

BETRAYED
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*Defending Marriage after Years of
Failed Leadership in the Church*

J O H N C L A R K

Foreword by

CATHERINE GODFREY-HOWELL, JCD

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To Athanasius, Veronica, Demetrius, Tarcisius, Philomena,
Dominica, Bonaventure, Immaculata, and Mary Katherine—
the primary purposes of our marriage.

To Joseph Seraphim, Christiana Cherubim, and
Raphael Francis—three children in heaven patiently
waiting for Mom and Dad to come home.

For Lisa.

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Foreword

THE NOTION THAT marriage today is in crisis is absolutely untrue. The spousal identity, with or without an institution, is a reality that we have perceived long before Christ elevated it to sacramental dignity because of the destiny it entails. We now know how to articulate the meaningfulness of this attraction to claim the right to marry (*ius connubii*) and how it indicates a reality beyond ourselves that makes this possible, and simultaneously our capacity to be remade through it. We also know now, more than ever, that fighting to maintain the spousal relationship leads to happiness and salvation. Whatever else there may be left in this world to possess, it cannot be greater than either of these. No, marriage is not in crisis. Chaos and suffering grow to unbearable weight because we refuse to let marriage speak for itself. This is what John Clark sets out to do—namely, to give marriage a chance to give an account of itself.

There are a few premises that need to be set in place (again). First, marriage entails a bond. Not an emotional reason to stay close to someone, but a reality that comes to be at the call of a man and woman who, with the fullness of their human faculties, profess a covenant between themselves. They have new identity in this moment that they can never forsake. This sounds like a tether, but it is the reverse—the marriage covenant is a promise that living

well will yield ten-fold fruit, as each spouse helps the other reach heaven. The bond of Christian marriage, the spoken oath and covenant, is *created* and is also the nursery for further human collaboration in creation. The identity given in marriage is something altogether new in this life, as is the conception of those souls that will come after because we, too, have spoken the right words of creation. Marriage is a sacrament, but as Clark vehemently exhorts the reader to see, its closeness to the Eucharist is the same proximity as the heart is to the soul.

And the hearts of spouses unified (even in imperfect participation) is the image of the same covenant that God has with His people. It is not lightly that the Code of Canon Law reproduces the importance of the marital covenant as the nursery of all vocations; in the light of spouses' vocation (some might say justice toward God in the way cult or liturgy embodies), these two are entrusted with fostering in that same spousal bond the vocations in their children, and especially to the priesthood.¹ What the covenant of spouses and the covenant the Eucharistic celebration acknowledges is explicitly bound together in their use of the same language, a

¹ This is not to say that priesthood is of greatest value, but that priesthood comes most robustly from good marriages. Cf. C. 226: §1 "Those who are married are bound by the special obligation, in accordance with their own vocation, to strive for the building up of the people of God through their marriage and family." §2 "Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them." The first encounter with sacramental covenant is with one's parents. If this is not the case, priests will be required to represent this before an explanation of faith seems possible. In any event, immutability needs to be expressed in human will, and if not by parents, then it will be difficult and quite reliant on grace.

language children hear first in their mother and father long before they grasp their own faith or receive the Eucharist.

Clark has written a book here about marriage and the Eucharist. Only a man who passionately loves his own wife could write this book. And I think it is actually a love letter to the Eucharist. After these years of pandemic and exclusion, Clark has had indeed more time with the former and so probably more to say to the latter. But the questions he asks are critical and reflective. Neither marriage nor the Eucharist rely on disposition or personality. Both call upon the highest human attributes even in the smallest or unannounced moments. Both are imbued with consistency, constancy, *words* pronounced, and actions that follow necessarily. The Eucharist is clearly a primary inspiration to Clark's marriage.

Another premise that needs to be re-presented is that in Christian (Trinitarian) anthropology, the most basic and irreducible relation among human beings is that of spouses, that of a man and a woman. Closer than even mother and child, spouses mark "the beginning," or primary reference, for all human relations in the way that creation in Genesis indicates the literal beginning for all things. To say this now may be highly contested given that a proper anthropology has been lost in all arenas save Christianity, but it remains true. The divine will for our lives is that our greatest expression of love (not to be confused with affection) is in a context of full reciprocity, equality, freedom, and individuality. To say the word "family" is, at its core, a reference to the spouses themselves. The blessing of children notwithstanding, the husband and wife together claim this enduring epithet, and it should not be taken from them.

Clark's treatment of marriage brings a lot to the surface, even if this was not initially intended. The history of the institution mirrors much of the turmoil spouses live daily, although in private. Marriage is not easy or hard, clear or complicated. Marriage is marriage. It *requires* shaming the ego, which can be sweet in the way it brings us closer and more worthily to the Eucharist. It mandates another to witness the decline and underestimation of everything around him, and remark on the wealth of human existence even in the settling of the dust. Marriage is also a battleground. A marriage is never lost or won in a given day and then set to cruise—rather, the stakes have been raised to include more than spouses themselves in their own marriages. Marriage is now a place wherein the profane struggles of the world seek to extract a kind of booster to endure when folly doomed their schemes from the outset. Servant of God Sister Lúcia, one of the Fatima visionaries, once wrote that the last battle for the world would be over marriage and the family, and Carlo Cardinal Caffarra has confirmed as much: “[The family] finds itself to be the battlefield where the power of this world meets the voice of God.”² If family means spouses, then we can be sure that marriage is ground zero. Every era of history has been divided by two principle shaping forces—namely, those who seek ways to destroy reality and those who give life and make way for the new. Marriage is a battleground because it is a place for creation. Clark and his wife live in this arena of struggle. The issues surrounding marriage as a sacrament, object of law, and its pastoralism are not to be taken lightly.

