus offers
  - (b) It is not to believe its dignity is founded on
    - [1] Its wealth
    - [2] Its physical plant
    - [3] The size of its congregation
- 2 The exchange of vows makes the relationship between the groom and bride the image of the relationship between Jesus and the Church
  - a **Each of these relationships can help us interpret the other**
    - (1) **A groom's relationship to a bride can tell us how Jesus relates with the Church: as a lover!**
    - (2) **And a wife's relationship to a groom tells us how the Church should relate to Jesus: also as a lover**
      - (a) As one who accepts the love He is offered
      - (b) And then as one who responds by offering love in return
  - b A realization of the symbolism of marriage can correct errors in how we understand Jesus
    - (1) A groom is not present as a **judge** — but as one who asks to love
    - (2) A groom is not present as a **lawgiver** — but as one who asks to love
    - (3) A groom is not present as a **bookkeeper** — but as one who asks to love
  - c All Jesus desires is to love us, to unite with us
  - d **The Church must allow itself to be loved — like a Biblical bride**
    - (1) If two people insist on loving but refuse to allow themselves to be loved, there can be no marriage!
      - (a) **A gift offered must be accepted**
      - (b) **The "Church" consists of those who accept the gift of Jesus like a bride accepts the love of her groom**
      - (c) The world also consists of those who are loved by Jesus just as is the Church,
        - [1] But those of the world who are not Christians are unaware of His love
        - [2] Or they are not accepting this love
    - (2) **Jesus loves us: that is the message of both the stable and the cross**
      - (a) We must want to be loved
      - (b) And we must allow ourselves to be loved
      - (c) Only then are we the Church
- 3 **Is this really how we see Jesus? As a passionate lover?**
- 4 Christians need to go behind the Christian sign of marriage -- whether they view it as a Sacrament or not
  - a The Jews in the wilderness at the Feeding with Loaves stopped at the sign -- as spotlighted in the Gospel of John
    - (1) John 6:11
      - (a) Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

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- (b) 12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."
- (c) 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.
- (d) 14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."
- (2) John 6:26
  - (a) Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."
  - (b) 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."
- b They missed the symbolism and simply sought a ruler who provided free bread
- c We, Christians, often repeat the error made in the wilderness; we stop at the sign
  - (1) But we go one step further: we think that's enough
  - (2) We stop with the Sacramental sign
    - (a) Jesus is feeding us Now
    - (b) We fail to see that Jesus feeding us now means that Jesus has a mission
      - [1] To feed each of us
      - [2] To feed all of us
      - [3] To feed each and all us always
    - (c) **Our mission is**
      - [1] To accept His feeding
      - [2] To accept the Love He offers
        - [a] Not just when we are in Church
        - [b] But always, wherever we are
- 5 So Marriage is a Sacrament
  - a It is to be seen as a blessing
    - (1) It is a sign that Jesus is loving the bride and the groom -- always!
    - (2) He is loving both of them -- always!
    - (3) **It is also a sign that Jesus is loving all of us -- always!**
      - (a) A sign that He **must love us regardless of how we have behaved in response to His love**
      - (b) **A sign that we have a duty to be loved and to love**
        - [1] To be loyal to His loving us
        - [2] And to love Him in return
  - b We are
    - (1) His friends
    - (2) His Beloved
  - c Are we
    - (1) Our own friend?
    - (2) Our own beloved?
      - (a) **There is a teaching often missed in Scripture**
        - [1] Luke 10:27\*
          - [a] So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."

