

Chapter 4

The Sacrament of Matrimony

Getting Started

Assign the students to read Chapter 4, "The Sacrament of Matrimony." Use the following questions from the Student Text to guide a discussion of the chapter:

- Name the commitment to which you have been most faithful.
- What do you perceive as the disadvantages of an arranged marriage? The advantages?
- What would be your ideal wedding proposal experience?
- What does this statement mean to you: Authentic married love is caught up in divine love?
- Imagine that you and your spouse have just celebrated your fiftieth wedding anniversary. Name some things you would want to be commended for on your marriage.

(See the Student Text for additional questions.) Then ask the students to read the following article.

Application Reading

http://uscatholic.claretians.org/site/News2?abbr=usc_&page=NewsArticle&id=7281

MARRIAGE: CELEBRATE THE COURAGE OF LOVE

The wedding day is just the first step and only a small part of the courageous act of marriage.

By John Shea

"PHIL, COULD YOU PICK UP GAGA?"

It was Marge Helprin on the phone. Gaga was Marge's mother and, more importantly, given what was going to happen Saturday, Cecily's grandmother. It was Cecily who dubbed her grandmother "Gaga." It just came out of her as a little girl and it stuck and spread.

Discussion

Lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:

1. Why does Gaga say that getting married is an act of courage? Because it involves two people fully committing themselves to one another despite the knowledge that death will ultimately separate them: "We join ourselves to others, even knowing death will separate us. We stand up to death, two mortals defying death with their love."
2. How does Gaga define the first time that a couple really has sex? It is when a couple releases not only their bodies to one another, but their hearts as well: "Then one day, you are there, completely and totally there. And whatever you are doing with your body, it reaches clear through the other person. And then, as my favorite poet said, 'God unties the knot.'"
3. How is the couple (Cec and Bax) a symbol of Christ and his Church, according to the deacon marrying them? In marriage, two become one in Christ, just as in the Church, Christ "joins us to one another, but we do not lose our individuality or uniqueness."
4. What two things happen in the process of two becoming one in marriage, according to the deacon? "First, we gradually come to see ourselves in the eyes of the one who loves us. . . . The one who loves us lets us be who we are." Second, "we seem more capable of love, more capable of giving ourselves. . . . And we realize this giving is not a losing. It is what we were meant to be all along."
5. What does the deacon mean when he says that the intimate love of marriage "overflows"? "It enters other relationships and energizes them." Ultimately, the married couple should be "witnesses to God's love in the world."
6. What is the significance of the Easter decorations at the wedding? Marriage is the beginning of a new life, and Easter celebrates the new life of Christ; and in marriage, the couple help each other to follow Christ into the "garden."

Activity

Planning a Catholic Wedding

- Many students' primary source of information about weddings comes from television, movies, and magazines. The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to the liturgical dimension of the Rite of Marriage by having them plan a Catholic wedding.
- This activity may be shortened by having students plan only part of a Catholic wedding—for example, the Rite of Marriage (#23–#29), the Liturgy of the Word (#21–#22), the Entrance Rite (#19–#20), or the Liturgy of the Eucharist (#30–#38).
- For this activity, the students will work in groups of two or three people. Each group will need one of the following: 1) a photocopy of the “Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass” from the *Rite of Marriage* #18–#38 (use your parish's copy, or order a copy from the Catholic Book Publishing Company, New York, \$12.95); 2) a bible, preferably the NAB version; 3) a list of the Scripture reading options from the *Rite of Marriage* #67–#105 (a list of these readings can be found at the end of this document); 4) paper and a pen or pencil for recording the group's decisions.
- Preface the activity by asking the students to talk about how weddings are depicted in our culture. What does our culture suggest is the most important element of a wedding?
- Explain to the students that the *Rite of Marriage* describes how the sacrament of Matrimony is to be conducted in the Catholic Church. It is like a “script” for Catholic weddings. However, the *Rite of Marriage* offers a variety of options so that the couple may choose to personalize their wedding. Tell the students that in order to get a better idea of what the Church considers to be the most important aspects of a Catholic wedding, they will have the opportunity to plan a wedding according to the *Rite of Marriage*.
- Divide the students into groups of two to three, and provide the groups with the materials necessary to plan the wedding (the bible, the copy of the “Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass,” and so on).
- Instruct the students to read through the “Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass,” choosing from among the options presented. They should record their choices to share with the whole group at the end of the activity. Tell them that although there is no “right” choice from among the options presented, they should be prepared to offer some reasons for why they chose the options they did.
- As the students work, monitor their progress in order to help them keep moving. After 10–15 minutes, announce that they should move on to plan the Liturgy of the Word; after another 15–20 minutes, announce that they should move on to the Rite of Marriage, and so on.
- When most of the groups have finished their work, gather the students together. Review the “Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass” with the students one section at a time (the Entrance Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Rite of Marriage, the Liturgy of the Eucharist). In each section, ask a representative from each of the groups to share 1) the options they identified; 2) the choices they made; 3) their rationale for the choices they made.
- Here are the options provided by the “Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass.” Entrance Rite: The priest may greet the bride and groom at the door or altar; the procession to the altar is optional; the participation of parents and witnesses (commonly known as “attendants”) in the procession is optional. Liturgy of the Word: The *Rite of Marriage* offers numerous options for the Scripture readings and responsorial psalm. Rite of Marriage: In the United States, the couple may choose from two different forms for declaring their consent; alternatively, they may declare their consent by responding to questions; the Rite offers three different forms for the blessing of rings, and the option for the groom and bride to say a short blessing during the exchange of rings. Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Rite suggests that the bride and groom may bring the bread and wine to the altar during the offertory; the Rite offers three options for the nuptial blessing, and three options for the solemn blessing.
- Close the activity with a discussion about how Catholic weddings differ from the way weddings are usually portrayed in our culture. What stood out as different from the way weddings are portrayed on television or the movies? (For example, the participation of the bride and groom in the entrance procession is optional; the bride and groom are presumed to process together; the bride and groom may be accompanied by both sets of parents during the procession.) What elements of a Catholic wedding are rarely portrayed in movie weddings? (For example, the questioning before the exchange of consent; the Liturgy of the Word; the nuptial blessing.) What elements of weddings as portrayed in popular culture are missing from the *Rite of Marriage*? (For example, the minister does not ask whether anyone objects to the marriage; there is no mention of the proper attire for the bride and groom; there is no mention of a unity candle; the minister is never instructed to say, “You may now kiss the bride”; the bride's father does not “give away” the bride.) The Rite

