

# EPISODE 2: MARRIAGE: THE FOUNDATION OF THE FAMILY

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## Opening Prayer

### St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.*

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.*

*Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.*

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

- 1) "I don't even know that the modern world has a definition of marriage. I think part of the idea is actually to eliminate the word," says Fr. John Riccardo in this episode. Today, it can be difficult to have conversations about marriage because so many people have their own ideas of what it is and how it should be lived.
  - a. *Is there a standard definition of marriage in everyday life now? What is that definition? Do we use different definitions depending on the circumstances?*
  - b. *How does the current cultural ideas about marriage affect how it is lived? How has your own understanding of marriage been shaped by our culture?*
  - c. *Why do you think we are we so confused on this point of the meaning, and even necessity, of marriage?*
- 2) Marriage is God's original creation for the human race. Because there is so much confusion regarding marriage, the Church's teaching on marriage stands out more and more as a sign of

contradiction to the culture's plan for relationships. The Church offers a firm foundation to understand marriage, its purpose, and how it can be lived out. What strikes you most about these three comments from the episode?

- a. *“Throughout history and across cultures, marriage has been universal, because it’s a natural reality. It’s built into God’s very design for man and woman.”* (Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly)
  - b. *“But Christ elevated marriage. So now, when a baptized man and woman marry, they enter into a sacrament. And through that sacrament, they receive the grace they need to fulfill their vocation.”* (Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly)
  - c. *“What’s Grace? Grace is supernatural power. So on the day that you get married, God gives you access to his power to love each other the way he’s calling you to love each other and the way you deep down want to love each other.”* (Fr. John Riccardo)
- 3) Among the attacks on marriage is the persistent message that a new human life is a mere burden on the relationship, that children are a threat to love and to the planet. The normalization of contraception inside and outside of marriage, especially forms of the “pill,” have restructured the culture radically, like the automobile restructured the way we build cities.
- a. *What do you make of the fact that the Catholic Church has continued to teach that use of contraception is intrinsically wrong?* (*Humanae Vitae, Theology of the Body, etc.*)
  - b. *St. John Paul II, referring to Natural Family Planning (NFP), wrote: “...the difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle: it is a difference which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought, one which involves in the final analysis two*

*irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality” (Familiaris Consortio, 32). What differences can you see between using contraception and NFP that St. John Paul II could be referring to?*

- 4) Greg and Julie Alexander, experienced marriage coaches, speak clearly about “intentionality” in living our marriages. The “entropy” which constantly wears down all things, including our relationship as spouses, is a constant matter of concern. This indicates that we need to make some key decisions.
- a. *What could be an important Intentional decision that a newly married couple could make before children arrive? (Faith, neighborhood, financial, etc.)*
  - b. *What could be an important intentional decision in raising Catholic children?*

### **Bricks for the Breach**

**“Throughout history and across cultures, marriage has been universal, because it’s a natural reality. It’s built into God’s very design for man and woman. But Christ elevated marriage. So now, when a baptized man and woman marry, they enter into a sacrament. And through that sacrament, they receive the grace they need to fulfill their vocation.” (Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly)**

“It’s important to recognize that because of sin, it’s difficult to live in accord with the truth of marriage. It’s also important to recognize it’s possible. And this is especially true for those who are in a sacramental marriage and have received the grace that comes with the sacrament to live in accord with the truth of marriage.” (Nicholas Healy)

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves 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. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1601)

**“A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible reality, instituted by Jesus, which gives grace. What’s Grace? Grace is supernatural power. So on the day that you get married, God gives you access to his power to love each other the way he’s calling you to love each other and the way you deep down want to love each other.” (Fr. John Riccardo)**

“I don’t even know that the modern world has a definition of marriage, I think part of the idea is actually to eliminate the word. Clearly one of the things which is at the center of it is this is a relationship which so long as you and I find this to be mutually beneficial, we’ll stay in it. And the moment either one of us or both of us no longer find it mutually beneficial, then we end it. It’s a consumer relationship.” (Fr. John Riccardo)

**“Marital love must be free, it must be total, it must be faithful, and it must be fruitful. And that’s because of the nature of love itself. Love must be free, can’t be coerced. Love must be total, I can’t partially love, I have to totally love. And then if I totally love then I’m going to be faithful. Love has to be faithful to be authentic love. And if in marriage the love between a man and woman, if you’re going to be free, and total and faithful, then you’ll be fruitful, you’ll be open to children.” (Dr. Tim Gray)**

“So how are men and women the same and how are men and women different? The Church has always protected that men and women are equal in dignity. But the Church doesn’t mean by that, sameness. So, we need difference too not just equality. The difference calls us to union as men and women.” (Mike Phelan)