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- [2] No one I've asked has seen the correct order God asks us to love
- (b) **Listening to Jesus, the following order of love results**
  - [1] **First we must let God love us**
    - [a] We can't give Him what we don't have
    - [b] We must accept His love for us before we return it or share it
  - [2] **Then we must love God in return**
    - [a] We must accept God as He is
    - [b] We must allow Him to be the One who must love us regardless of what we have done or not done
    - [c] So we must accept His love for us regardless of what we have done or not done
  - [3] **Next is where we all err**
    - [a] We say we are to love our neighbor
    - [b] Jesus said I am to love you according to the standard by which I love myself!
      - {1 **So there is a prerequisite to my loving you**
      - {2 **I must first love myself**
        - {a} To treat myself with respect
        - {b} To accept myself as I am
  - [4] **Only then will I know**
    - [a] How to respect you
    - [b] How to accept you as you are
- III **JESUS WEDS HIMSELF TO US FOREVER**
  - A Most people are aware of the Catholic Church's rule: there should be no divorce
  - B Few people know of the theological reason that underlies this divorce rule
    - 1 Catholics are given the "onus" without the "bonus"
    - 2 Actually many of us are taught a Catholic distortion of reality
      - a We are taught that we can't divorce an unfaithful spouse
      - b But we are also taught Jesus does divorce His unfaithful spouse: us
        - (1) Being unfaithful in religion is a "sin"
        - (2) We are taught Jesus hates the sinner; separates Himself from the sinner
          - (a) He is also a Judge
          - (b) And as such He will send His sinning former spouse to "Hell"
          - (c) If that isn't a divorce, what the Hell, (pardon the pun,) is?
        - (3) **At the same time we are to continue to love our unfaithful spouse**
      - c If we repent, Jesus then takes us back (weds Himself to us anew)
      - d We, on the other hand, are ordered to live in an earthly Hell with our abusive spouse
  - 3 **All this is backwards**
    - a Bethlehem shows us that Jesus weds Himself to being human (unites)
    - b Calvary assures us that this wedding, this union, is complete and eternal
      - (1) He **can never withdraw Himself from us — He dies to the ability to do this**
      - (2) He **will never withdraw Himself from us**
      - (3) In legal terms, Jesus can and will never divorce us
        - (a) All of us as the Church
        - (b) Each of us as members of the Church

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- (4) Remember:
  - (a) It is sinners that He loved completely and gave Himself to
  - (b) It is sinners that He loves now and forever
  - c Baptism celebrates the moment that this wedding began for you and for me
- C Therefore, the visible sign and the invisible reality should now be clear
  - 1 The sign consists of a husband and wife offering themselves to each other completely and forever
  - 2 The reality exists in the mystery of Jesus giving Himself to the Church (each of us and all of us) completely and forever
- D Remember: there is no magic to the Sacraments
  - 1 God unites with the gift of a husband's and a wife's mutual love to create the Sacramental bond
  - 2 That which creates a marriage (love) must sustain it
- IV APPLICATION OF THE MEANING OF THE SIGN
  - A Creation is incomplete!
    - 1 And God needs you to help Him complete it
      - a One look at the universe must convince anyone that this world is not what a loving Father wishes it to be
        - (1) Warfare
        - (2) Violence
        - (3) Robbery
      - b When God rested after the sixth day, He did so for a reason
        - (1) Genesis:1:31
          - (a) *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.*
          - (b) *2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.*
          - (c) *2:2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing: so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.*
          - (d) *2:3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*
        - (2) God had made us free
          - (a) He took the universe as far as He could without our cooperation
          - (b) From now on, He is dependent upon our loving each other
            - [1] A couple uniting in love brings the universe closer to the harmony God desires for everyone
            - [2] When we all allow ourselves to be fully loved and offer ourselves fully to love each and all others, the universe will have achieved the goal God has for it
    - 2 Your love creates a new family
      - a Out of the chaos of division, comes the unity of a new family
      - b The Bible teaches this
        - (1) Genesis 2:24
          - (a) *"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh."*
        - (2) The teaching of this verse is dramatic
          - (a) There is a new "flesh"
          - (b) "Flesh" refers to a new person, a new existence!
  - B All this is logical
    - 1 God is love