² “Dio ci guardi dall’aver paura . . .”

A further merit of this book is a reorientation toward recognizing the stupidity of how we often talk about the future of civilization. There will always be judgment involved in living well. We cannot avoid calling things as they are when we try to be smart, and drowning out marriage is nothing more than an attempt to get rid of the sting of being stupid. A positive image of this harsh remark comes to us in John Paul II's *The Jeweler's Shop*. A man and woman meet the jeweler who enacts the image of weighing and watching, who wills them to walk into the future that they believe to be there before them. It is only together in covenant that the unknown causes no more anxiety, as Andrew says: "The future for us remains an unknown quantity, which we now accept without anxiety. Love has overcome anxiety. The future depends on love." But his love has a concrete object. Christian marriage presupposes many judgments, but there is also the affirmation of the causal relation between the seen and unseen. Certain realities *cannot be* without such words. The future of mankind requires such words, and they will be uttered by spouses. The future does not just happen; it is made and it is prayed in the lives of sacramental marriage. The priesthood will not go to ruin if bishops all lose their legs. It dies with marriage.

The present work is less about doom and is quite hopeful. In this world, to be true to oneself and at the same time true to nature usually means a call to arms, but confusedly also an attempt to express some modicum of affection for others. I believe the purpose of this book is very well intentioned especially in the questions it asks, which will require an account from various groups within the Church, and always

in a spirit of fraternity. Nevertheless, it begins to draw a line that signifies where one speaks well of marriage or where one speaks badly (or not at all), and therefore cannot be of service to it. If the future is love, true love does require judgment even if in mercy we bear the weight of folly on our own shoulders. If you are a spouse, you know that regardless of the process, you married a person you must in some way carry. This is love. But *before* it is love, it is called marriage. No other word describes love more fully save one—namely, Eucharist.

In sum, John Clark poses a serious series of questions regarding how we are encouraged to think about marriage today: Why is marriage presented as much less than it actually is? Why is the process of declaration of nullity not rightly understood and so often misrepresented? Why is there no concerted effort to clarify the challenges identified by the laity regarding the vocation? (If marriage is the last stronghold, why are family issues not given due attention and reinforcement?) Why does the process for the declaration of annulment still elicit so many misunderstandings and allow itself to be instrumentalized in doctrinal disputes that only partially touch marriage, and yet seem to end up aiming at the Eucharist? As Clark rightly observes, if marriage “loses its sacramental limbs” and is reduced to sociological constructs, how will the world be able to meet Christ here on earth if it is determined to believe that there is no link between the seen and unseen, if words cannot in faith still *create*? And if we believed this, truly, how much more would we be emboldened to live steadfastly and in resolution toward our spouses, as others that require of us understanding as much

as self-expression, with Christ as our example in all things? One's spouse is what one will be judged against, Nobel Prize notwithstanding.

There is a reason there is a juridical process that declares nullity of marriage. When words do not mean anything, this must be exposed. It is a lie and fraud, or it is a reality that in some cannot be achieved because words do not enjoy a full expression of intellectual integrity. These cases occur, and it is a very good thing that the Church declares an attempted sacrament to be failed. Otherwise it would amount to people living without any real reference to truth. This is required for clarity in one's road to sanctity and opposes abuse and abject degradation. But, on the flipside, if words have weight and create, to deny this in the face of marriage, how can we save face when we say we believe in what is present in the Eucharist? Clark is relentless: "Take every question seriously!" he seems to shout. All in all, there are a host of serious things to talk about.

A professor and renowned teacher on the thought of John Paul II and the catechism of human love, Adrian Reimers, recently celebrated his fiftieth wedding anniversary. I asked him (myself barely five years wed) what he would say is the true stuff of a good marriage. His answer was something learned from his wife, Marie: One must have reverence, above all reverence toward one's spouse. My interpretation is that one must act as if this person is the altar on which you hang your prayer and sacrifice to God Himself, as if you yourself are priest. In this brilliance, the Reimers are a real jolt. So is John Clark. If it is not spousal love that is given the chance to guide us into the future, it begs the question:

Will there be a future at all? What will Christ find when He returns to this place? And will spouses be judged more harshly than the ministers of the Church? How do we live now so that our spouses will be the happiest faces we see in heaven, both because of us and for us?

Catherine Godfrey-Howell, JCD

Preface

THE YEAR 1969 witnessed more than 426,000 Catholic weddings in America. By 1989, the number had fallen to 326,000. By 2014, the number had dwindled to under 148,000. In 2020, the number fell to under 100,000.³ Some might think that figure was significantly reduced due to Covid restrictions; however, it was consistent with a well-established downward trajectory. And while fewer Catholics chose to begin a marriage, more Catholics chose to end one. In the year 1968, there were fewer than 350 annulments in America. By 1989, that number had skyrocketed to over 70,000. That is an increase of 20,000 percent in one generation. Some people have expressed relief that the annulment numbers have decreased in recent years. In 2014, for instance, there were only 23,000 annulments. But this simply reflects mathematical reason: fewer people are attempting annulment because fewer people are attempting marriage.