“Female and male. Him being the strong, confident one. He wants to protect. He wants to guard. He wants to provide. He wants to initiate ... all these beautiful things that are so masculine. And then you have the woman who’s the nurturer. She’s the receiver. And her heart expands with new life.” (Sarah Swafford)

“Entropy in physics means everything tends toward decay. Sun’s gonna burn out, bodies age, iron rusts, relationships can tend towards lazy. Don’t let the law of social entropy decay your marriage. Who would your spouse say that you treat the best? Would they say ‘Boy, I’ll tell you what, I wish I got half of the consideration that he gives to those people at work.’ You want your spouse to be able to say, ‘My spouse treats me better than he or she treats anybody else.’ That’s the ideal.” (Dr. Ray Guarendi)

“Sacrifice is absolutely essential in marriage, the mutual sacrificing of the spouses. We live in a culture that’s very individualistic and self-focused. People tell you to do what you want when you want and take a selfie while you’re doing it. But this isn’t the path to happiness or fulfillment. And so in a marriage, husband and wife must give and sacrifice for the other. This is the mark of authentic love.” (Sr. Maris Stella)

“In today’s world, it’s very important that we are intentional in living our Catholic faith, because the many attacks that are waged on marriage today are just incredible. And so if we don’t take the time to really focus on how it is that we’re going to defend our family from those attacks we’re gonna find ourself getting lost.” (Greg Alexander)

“Learn to pray together as spouses. That takes time. It’s a real level of intimacy, prayer together, but couples that learn to pray together do not divorce. So, Rosary in the morning together, prayer before you

go to bed at night together. Whatever form that takes, because your intimacy will be something the enemy cannot divide.” (Mike Phelan)

## **Sword of the Spirit**

### **JESUS CELEBRATES AND REVIVES MARRIAGE: THE WEDDING AT CANA**

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

### **THE MAGNA CARTA OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**

*Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath*

*of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5: 21-33)*

*“For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*

*This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.*

## **Call to Battle**

1. **Consider implementing the following simple relationship-building measures in your marriage.** Choose one or two to discuss with your spouse and/or to implement as a couple:
  - a. Prayer as spouses: Beginning and ending the day in prayer together brings great peace over time in a marriage. Some options to consider:
    - i. Pray the Rosary (or a single decade if time is tight) to start the day.
    - ii. Pray Night Prayer (from the Liturgy of the Hours) before bed.
  - b. Time for the Little Things: Psychological relationship wisdom generally recommends that you must set aside 1.5 hours per week just for discussing the practical matters of your home, finances, and relationships, etc. Determine to carve out this

important time to keep the anxieties of life from overtaking your marriage and to communicate well.

- i. Option one: take a 15-minute walk as spouses once per day, using this time to go through the “lists” each of you has on their mind.
  - ii. Option two: take a coffee break in the morning once or twice per week, or in the evening when the children go to bed, to have this conversation time.
- c. Bring back date night! Choose an evening once per week or twice per month. Take turns planning the date. This should not be for discussing practicals but for enjoying romance and sharing life together as spouses away from the kids and other distractions.
  - d. In all this, recognize “times of necessary imbalance” in your relationship. A newborn, a sick child or parent in need, or another challenge can seemingly forbid time together as spouses. Realize that you might need to adjust to shorter time for a while. Pray together and for each other in this “time of necessary imbalance”. It will not be this way forever. God will give you the grace you need if you ask.

2. **Prayer for renewal of the grace of the Sacrament in times of difficulty:** Consider adding this prayer to your prayer-toolbelt and praying it in times when you are in conflict or facing difficult decisions:

- a. *Dear Lord Jesus, we thank you for our marriage, and that you promise with this Sacrament your grace, your power, to help in all difficulties. We pray that You renew this grace in our marriage, right now. Give us the power to love each other (and our children) as we ought, right now. Jesus, we trust in you. (3x) Thank you, Lord Jesus.*

## **Closing Prayer**

Request intentions from the group, and then pray the Prayer for the Family to close:

### **Prayer for the Family from St. John Paul II**

*Lord God, from You every family in heaven  
and on earth takes its name.*

*Father, You are Love and Life.*

*Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,  
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,  
grant that every family on earth may become  
for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.*

*Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions  
of husbands and wives for the good of their families  
and of all the families in the world.*

*Grant that the young may find in the family  
solid support for their human dignity and  
for their growth in truth and love.*

*Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of  
the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the  
weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.*

*Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out  
her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.  
Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.  
Amen.*