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- 2 So creation must reflect God
- 3 So love, human love, is needed to perfect creation, to unite it
- V BABIES ARE SACRAMENTS OF HUMAN LOVE
  - A In God's ideal plan, all children are sacraments, visible signs of an invisible reality
  - B Love is not static: its sign must not be static or automatic either
    - 1 Love seeks to create unity
    - 2 It strives to create family
    - 3 Love wishes to sustain and deepen bonds of family community
  - C Love must grow
    - 1 In nature, anything not growing is already dying
    - 2 Love in its very developing constantly demands richer signs of expression
  - D A baby is to be an expression of the love uniting the man and woman
    - 1 Their love has become so vibrant, so alive, it needs to live
    - 2 Anything less is inadequate as a sign of this love
  - E With this background, we can examine Birth Control
    - 1 The Traditional View rejects all artificial birth control
      - a However, there is no scriptural foundation for this position
        - (1) A papal commission established to examine the topic discovered this lack of Biblical foundation
        - (2) The main modern papal encyclical dealing with birth control reflected this lack; it could not base the teaching on any solid guidance from the scriptures
      - b The teaching is based on a particular philosophic view — a philosophy that is very strange to us
      - c The teaching is based on the premise that the primary purpose of marriage is having children
        - (1) If this is so, any artificial interference with the birth process strikes at the purpose of marriage and is morally wrong
        - (2) Even a natural intervention (abstinence) is not always morally correct
          - (a) Having children is always the primary reason for the existence of a family
          - (b) This assertion remains valid regardless of the number of children the family might already have had
          - (c) Therefore, a couple must always have a very good reason to avoid having children
      - d The basis of this teaching is a philosophy which holds that matter is evil and spirit is good
        - (1) This view was made popular by Plato
          - (a) "Spirit" endures and has no limitations
          - (b) Matter is finite and never achieves the ideal
        - (2) The view received a boost from Persian dualism
          - (a) There are two gods
          - (b) The good god made the spiritual world
          - (c) The evil god made the material world
        - (3) Both Plato and the Persian religion affected Augustine and reflected his life experience
          - (a) He had lived a wild life ruled by passions, fathering an illegitimate child
          - (b) As a consequence, he feared his body, including his emotions
          - (c) He claimed that only babies justified sex, women, and marriage
      - e Since sex is the greatest of all pleasures



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- (1) It poses the greatest of all dangers
- (2) Only babies justify risking oneself in the face of so great a threat
- 2 There are mature criticisms of this Traditional View
  - a It has no scriptural foundation!
  - b Nor is it based on an experience of reality
    - (1) Most people marry primarily for love
    - (2) They do not see having countless children as their primary purpose when marrying
  - c There are reasons the Traditional View was accepted uncritically for so long
    - (1) Children were a blessing to families— most people lived on farms
    - (2) And families with many children were necessary to society
      - (a) There was a high child mortality rate and a short life expectancy
      - (b) Mankind needed as many children as possible to survive
  - d The agricultural and scientific and medical and industrial revolutions that began about 1600 AD began to change attitudes towards the need for children
    - (1) For many married couples, children became a burden, a financial and emotional drain
    - (2) The presence of additional children could hurt the parents' love and interfere with healthy family relationships
  - e Aware of the criticisms of the Traditional View, the Vatican Council gave marriage a double "primary" purpose
    - (1) Love
    - (2) And babies
- 3 The Modern View is radically different
  - a The primary purpose of marriage is the union of two people resulting from the total giving of self in love
    - (1) This communion leads to an ever deepening discovery of the mystery of love
    - (2) And consequently, it results in a deeper discovery of the mystery of the God of love, of the God who is Love
  - b There is a Scriptural bases for this view since human love is intended to be an introduction to God
    - (1) 1-John 4:7
      - (a) Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God: everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
    - (2) 1-John 4:20\*
      - (a) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?
  - c This view is also supported by human experience: most people marry to love and to be loved
  - d There are consequences to this new understanding of the purpose of marriage
    - (1) A couple shouldn't have babies when having them will restrict their ability to love each other
      - (a) One or both spouses are too unhealthy
      - (b) It is too soon in the growth of the couple's love for each other
      - (c) The couple is too poor to afford a child at this time so a birth can harm their relationship
      - (d) One or both spouses is/are too immature to accept the blessings and responsibilities of being a healthy parent
    - (2) But they should make an effort to co-create a baby when one is needed to express love