It's impossible to do a comprehensive damage assessment regarding the rejection of Matrimony, but we might look at it this way. It is proper to say that the sacrament of Matrimony serves as the heart of the Mystical Body of Christ. The graces and fruits of Matrimony nourish the Church Militant, relieve the Church Suffering, and increase the Church Triumphant. But Matrimony's treatment over the past fifty

³ "Frequently Requested Church Statistics."

years has resulted in endocarditis—heart damage—to the Mystical Body of Christ.

Many Catholics are likely unfamiliar with the above statistics. They may vaguely notice fewer weddings today; they're likely friends with fellow Catholics who have undergone annulments. But they are largely unaware that the catastrophe surrounding Matrimony is epidemic. Largely, the problem is not spoken of inside churches or outside churches: for all its central importance, the word "Matrimony" is seldom uttered in Catholic churches. (As we'll see, that is part of the problem.) What we Catholics hear instead is that there is a crisis of priestly vocations. Certainly, we need more priests. But the years 1994 to 2014 actually saw an *increase* of ordinations.⁴ Lest we forget, there are only two vocational sacraments: Holy Orders and Matrimony—and it is the latter that is in decline.

This book seeks to address a very basic question: Considering its irreplaceable vitality, how has marriage reached a stage of indifference, neglect, and rejection? To be sure, there is not one single answer. It is easy to blame the American culture broadly. The sexual revolution of the 1960s—which loudly rejected marriage—is an overwhelming culprit. American society has grown more pornographic by the day, presenting the marital act as a nonmarital act, as well as a violent and hateful one. Children, the primary purpose of marriage, are seen as an unwanted and unnecessary obstacle to the good life. But it is unfair and unhelpful to blame marriage's demise on American society alone. If we are going to have a serious discussion about marriage—if we desire to protect

⁴ "Frequently Requested Church Statistics."

and nourish Matrimony—then we must focus on what has been happening *inside* the Catholic Church. The promotion of same-sex marriage by celebrity prelates seems to be an obvious starting point. Taken together, there is considerably more ecclesiastical outreach to same-sex couples than those couples who are sacramentally married. Masses for LGBT Catholic couples have become standard practice in numerous dioceses, but when was the last time you saw a Mass for sacramentally married couples promoted? The promotion of same-sex marriage among Catholics, however, is not the root cause of Matrimony's crisis; rather, it is the effect.

What is the root cause of Matrimony's problems? Broadly, it is the failure to appreciate Matrimony as a sacrament. Simply, Matrimony is not treated with the reverence and respect of the other sacraments. Consider: what other sacrament finds itself under the siege of unrelenting scrutiny? Do panels convene to determine the legitimacy of a first confession? Are there brochures in the vestibules questioning the validity of a Eucharistic consecration? After an unpleasant sermon, is there a demand to investigate the validity of the priest's ordination? Thirty years after the fact, do we hire high-priced canon lawyers to argue against the legitimacy of a man's reception of Anointing of the Sick? Most Catholics, priests and laity alike, would never consider doing any of these; yet, when it comes to Matrimony, questions and doubts are often encouraged. That's where we are, and denial will only lead to more damage to the ventricles of the Mystical Body's heart.

As always, however, there is hope—specifically, there is hope that the prelates of the Church will work to restore the

prominence of this great sacrament. There is also hope that the laity will come to a greater love of their own marriages and a more comprehensive understanding of Matrimony itself. We need to understand how God intended marriage from the beginning. We need to be inspired by those who laid down their lives for marriage. We need to know that though the world will tempt us to reject marriage, God's grace will see us through. We need to recognize that the sacraments rise together, and a reverence for the Eucharist requires a reverence for Matrimony by design. We need to contemplate a central fact too often forgotten: God loves marriage. He loves your marriage, and He loves mine. Mary, the Mother of God, loves marriage too. Just when your marriage might seem troubled—just when it seems to have run out of wine—Jesus wills to replenish sacramental graces to the brim. It could just be that Jesus has saved the best graces for last.

The beauty, the majesty, the truth, the purpose, the permanence, the indissolubility, the sacramentality of marriage—these things must be embraced and championed throughout the cathedrals and domestic churches of the world. My hope is that this book can be part of that process of pondering and analyzing the theology of Matrimony, and that the sacrament can be restored to widespread glory.

John Clark

November 1, 2022

The Feast of All Saints

Acknowledgments

NO ONE WRITES a book alone.

My parents, Bruce and Mary Kay Clark, taught me a five-decade class about marriage. Without my parents' example to guide me—especially in the inspirational final years of their marriage on earth—this book would have never been written.

My wife and I have been married for thirty years. Lisa made it incredibly easy for me to write about the happiness and fulfillment of marriage.

Monsignor Ignacio Barreiro, Father Frank Papa, and Archimandrite Constantine Belisarius were my dear priestly friends in life. When I doubted, they assured me. When I hesitated, they encouraged me. When I wandered, they led me back. Though they passed on to their eternal rewards before this book was written, I have no doubt that these men assisted me from heaven.

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In the Very Beginning: From Eden to Cana

“He said to them, ‘For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.’”

