



The Sacrament of Marriage

“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and woman establish between themselves is a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.” This quote from the Code of Canon Law (the laws that govern the church as an institution) sums up the essential aspect of marriage. Marriage is a partnership, that is to provide for a quality of life for the man and woman who enter the covenant, and to bring children into the world and educate them.

Marriage is a sacrament and one of the sacraments, like Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, that is to be celebrated once in a life time. In order to be married, one has to be free to give “consent.” They must understand what they are doing. They cannot have any psychological difficulty that would impede them from fulfilling the essential obligations of marriage. They cannot be forced by any person or circumstance (someone tells them they have to marry a certain person) to enter into marriage. They must freely give this consent on their own. They must assume that this relationship is for life (one cannot hold out for the possibility of divorce if it does not work out.) Finally, they must be open to the possibility of children. If any of these things are found to be lacking, the marriage is not a **sacramental** marriage. When the church does an annulment, they look at these essential qualities to see if any are lacking. If any of these qualities are found to be lacking, the person never entered into the sacrament in the first place and thus are free to marry in the church. It never denies that the person was married prior, just that it was not a **sacramental** marriage.

Because marriage is a sacrament, it is expected that marriages take place in a church. I often get requests to have someone’s wedding outdoors. The only way I can do this is if the Archbishop gives me permission. He is not inclined to do so, in fact has never done so. We build churches and maintain them so we can celebrate the sacraments in them. A couple comes to God’s house to begin a new life together, just as they bring their child to the church for baptism, first communion, reconciliation, confirmation etc.

Another misconception I often run into is that one cannot validly get married in another Christian church. This often happens when one of the parties is not a Catholic and wants to get married in their own church. If yourself or your children or grandchildren are getting married, please, please, please come see me. It is a simple act of doing some paper work and giving permission to get married in another Christian church. It pains me when I read in the paper that a parishioner’s child gets married somewhere else and they have not come to see me before the event. You can get validly married somewhere else, one just needs to get a dispensation. On the same note, if you have already done this and did not get the proper permission from the church, it is a simple act of blessing the marriage. Please make an appointment with me if you or someone you know is in this situation.

Divorce is a painful reality that affects our society. When a couple gets divorced, it has wide reaching effects for the entire family and for society. If you find yourself in this situation, please come see me so we can do an annulment. Even if you do not plan on getting married again, an annulment can help to put you closer to the situation.