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- (a) They should strive to procreate when it is needed to allow their love to grow
- (b) They should remember that its always dangerous to limit love
  - [1] They shouldn't arbitrary decide to have:
    - [a] No babies
    - [b] One
    - [c] Two
  - [2] Marital love by its very sign must be open
- (c) But: adoption may allow the married couple an opportunity to express their growing love
  - [1] This is true even when love demands a new sign, a deeper expression, if the love is to continue to be enriched
  - [2] This sign, this **child**, need not always be the natural product of their sexual loving
- e The Traditional interpretation should have forbidden marriages of people unable to have children
  - (1) One of them is sterile and aware of the condition
  - (2) One or both are too old for to have **children**
  - (3) It didn't forbid such marriages
    - (a) This lapse shows that love, not children, must be seen as the primary purpose of marriage even according to the traditional view
    - (b) Today, people incapable of loving are incapable of Sacramental marriage
      - [1] Few marriages are annulled because the couple blocked procreation
      - [2] Most are annulled because one or both of the spouses were too immature to offer themselves completely in marriage
- **4 Finally**
  - a The Traditional View had nothing to do with the Visible or Invisible Signs of marriage
  - b The Modern view definitely does
    - (1) Marriage is a sign of God loving us and of our loving God
    - (2) The visible sign, the exchange of love, reflects this
- E Children continue to be signs of the parent's love for each other
  - 1 What creates, must sustain
    - a This axiom is a challenge to parents to grow in love for each other
      - (1) In being loved
      - (2) In loving each other
      - (3) In loving their **children**
    - b The parents' developing love is needed to guide their children to maturity
      - (1) The love that created the **child** is not a love that is capable of sustaining the same **child** to maturity
      - (2) Only a constantly maturing love can guide the child to maturity
  - **2 The parents, thus, face a challenge**
    - a Children often come between the love of the parents: children demand attention
      - (1) One (usually the mom) focuses on the **child**
      - (2) The other parent often feels ignored, jealous
    - **b We must always distinguish the real from the ideal**
      - (1) Some **children** are unwanted
      - (2) Some **children**, however, are planned for unhealthy reasons

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- (a) A parent tries to escape loneliness
- (b) A parent tries to live out frustrated dreams through the children's achievements
- (c) One or both parents try to save a marriage that has no love
- 3 Parents are constantly challenged to see the sacredness of their children
  - a To begin to respect them
  - b To begin to release them
  - c To begin to prepare them for maturity
  - d To begin to prepare them not to need the parents
- VI FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
  - A **The Bible, sadly, was the product of a very chauvinistic culture**
    - 1 Remember: God accepts people as they are
      - a He touches them with an experience of God, Himself, saving them, allowing them to keep their levels of knowledge, superstition, and ignorance
      - b He gently allows humanity to grow through His series of touches
        - (1) He touched chauvinistic individuals -- and allowed them to remain chauvinistic
          - (a) Pregnancy kept women from being the main defense in a culture of tribal violence
          - (b) The reliance upon male warriors often led to a male culture
        - (2) God's touch did not correct the errors of their minds; it simply allowed their hearts to experience a genuine touch of His Existence
          - (a) His service in their lives
          - (b) His salvation
          - (c) His loving guardianship
        - (3) Gradually these experiences enlightened them to recognize the equality of woman and man
    - 2 **The OT contains clear signs of chauvinism**
      - a **Woman enjoyed no legal standing**
        - (1) Could not be counted to establish a synagogue
        - (2) Could not initiate a divorce
      - b **A wife was viewed as the property of her husband**
        - (1) The husband committed no adultery through intercourse with a prostitute or an unmarried maiden
          - (a) No offense was committed against the adulterer's wife
          - (b) Society's security was not endangered by his action
        - (2) All intercourse by a wife, not with her husband, was adultery
          - (a) She could be stoned to death -- while the man, at worst, would be whipped
          - (b) The penalties were inflicted on her because the security of the family was jeopardized
        - (3) She's listed with his other goods in the ban against coveting
          - (a) Exodus 20:17
            - [1] "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."
          - (b) No similar restriction was placed upon the husband -- unless he covets another man's wife
          - (c) If she's coveted, there could be no peace in society
      - c Although she could not divorce him, he could divorce her