—Matthew 19:8

THE FIRST MARRIAGE had no guests. The bride and groom had a quiet wedding followed by a short but perfect honeymoon—all in a place designed for them and their happiness. Their honeymoon would have continued indefinitely had it not been spoiled by an uninvited guest and their decision to let him remain. Because they failed to command this inhuman visitor to leave, their honeymoon ended in shame and disgrace. The couple’s argument that followed was brutally accusatory. Worse, they refused to apologize to the owner of the paradisaal abode. Thus, they were told to leave and never return. Their marriage witnessed more devastation than any marriage since. Through it all, they never seem to have considered divorce. Perhaps they never forgot how happy marriage could be.

Their names were Adam and Eve.

Even in texts that examine the nature of Christian marriage, little attention is paid to this first marriage. That is unfortunate because the marriage of Adam and Eve can help us understand how God intended marriage from the very beginning—before the Fall. When we consider that Christ’s elevation of marriage to a sacrament was restorative in nature, it invites us to investigate what marriage looked like before the Fall—before marriage found itself in need of restoration. So, to initiate our glimpse of marriage, that is where we will begin: in the Garden of Eden.

The Marriage of Eden

Genesis tells us, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gn 1:31). From the moment of Adam’s creation, he was surrounded by good, beautiful, and wondrous things. Genesis only gives us a tiny glimpse of Eden. But even that little window reveals that Adam touched, tasted, smelled, saw, and heard earthly pleasures that we—living in our fallen world today—cannot imagine.

Yet, even with all that, Adam was unfulfilled. No matter where he looked, nothing in the Garden was like him. Perhaps he felt another reality: humanity itself was incomplete. But Adam would soon feel complete. “God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’” (Gn 2:18). The creation of Eve was not an afterthought of the omniscient God; it was always God’s plan to create humanity. Father Peter Elliott, author of *What God Has Joined: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, explains that the creation of Adam and Eve “is part of the one act of God

creating the human person.”⁵ In the creation of Eve, male and female profoundly complement each other, and humanity is realized. Her method of arrival was unique. During Adam’s sleep, God formed Eve from flesh and bone from Adam’s side. In subsequent marriages, two become one flesh. In Adam and Eve’s marriage—this first marriage—one flesh becomes two, and then it becomes one again. The complementarity of the sexes could not be more pronounced.⁶

When Adam arises from a “deep sleep” (Gn 2:21) to set his eyes on Eve for the first time, he experiences fulfillment. Upon seeing her, Adam exhibits love and wonder, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gn 2:23). Saint John Chrysostom explains that “like himself” means “of his kind, with the same properties as himself, of equal esteem, in no way inferior to him.”⁷ We do not know how long Adam was in the garden without Eve; perhaps it was days, hours, or mere minutes. However long it may have been, we know this: Adam waited his whole life for Eve.

Though their bodies were designed for reproduction, Saint Thomas Aquinas speculates that sexual consummation did not occur before the Fall.⁸ Still, the more critical point for Saint Thomas was this: sexual intimacy was consistent with Adam and Eve’s innocence. He writes, “Therefore, even if man had not sinned, there would have been such intercourse, to which the distinction of sex is ordained.”⁹ Aquinas fur-

⁵ Elliott, *What God Has Joined*, 8.

⁶ Elliott, 7.

⁷ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, “Homily 15.”

⁸ Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, “Supplement,” Q. 42, Art 4.

⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 98, Art. 2.

ther explains that intercourse would have been significantly more pleasurable to Adam and Eve before their fall because “sensible delight” would “have been the greater in proportion to the greater purity of nature and the greater sensibility of the body.”¹⁰ Likewise, Saint Augustine strenuously objects to those who claim that intimacy would have been impossible before the Fall. Augustine points out that if it were true that man could not copulate without sin, the procreation of children would be sinful. Man would be left in a position where sin would be necessary to continue the human race. If that were true, Augustine says, it would be impossible for Christian parents to bring souls to heaven without committing a sinful act.¹¹ Every child, with the glorious exception of the Immaculate Conception, bears the mark of original sin on his or her soul, but that is profoundly different from claiming that the commission of actual sin is necessary to produce a child.

In this discussion of sexual intimacy in the garden, however, we should recognize a more profound reality that Saint Ambrose recognized: Adam and Eve were formed to be united in body but also—and more profoundly—in spirit.¹² Unity of body is a sign, a reflection, of unity of spirit—not the other way around. Taken and lived properly, marriage is a unity of spirit. Further, Adam and Eve were united with God as a married couple, for God had brought them together. Their friendship was rooted in their friendship with God.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 98, Art. 2. See also Messenger, *Two In One Flesh*, 18.

¹¹ Dods, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo*, vol. 2, *The City of God*, 39.

¹² Savage, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 42, *Saint Ambrose: Hexameron, Paradise and Cain and Abel*, 174.