talks about “witnesses” rather than “attendants”; what does this choice of wording say about the role of the maid of honor and best man? What does the Catholic wedding “script” imply about Catholic belief regarding marriage?

Additional Activities

- Have the students complete the activities described in the “Pray While You Pound the Pavement” feature on page 113 of the Student Textbook.
- Have students make and discuss a list of rules for dating as described in assignment #5 in the Assignments and Applications section of the Student Textbook (page 135).
- Have students make a collage or poster celebrating the witness of long and successful Christian marriages as described in assignment #10 in the Assignments and Applications section of the Student Textbook (page 135).
- Have the students complete Handout 27, “Finding a Soul Mate” in the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.

Additional Resources

For Internet resources, see the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.

The following videos are appropriate for use with this chapter:

- “Our Catholic Wedding” (Liturgical Training Publications, 30 minutes)

Scripture Reading Options in the Rite of Marriage

Options for the First Reading (Old Testament)

1. The first creation story (Genesis 1:26–28, 31)
2. The second creation story (Genesis 2:18–24)
3. With God's help, Isaac finds a suitable wife in Rebekah (Genesis 24:48–51, 58–67)
4. Tobias asks Raguel for Sarah's hand in marriage (Tobit 7:9–10, 11–15)
5. Tobias prays for God's mercy for himself and Sarah on their wedding night (Tobit 8:5–7)
6. A biblical love song (Song of Songs 2:8–10, 14, 16; 8:6–7)
7. The qualities of a good spouse (Sirach 26:1–4, 13–16)
8. God's covenant with his people as a model for the marriage covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–32a, 33–34a)

Options for the Responsorial Psalm

1. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 33:12, 18, 20–21, 22)
2. I will bless the Lord at all times (Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9)
3. The Lord is kind and merciful (Psalm 103:1–2, 8, 13, 17–18)
4. Happy are those who do what the Lord commands (Psalm 112:1–2, 3–4, 5–7, 7–8, 9)
5. Happy are those who fear the Lord (Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5)
6. The Lord is compassionate to all his creatures (Psalm 145:8–9, 10, 15, 17–18)
7. Let all praise the name of the Lord (Psalm 148:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12, 13–14)

Options for the Second Reading (New Testament)

1. The depth of God's love (Romans 8:31–35, 37–39)
2. A summary of Christian life. (Romans 12:1–2, 9–18 [long form] or Romans 12:1–2, 9–13 [short form])
3. The sanctity of the body (1 Corinthians 6:13–15, 17–20)
4. The qualities of love (1 Corinthians 12:31–13:8)
5. Marriage compared to the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:2, 21–33 [long form] or Ephesians 5:2, 25–32 [short form])
6. Love perfects all virtues (Colossians 3:12–17)
7. The conduct of Christian wives and husbands (1 Peter 3:1–9)
8. Love of God requires love of one another (1 John 3:18–24)
9. God is love (1 John 4:7–12)
10. The wedding feast of the lamb (Revelation 19:1, 5–9)

Options for the Gospel Reading

1. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–12): "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (verse 3). Matthew 5 in the NAB.
2. Be salt and light for the world (Matthew 5:13–16)
3. Build your house on rock (Matthew 7:21, 24–29 [long form] or Matthew 7:21, 24–25 [short form])
4. The indissolubility of marriage (Matthew 19:3–6)
5. The Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:35–40)
6. The indissolubility of marriage (Mark 10:6–9)
7. The wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11)
8. Jesus' commandment (John 15:9–12)
9. No greater love (John 15:12–16)
10. That they may be one (John 17:20–26)