

Month Two 2011 Bulletin Announcements What is Marriage? Why Can't Marriage be Redefined?

WEEK ONE



Marriage Minute: What is Marriage?

Marriage is the lifelong partnership of mutual and exclusive fidelity between a man and a woman ordered by its very nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. The bond of marriage is indissoluble – that is, it lasts “until death do us part.” At the heart of married love is the total gift of self that husband and wife freely offer to each other. Because of their sexual difference, husband and wife can truly become “one flesh” and can give to each other “the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love” (*Familiaris Consortio, no. 14*).

Marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman is a *sacrament*. This means that the bond between husband and wife is a visible sign of the sacrificial love of Christ for his Church. As a sacrament, marriage gives spouses the grace they need to love each other generously, in imitation of Christ. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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Marriage Minute: What is sexual difference?

Sexual difference is the difference of man to woman and woman to man. It affects a person at every level of his or her existence: genetically, biologically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially. Sexual difference is an irreducible difference. It is unlike any other difference we experience, because it – and only it – allows for the total personal union between husband and wife that is at the heart of marriage. The difference between men and women is for the sake of their union with each other. It is what makes spousal union possible. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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Marriage Minute: Why can't marriage be redefined?

The word “marriage” isn’t simply a label that can be attached to different types of relationships. Instead, “marriage” reflects a deep reality – the reality of the unique, fruitful, lifelong union that is only possible between a man and woman. Just as oxygen and hydrogen are essential to water, sexual difference is essential to marriage. The attempt to “redefine” marriage to include two persons of the same sex denies the reality of what marriage is. It is as impossible as trying to “redefine” water to include oxygen and nitrogen. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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Marriage Minute: Isn't marriage just about love and commitment between two people?

Of course love and commitment are important for marriage – as they are for many relationships. But marriage is unique because the commitment it calls for is better described as communion, where “the two become one flesh (Gen 2:24).” Only a man and a woman in marriage can become a “one flesh” communion. The unity of husband and wife is so intimate that from it can come a “third,” the child – a new life to be welcomed and raised in love. No other relationship, no matter how loving or committed, can have this unique form of commitment – communion—that exists in marriage, between a husband and wife. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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