To be sure, Eden was not heaven; Adam and Eve did not have the “vision of the Divine Essence” reserved solely for the saints and good angels.¹³ Here on earth, however, God does offer us foretastes of heaven. Insofar as divine mercy allows us tiny morsels of heaven in this fallen world, Adam and Eve enjoyed entrees. And much of that foretaste was found in marriage. As Saint Augustine observes, “And what could those persons fear or suffer in such affluence of blessings, where neither death nor ill-health was feared, and where nothing was wanting which a good will could desire, and nothing present which could interrupt man’s mental or bodily enjoyment? Their love to God was unclouded, and their mutual affection was that of faithful and sincere marriage; and from this love flowed a wonderful delight.”¹⁴ Tragically, Adam and Eve’s honeymoon did not last long; Augustine and Aquinas concur with what Scripture seems to attest: the Fall happened very soon after Eve arrived in the garden.¹⁵

Attacker of the Bond

Lucifer—brightest of the angels in being but darkest in deed—is envious. A “murderer from the beginning” (Jn 8:44), he seeks to end the first marriage. He seeks to attack the bond of marriage. And he intuits something right from the beginning: Adam and Eve’s marriage is not merely a

¹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement, Q. 92

¹⁴ Dods, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo*, vol. 2, *The City of God*, 21.

¹⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part, Q. 98, Art. 2. See also Messenger, *Two In One Flesh*, 18.

partnership between a man and a woman. Instead, marriage is a triangular relationship among a man, a woman, and God. If only he could make the husband and wife enemies of God, they will become enemies with each other.

And that is exactly what he did.

As Elliott explains, “Marriage is the target of the serpent, first as his tactic of seduction, playing upon the nuptial bond between man and woman to get them to fall, and then in disrupting that bond.”¹⁶ To the detriment of the whole world, they fell.

Because Eve is mentioned first in the Genesis text, the reader might assume that Eve was alone with the serpent. But she was not alone; Adam was with her—a fact confirmed using the Hebrew word *immāh*, which means, “who was with her.”¹⁷ Adam failed to protect his wife from danger. Adam allows his wife to be tempted; then she eats the forbidden fruit, then offers it to him. This married couple sinned together—a fact emphasized by the Church fathers.¹⁸ This couple acted together, not to divorce each other, but to divorce God.

At the first moment of their fall, Adam and Eve run for cover, using fig leaves as makeshift clothing. Innocence has been lost, Adam and Eve’s intellect is darkened, and they have their first inclinations of concupiscence, defined as “a desire of the lower appetite contrary to reason.”¹⁹ This requires

¹⁶ Elliott, *What God Has Joined*, 9.

¹⁷ Bergsma, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*, vol. 1, *The Old Testament*, loc. 2159 of 30084, Kindle. The authors translate the word to mean “who was with her.”

¹⁸ Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Marriage*, 98, Kindle.

¹⁹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, s.v. “Concupiscence.”

some explanation. Concupiscence is not synonymous with lust (because concupiscence is far broader than inordinate sexual desire and can include things like gluttony and sloth). Still, lust is a powerful component of concupiscence. Sexual desire, *per se*, is not wrong; in fact, God placed sexual desire in Adam and Eve. Ordinate sexual desire—like ordinate eating and drinking—is good. But concupiscence disrupts reason and produces unreasonable and improper desires. After their sin, Adam and Eve experienced concupiscence for the first time, and they were frightened. Suddenly, their world has been turned upside down.

As the devil watched with delight, he likely presumed that Adam and Eve would suffer his same fate: damnation. From the devil's perspective, Adam and Eve had committed the same sin of attempting to appropriate divinity to themselves. He also likely presumed that marriage itself was doomed; after all, this marriage had only endured for a brief amount of time. What chance did marriage have?

The devil must have been shocked that neither of these was the case.

First, Adam and Eve were not damned. They were cast out of the garden, never to return. All creation would suffer. Man's passions, for all generations, would become disordered by concupiscence through this ancestral sin. But they were not damned; quite the contrary: they were promised a Savior.

Second—and this must have infuriated the devil—marriage was not destroyed. Because of the Fall, marriage was damaged but not destroyed. The earth is cursed because of Adam and Eve's sin, but they are not cursed, nor is the marriage. God's vengeance was exacted on the

serpent—the attacker of the bond—whom God primarily blames for disrupting that marriage. Speaking to the serpent, God says, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals” (Gn 3:14). Even though Adam and Eve had infinitely offended God, and their marriage would now suffer the effects of concupiscence, their marital bond remained strong. Adam and Eve left the garden in disgrace, but they left it together. Like man and the rest of creation, marriage stands in desperate need of healing.²⁰ Eve’s villainy in the garden had left marriage in a precarious state; the heroism of another woman, however, would work to restore marriage to its former glory. And her divine Son would establish Matrimony not as a sacrament of the Old Law but as a sacrament of the New Law.

Children as Primary from the Beginning

The Catholic faith has continually upheld three ends of Matrimony: first, the procreation and education of children; second, mutual assistance of the husband and wife; third, to remedy concupiscence. Remedying concupiscence and mutual assistance have been recognized as secondary to the primary end. In fact, these secondary ends serve the primary end. As the sacrament of Matrimony is restorative, and insofar as that restoration refers to Adam and Eve’s marriage, we might naturally ask: do these three ends describe Adam and Eve’s marriage?

²⁰ Elliott, *What God Has Joined*, 10.

There was no concupiscence before the Fall; therefore, it cannot be said that an end of their marriage—in its original condition—was to remedy concupiscence.