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- (1) By handing over a note of dismissal in the presence of two witnesses
- (2) And by returning her dowry
  - (a) Her family would demand their ancestral property returned
  - (b) It needed to be returned in order to retain peace with them -- not with her
- 3 The NT makes great strides towards equality
  - a Its accomplishments included steps forward
    - (1) Mark makes men and women become equal in divorce proceedings
      - (a) Mark 10:11
        - [1] So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12\* "And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."
      - (b) Jesus recognizes a woman's legal right to divorce
      - (c) Adultery was made equal -- whether it was committed by the husband or the wife
    - (2) Paul draws out the dramatic consequences of Baptism
      - (a) Galatians 3:28\*
        - [1] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
        - [2] He claims full sexual equality: "neither male nor female"
      - (b) He addresses women in his letters
        - [1] He especially addresses those who offered their homes as hostesses for Church services
        - [2] He lists one as an apostle
          - [a] Romans 16:7
            - {1} Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
    - (3) Luke shows Jesus offering special attention to women
      - (a) In his Gospel, Luke focuses upon them at times
      - (b) He offers duplicate stories balancing attention to men with attention to women
        - [1] If he tells a story of a miracle performed for a man, he adds one performed for a woman
        - [2] If he relates a parable about a man, he adds one for women: lost sheep; lost coin
          - [a] Luke 15:4
            - {1} "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?
            - {2} 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'
            - {3} 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.
          - [b] Luke 15:8
            - {1} "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?
            - {2} 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'

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- {3} 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
- [3] The activity of the Good Samaritan is balanced by the spiritual meditation accented in the following story about the sisters Martha and Mary
  - [a] Luke 10:29
    - {1} "And who is my neighbor?"
    - {2} 30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead.
    - {3} 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.
    - {4} 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
    - {5} 33 But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.
    - {6} 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'
    - {7} 36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
    - {8} 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."
  - [b] Luke 10:38
    - {1} As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.
    - {2} 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.
    - {3} 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"
    - {4} 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."
- [4] Luke shows that women accompany Jesus on His journey and support Him
  - [a] Luke 8:1
    - {1} After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.
    - {2} 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;
    - {3} 3 Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.
- b But chauvinism still echoes in the pages of NT works
  - (1) Luke never allows women to share any role in the ministry in Acts
  - (2) An editor or Paul added stern sections ordering women to silence
    - (a) 1 Corinthians 11:3

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- [1] Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.
- [2] 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head--it is just as though her head were shaved.
- [3] 6 If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head.
- [4] 7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.
- [5] 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.
- [6] 11 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.
- [7] 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?
- [8] 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.
- [9] 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice--nor do the churches of God.
- (b) 1 Corinthians 14:33
  - [1] For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.
  - [2] As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.
  - [3] 35 If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.
- (3) Matthew drops the equality references regarding adultery and divorce
  - (a) Mark 10:4
    - [1] They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.
    - [2] 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female'.
    - [3] 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one.
    - [4] 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."
    - [5] 10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.
    - [6] 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."
  - (b) Matthew 5:31
    - [1] "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'
    - [2] 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.
  - (c) Matthew 19:8

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- [1] 8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.
  - [2] 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."
- B Jesus treated women with dignity
  - 1 Centuries later that dignity has not yet been fully established for women
    - a He died for all
      - (1) This gift must be given equally to all
      - (2) So all must be equal in worth in God's eyes
    - b All die in baptism: they shed, lose, any traits that would debase them socially
      - (1) Removal of clothing was shedding all that identifies the individual
      - (2) All the baptized then donned the same white robes to show their equal in status
  - 2 Slowly the Bible translations and churches are recognizing women's equality
    - a Unnecessary male references are removed from Bible translations
    - b Ministries are gradually opening to women in the churches
      - (1) They are ordained as clergy in some
      - (2) There has been recent growth in the Catholic Church
        - (a) They are accepted as Eucharistic Ministers
        - (b) They are accepted as altar servers
        - (c) They are accepted as "pastors," (official administrators,) in a few priest-less parishes
        - (d) And one is accepted as a "chancellor" in her diocese
- C We must remember that the Biblical culture achieved harmony through dependent relations
  - 1 A peaceful society resulted from a pyramid structure
    - a The Emperor at the top
    - b Then governors
    - c Then nobility
    - d Then poor freemen
    - e Then slaves
  - 2 They could only picture a harmonious family household organized in the same set of tiers
    - a Husband at the top
    - b Wife
    - c Servants
    - d Children
    - e Slaves
- D Our culture, of course, is radically different
  - 1 It is based on equality
  - 2 Family harmony is best achieved using this same cultural pattern
    - a There are no set roles for either a husband or a wife
    - b Even some Catholic priests are coming to realize this
- VII REAL vs. IDEAL: ANNULMENTS
  - A Today, a great percent of Christian marriages fail