What about “mutual assistance?” To address that question, we can look back to Genesis, which describes Eve as “a helper fit for him” (Gn 2:18). That phrasing implies mutual assistance. Eve was not to be a slave or employee of Adam; she was a helper for him. She was a helper with him in tending the Garden of Eden. So, we can conclude that mutual assistance was an end of the first marriage. But are we to conclude that mutual assistance was confined to caring for the garden? Or could it be that mutual assistance went far beyond caring for the flora and fauna of paradise? We will revisit that question in a moment. And that brings us to the next end: children.

The procreation and education of children is not merely an end but the primary end of marriage. This primary end teaching is the common opinion of the Church fathers, both testaments of Scripture, and the Magisterium; the teaching enjoys infallibility.²¹ In his 1930 encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, Pope Pius XI references the 1917 Code of Canon Law: “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; the secondary [end] is mutual support and a remedy for concupiscence.”²² Further, Pope Pius XI points to the Garden of Eden to affirm this primary end: “Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place. And indeed the Creator of the human race Himself,

²¹ Marshner, *Annulment or Divorce?*, 7.

²² Peters, *The 1917 or Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1013.1; Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, no. 17.

Who in His goodness wishes to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life, taught this when, instituting marriage in Paradise, He said to our first parents, and through them to all future spouses: ‘Increase and multiply, and fill the earth.’”²³

Adam and Eve’s bodies—in their maleness and femaleness—were created to transmit human life. And not only could they, but they were commanded to do just that. It is to their shame that Adam and Eve fell before they had the chance to conceive children in paradise, but they were certainly designed to do so. And not only were Adam and Eve intended to conceive children but so were *all* the future men and women in Eden. Aquinas states that, had Adam and Eve not fallen, *everyone* would have been called to fruitful marriage: “Hence it was fitting that all should generate, and not only the first parents. From this it seems to follow that males and females would have been in equal number.”²⁴

Augustine writes, “To increase and multiply and replenish the earth in virtue of the blessing of God, is a gift of marriage *as God instituted it from the beginning* before man sinned.”²⁵ But it was not only earth that was to be replenished but heaven. It is the opinion of Saint Augustine, Saint Bonaventure, and Saint Anselm that the saved human souls will replenish the number of souls lost at Lucifer’s rebellion.²⁶ God designed marriage to restore what Lucifer had stolen,

²³ Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, no. 11.

²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 99, Art. 2.

²⁵ Dods, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo*, vol. 2, *The City of God*, 38, emphasis added.

²⁶ Augustine, “The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love”; Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 32. Messenger, *Two In One Flesh*, 29.

which might partially explain the devil's antipathy not only for Adam and Eve's marriage but for all Christian marriages.

Indissoluble from the Start

The recognition of the primacy of the *procreation and education of children* points to the indissolubility and fidelity of marriage.

When we use the word “procreation” from the perspective of sacramental theology, it can be defined as “the normal use of the sexual act with resultant conception and birth of a child.”²⁷ Procreation is a momentary act, but it is sacramentally inseparable with *education*, which is lifelong. In common parlance, *education* tends to refer almost exclusively to academics—as in reading, writing, and arithmetic—but within the context of marriage, education is much more comprehensive. The word derives from the Latin *educatus*, which means “to bring up, train, and teach.” This principle is established in Scripture. Proverbs reads, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prv 22:6). Ephesians instructs, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Deuteronomy commands, “And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you

²⁷ Ford, “Marriage: Its Meaning and Purposes,” 345. This distinction of “normal use” is important here. “Procreation” might be used to broadly apply to medical procedures such as *in vitro* fertilization that the Church declares unlawful. That is, if a married couple partakes in an *in vitro* fertilization, they are not engaging in “procreation” but in an objectively sinful act.

sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Dt 6:6–7).

These passages indicate a reality that Adam and Eve discovered; namely, bringing up and training a child is not an event but rather a process—a lifelong process of the husband and wife. It is a process in which mutual assistance, a secondary end, serves the education of children, the primary purpose. We might assume that “mutual assistance” implied a relationship between Adam and Eve that exclusively focused on each other. But in its highest manifestation, “mutual assistance” referred to the procreation and education of children. The procreation *of children* and *education of those children* are inextricably linked. A husband and wife form a bodily and spiritual unity to procreate; the husband and wife then educate until it is time for the child to “leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife” (Mt 19:5) to begin the process anew. God sent Adam a helper, not merely to tend the garden but to bring children into the world and then into heaven. As Saint Ambrose writes, “We understand that to mean a helper in the generation of the human family.”²⁸ And that is how it was meant to be from the beginning.

This primary purpose is evident not only in Adam and Eve’s marriage but throughout Scripture. Matthew Levering makes a fascinating observation in this regard:

The association of marriage with the procreation and raising of children is treated by the Bible as a self-evident element of human life. When a married couple cannot conceive a child, this leads to sadness.

²⁸ Ambrose, “St. Ambrose on Gen. 2-3,” 327.

In numerous biblical instances, God brings about the miraculous conception of a child. This is part of the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rachel, and other significant biblical couples. In a poignant moment, the hapless husband Elkanah tells his childless wife, “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8). Of course he is not!²⁹

Adam and Eve’s marriage was indissoluble; the very authority of Christ confirms this truth. In the nineteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus is asked, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” (Mt 19:3). Though He does not mention the names Adam and Eve, Jesus answers their question by clearly referencing their marriage. He says, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Mt 19:8). The message is clear: Adam and Eve’s marriage was indissoluble by divine design, and Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for failing to recognize that fact: “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, 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?’” (Mt 19:4–5).

The Pharisees were correct in one respect: Moses had allowed divorce. In Old Testament times, God permitted men to divorce their wives—that is true. But the Pharisees should have been asking why. Aquinas references that

²⁹ Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Marriage*, 141.

marriage was considered indissoluble under Mosaic Law, but “the indissolubility of marriage was suspended in the law of Moses in order to avoid a greater evil, namely wife-murder.”³⁰ Divorce, an evil, was allowed to prevent the greater evil of murder. This is hardly a ringing endorsement of divorce. The divine view of divorce is succinctly expressed in the book of Malachi: “For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel” (Mal 2:16).

This indissolubility is also inseparably linked to fidelity. Though bigamy was also allowed in Mosaic Law, marriage in the state of innocence was designed for two—only two—to become one flesh. Tertullian reminds us that bigamy was introduced to the world through the actions of Lamech, who was in the line of Cain. Lamech was a murderer like Cain and a bigamist who took two women as his wives. Tertullian writes, “Plurality of marriage began with an accursed man. Lamech was the first who, by marrying himself to two women, caused *three* to be (joined) ‘into one flesh.’”³¹

We should note something here to eliminate any confusion regarding indissolubility and divorce. Within His teaching on marriage, Jesus said, “Whoever divorces his wife, *except for unchastity*, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery” (Mt 19:9, emphasis added). Is Jesus allowing divorce in the case of unchastity? If so, how does that stand alongside the permanence of marriage? Does this teaching constitute an exception for divorce? It does not.

³⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement, Q. 67, Art 3, Reply to obj. 5.

³¹ Tertullian, “On Exhortation to Chastity.”

Author John Meier explains that Matthew's word, often translated into English as "unchastity," is *porneia*, a word that "carries the sense of incestuous union."³² Jesus was saying that in the case of incestuous "marriage," the consanguinity prohibition applied: there was never a true marriage in the first place. For confirmation of his argument, Meier indicates that the same word "porneia" was used in 1 Corinthians 5:1: "It is actually reported that there exists among you *porneia*, and such *porneia* as does not even exist among the pagans; that a man should have his father's wife."³³ It might reasonably be asked: Why would Jesus bring the matter of incestuous marriage up at all? The reason, as Meier explains, is that the Jewish people at that time were "almost unique in their strict prohibitions of incestuous marriages."³⁴

In addition to Meier, other theologians note the use of *porneia* and draw similar conclusions. Father E. C. Messenger, for instance, notes that *porneia* "is certainly not the word usually employed to signify adultery,"³⁵ that is, sexual sin committed *within* marriage. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus was not referring to a problem that occurred *during* the marriage but rather an impediment that preexisted in what appeared to be a marriage. Jesus is essentially saying, *And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except in the case where there was never a valid marriage, and marries another, commits adultery.* Jesus's essential teaching is that a lawfully married person cannot marry another; to do so is to perform the act of adultery.

³² Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, 256.

³³ Meier, 256.

³⁴ Meier, 254.

³⁵ Messenger, *Two In One Flesh*, 110.

Jesus's teaching is clear: Matrimony was designed to be an indissoluble union for the primary purpose of procreation and upbringing of children.

The Lessons of Tobias

In the garden, the serpent showed his hand: he is the cunning adversary of humanity who hated (and still hates) marriage. Of course, the devil cannot destroy marriage; he can only tempt humans to destroy their own. He tried it with Adam, who refused to cast the serpent out of the garden, thus failing to protect his wife and his marriage. But what if Adam *had* cast out the serpent? What might his marriage have been like if Adam had exorcised that envious creature? Scripture does not tell us precisely, but it gives us a fascinating peek in the Old Testament book of Tobit.

The book recounts the history of Tobit and his family during the Assyrian captivity, some seven centuries before Christ. As the head of the family, Tobit has been blind for years. His blindness rendered him unable to work and has devastated his marriage to the point where Tobit prays for death. At the same time, Tobit is offering this prayer, we learn the story of a beautiful young woman named Sarah, who lives in the town of Med'ia. Sarah has been married seven times, and each of her husbands died on his wedding night. Sarah did nothing wrong, but her father's servants accused her of causing these men's death. Sarah desperately wants to be married and have children, but a lasting marriage has escaped her for some unknown reason. Like Tobit, Sarah prays to die. Tobit's marriage is falling apart; none of

Sarah's seven marriages even make it to the point of consummation. And both are desperately miserable.³⁶ When we readers are introduced to Tobit and Sarah, their paths are about to cross.

Tobit has entrusted “ten talents of silver” (Tb 4:20) to a relative in Med’ia, so he instructs his son, Tobias, to retrieve that wealth. Tobias prays for help and locates a guide to help him on his journey. (Tobias later discovers that this is no ordinary guide; rather, it is the archangel Raphael.) Along the way, Tobias stepped into the Tigris River, where a massive fish jumped from the water, seemingly attempting to swallow Tobias. But Raphael instructed Tobias: “Catch the fish” (Tb 6:3). Tobias caught the fish, fileted it, ate it, and—following the instruction of Raphael—carefully preserved the heart, liver, and gall and dutifully stored them in his pack.