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- 1 Catholics believe all marriages between two Christians are intended to be Sacraments
- 2 Not just marriages between two Catholics or Catholic and another Christian
- B **The Catholic rate of failure is not significantly different from the rate of others in our culture**
  - 1 Over 33% of Catholics marriages in many areas fail
  - 2 What happens to these divorced Catholics?
    - a It is important that we know that today **divorce is not forbidden**
    - b Remarriage after a valid, Sacramental marriage is forbidden
- C We must understand what the Catholic Church means by "annulment"
  - 1 The term means different things when an annulment is granted by the state and by the Church
    - a **When it is used by the state it means that no marriage ever existed legally**
    - b **When it is used by the Church it means that no Sacramental sign existed in a marriage**
      - (1) If there has been no state annulment, the Catholic Church holds that a legal marriage did occur
      - (2) A Church annulment makes no reference to the legality of the civic marriage
  - 2 If there is a civil divorce, the Church says
    - a The couple were married (legally)
    - b But they never had the Sacramental sign
    - c This legal status of the marriage is important for the children
      - (1) They remain **legitimate after the Church annulment is granted**
      - (2) Many balk from seeking a Church annulment for fear of its effect on the legality of the children
- D Annulment refers to more than a legal fiction
  - 1 **Before 1950 one was granted only for very few, very extreme reasons**
    - a Many innocent people were trapped
    - b They were made to suffer in order to protect the institution of marriage; this was sinfully unfair
  - 2 Since 1950 the most common reason for granting an annulment is the emotional immaturity of one or both of the parties
    - a **If two 4-year-olds intend and go through a marriage ceremony, everyone knows**
      - (1) There was no marriage
      - (2) The couple was too immature to offer enough legal consent to establish a legal contract
    - b Today most divorces follow a similar pattern
      - (1) The couple intended a lasting marriage
      - (2) They were each physically and intellectually mature enough to establish a legal contract
      - (3) But an examination of the marriage history shows that
        - (a) **The actions of one or both reflected an emotionally immature person**
        - (b) One or both was/were unable to offer enough of self in love to establish the **marriage Sacrament**
          - [1] Remember that each party is called to be a sign of either Jesus or the Church totally immersing herself/himself in each other
          - [2] Such a total dying to self demands real maturity
- E What happens if no there is no annulment and the person remarries?
  - 1 **They are not excommunicated!**



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- 2 Most people work out their problem in the "Internal Forum"
  - a This refers to their relationship with God
  - b They believe and feel they are "OK" in God's eyes
- 3 He/she must ask, "What would a loving God want?"
  - a That they remain single and grow neurotic, scarring their children?
  - b Or that they discover love and grow as healthy people, spouses, and parents?
- 4 Marriage often reveals the answer
  - a If there is a true loving relationship in the new marriage, a God of love must be present,
  - b 1 John 4:7
    - (1) Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
    - (2) 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.
    - (3) 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
    - (4) 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
    - (5) 12 No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.
- VIII CONCLUSION
  - A Don't get bogged down in legalism and argument
  - B Christian Marriage is intended by Jesus to be a sign, a Sacrament
    - 1 It reflects His relationship with each of us and all of us
    - 2 It reflects our relationship with Him
  - C We must use it to remember our challenge
    - 1 When we look at newly weds:
      - a All they want to do is bless each other by giving themselves to each other
      - b Does this describe how we see our relationship with Jesus? And with the world?
    - 2 When we look at a loving couple in the mid years of marriage
      - a They are blessing each other with the gift of self
      - b Does this describe how we see our relationship with Jesus? And with the world?
    - 3 When we look at a successful 50th anniversary couple
      - a They have blessed each other with the gift of self
      - b Does this describe how we see our relationship with Jesus? And with the world?
  - D I. Closing quotes
    - 1 A. Revelation 19:7\*
      - a "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."
    - (2) B. Revelation 21:2\*
      - a 1. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.