At the end of their journey, Tobias asked Raphael why he had instructed him to keep the organs of the fish. Raphael told him, “As for the heart and liver, if a demon or evil spirit gives trouble to any one, you make a smoke from these before the man or woman, and that person will never be troubled again. And as for the gall, anoint with it a man who has white films in his eyes, and he will be cured” (Tb 6:7–8). Raphael also informed him that he should marry Sarah, who he described as “sensible, brave, and very beautiful” (Tb 6:12). Tobias made an obvious objection: marriage to Sarah seemed to carry an immediate death sentence. Raphael explained that the lust demon named Asmodeus

³⁶ Bergsma, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*, loc. 9884–9949 of 30084, Kindle.

had killed each of these seven men on his wedding night. But Raphael assured Tobias with this beautiful soliloquy:

Now listen to me, brother, for she will become your wife; and do not worry about the demon, for this very night she will be given to you in marriage. When you enter the bridal chamber, you shall take live ashes of incense and lay upon them some of the heart and liver of the fish so as to make a smoke. Then the demon will smell it and flee away, and will never again return. And when you approach her, rise up, both of you, and cry out to the merciful God, and he will save you and have mercy on you. Do not be afraid, for she was destined for you from eternity. You will save her, and she will go with you, and I suppose that you will have children by her. (Tb 6:15–17)

Upon hearing of his destiny, Tobias fell in love with Sarah. On the night of their wedding, Tobias did what Raphael instructed, reciting this prayer:

Blessed are you, O God of our fathers, and blessed be your holy and glorious name for ever. Let the heavens and all your creatures bless you. You made Adam and gave him Eve his wife as a helper and support. From them the race of mankind has sprung. You said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.” And now, O Lord, I am not taking this sister of mine because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that I may find mercy and may grow old together with her. (Tb 8:5–7)

Tobias and Sarah prayed together and then went to sleep, putting off the consummation of their marriage until the third night. Tobias returned to his father with the miraculous medicine from this fish, which restored his sight. Tobias lived for many years, faithful to Sarah, faithful to God, in a marriage richly blessed with children. His prayer's reference to Adam and Eve was appropriate, for Tobias and Sarah had done what Adam and Eve had failed to do: expel the serpent from their marital home and put their faith and hope in the mercy of God.

Tobias and Sarah's marriage serves as a powerful witness: strong marriages drive out demons.

Of course, it also illustrates something else: the devil hates marriage. That fact was immediately known to Sarah's seven suitors, as well as her and Tobias. But just as hell did not have the final say for Tobias and Sarah, nor will hell have the final say about marriage. If the devil thought he had destroyed marriage, he thought wrong. Marriage would triumph. And the triumph of marriage, the mystical and indissoluble union of man and wife before God, would have a mediatrix. That mediatrix, a married woman of perpetual virginity, would be the same woman who was promised to crush the head of the devil. While Eden's wedding had no human guests, another wedding did.

The Wedding Feast at Cana

In the opening chapters of Genesis, marriage faced a near-apocalypse. Adam and Eve invited a serpent into their wedding abode, and marriage fell. But that was not the end of marriage. In the opening chapters of the Gospel of John, we

learn the story of another married couple. Though they had no way of knowing it at the time, they had invited the Savior of the world to their wedding. From their first moments together as husband and wife, Christ physically stood at the center of the marriage.

The couple had also invited Mary, the Mother of God. Mary turned to her divine Son in a time of embarrassment for this couple. The couple had run out of wine, a significant social blunder. Mary told Jesus something He already knew: “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3). Mary knew the consequence of her words. Up until now, Jesus had not worked a public miracle; the Gospel of John informs explicitly of that fact. Why had Jesus not worked a miracle? Saint John Chrysostom explains that if Jesus had worked public miracles as a young boy, others would have “deemed the thing a delusion” and rejected Him.³⁷ But it would have had a more profound effect. As Chrysostom writes, “If while quite young He had wrought miracles,” His persecutors would “have hurried Him sooner and before the proper time to the Cross, in the venom of their malice.”³⁸ Mary knew that this miracle would begin the path of the public life of Jesus, and that His path would end on a cross. The response of Jesus underscores that fact as He tells His mother, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (Jn 2:4). Mary’s observation about the lack of wine led to Jesus beginning His public life. Jesus could have begun His public life at any time, yet He began it at a wedding at

³⁷ Chrysostom, “Homily 21 on the Gospel of John.”

³⁸ Chrysostom, “Homily 21 on the Gospel of John.”

Mary's urging. It is clear that Jesus loves marriage, as does His mother.

To the brim, the servants poured water into six huge waterpots, and Jesus turned ordinary water into the best wine. More than a hundred gallons of water was turned into wine. It is declared the best of wine; through this miracle, Jesus "manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (Jn 2:11).

The Catholic Church definitively teaches that Jesus instituted each of the seven sacraments, but that definitive teaching does not inform us as to the exact moment that marriage was raised to a sacrament. But whether it was at the precise moment that Jesus turned water into wine, this wedding at Cana played a beautiful role in reversing what Adam and Eve had damaged. The first sacrament in the Old Testament appears to be the first sacrament of the New Testament.

The centrality of Matrimony was clear to early Christians and to the Christians who followed. It was the hill they would die on. As we are about to see, many illustrious martyrs of the Catholic Church would defend Matrimony to the death.