

Lyceum 136 -February 26, 2026, a forum to Think, Discuss, Share, and Learn from one another. Your input is welcomed - Iron sharpens iron.

Neighborhood “The1826, in Connecticut, a farmer named Josiah Holbrook started a school for ‘the general diffusion of knowledge and raising the moral and intellectual taste’ of Americans. In those days, the opportunities for higher education were limited to those venerable old universities that had long served the upper crust. Holbrook’s vision was to make learning – practical, liberal, and humane – available to working people of all kinds. He named his school the Lyceum, after the garden where Aristotle once taught his students philosophy.... We need to go deeper than the superficial fights that characterize public life. We need to return to the first principles and meet each other there as human beings.”– Nathan Beacom, Plough Magazine, Autumn 2023, p. 9.

We continue to highlight a sacrament weekly, having completed Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, Confirmation, and now **Marriage**.

Thomas Merton defined the sacrament as a “sacrament of the presence of God.” He emphasized that the sacrament is not merely an outward sign, but also a spiritual presence and action of grace and power.

I share the following poem which I wrote for my wife, Mary to be, when I proposed to her over a hot fudge sundae over 40 years ago.

Your love for me is

humanizing and divinizing.

Our love is spontaneous,

and has its own delicate process

of unfolding and flowering.

Your love moves me

to reach out, to touch,

and to be with you.

Your love excites and stills

my heart, and together we walk hand

in hand in the eternal presence of God,

Our Father.

The Sacrament of Marriage, also known as Matrimony, is a sacred covenant between a baptized man and woman, established for life, aimed at mutual love and the procreation and education of children.

Definition and Nature

The Sacrament of Marriage is defined as a covenant by which a man and a woman establish a partnership for the whole of life. The partnership is ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of the offspring. It has been elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, meaning it is a visible sign of God's grace and love.

Theological Significance

Marriage is rooted in the creation narrative of Genesis, where God created man and woman for each other, establishing the foundation for marital union. The New Testament further elevates marriage, with Jesus affirming its indissolubility and significance. In Matthew 19:6, He states, "What God has joined together, let no one separate," emphasizing the sacredness of the marital bond.

Rituals and Celebration

The celebration of marriage is typically conducted within a liturgical context, often during a Mass, which underscores its sacramental nature. The couple exchanges vows in the presence of a priest and witnesses, signifying their commitment to each other and to God. The sacrament is also marked by the Nuptial Blessing, which involves God's grace upon the couple.

Requirements for a Valid Marriage

For a marriage to be considered sacramental in the Catholic Church, both parties must be baptized Christians. The Church recognizes marriages between baptized non-Catholic Christians or between a Catholic and a non-Christian or between a Catholic and a non-Christian are not considered sacramental without special permissions.

Implications for Married Life

Marriage is not merely a contract but a divine covenant that calls for mutual self-giving, love, and fidelity. It is a path to holiness, where spouses are called to support

each other in their spiritual and personal growth. The sacrament emphasizes the importance of family life, as children are seen as a blessing and an extension of marital love.

In summary, the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church is a profound commitment that reflects God's love and grace, serving as a foundation for family life and a means of sanctification for the couple. It is celebrated with deep reverence and is integral to the life of the Church.

What makes a good Christian marriage?

A strong marriage doesn't happen by accident. It's built over years of shared effort, intentional choices, and leaning on faith when life gets hard. For Christian couples, their relationship isn't about the two of them — it's a partnership with God at the center. The habits that keep love steady over decades aren't flashy or complicated, but they are consistent, meaningful, and rooted in both grace and commitment.

They Pray Together Regularly

Prayer isn't just for emergencies — it's a daily anchor. Whether it's holding hands before bed or offering a quick prayer before a big decision, couples who pray together stay spiritually connected. It's less about the perfect words and more about inviting God into every season of life. That shared time creates unity even when the day has been messy or stressful.

They Keep Communication Honest and Kind

Disagreements happen, but strong couples know the value of talking things through without tearing each other down. Honesty matters, but so does tone. They share frustrations without weaponizing them and listen without jumping to defend. Over time, this habit builds trust, because both partners feel safe expressing what's really on their hearts, knowing they'll be heard instead of dismissed.

They Make Time for Each Other, No Matter How Busy Life Gets

Jobs, kids, and church responsibilities can easily push quality time to the bottom of the list. Couples who stay close protect time together — a walk after dinner, a quiet breakfast, or even running errands side by side. It's not always grand gestures, but the small, regular moments that say, "You still matter most to me."

They Forgive Quickly and Fully

Resentment doesn't just fade on its own — it grows if left unchecked. Christian couples who last learn to forgive without keeping score, remembering how much grace they've received themselves. Forgiveness doesn't mean pretending the hurt never happened, but it does mean choosing not to hold it over the other person. This clears the path for healing instead of letting bitterness take root.

They Support Each Other's Callings

In a Christian marriage, each partner has their own God-given gifts and callings. Strong couples make space for each other to pursue those passions, whether that's leading a ministry, going back to school, or starting a new project. Instead of competing, they cheer each other on, knowing that personal growth in one spouse enriches the marriage.

Stay Connected to a Church Community

Isolation makes it easier for misunderstandings and struggles to grow. Couples who stay strong often stay plugged into a faith community that encourages, prays for, and sometimes even challenges them. Being surrounded by other believers provides perspective and accountability, which can be especially helpful during seasons when it's harder to feel united at home.

They Keep a Sense of Humor

Laughter can be a lifeline in marriage. Couples who can laugh at themselves, find joy in silly moments, and not take every inconvenience too seriously tend to weather challenges better. Humor breaks tension reminds you that you're a team and helps keep the relationship lighthearted even when the world outside feels heavy.

They Keep Physical Affection a Priority

Physical closeness matters beyond intimacy — a hug in the kitchen, holding hands in the car, or kissing goodbye before work. These small gestures speak volumes over time, reminding each other they're still wanted and cherished. It's a way of saying "I see you" without needing a single word, keeping the spark alive in the everyday routine.

They Pray for Each Other Individually

Even when they're not praying together, strong couples take time to lift each other up privately. These prayers can be for protection, wisdom, strength, or encouragement. It's a quiet habit, but it shows a deep level of care — one that says, "I'm bringing your

needs before God, even when you don't know it." That unseen support often shapes how they treat each other day to day.

They Protect Boundaries in Their Relationship

Healthy marriages have guardrails. This can mean being mindful about one-on-one time with members of the opposite sex, keeping transparency with devices, or setting limits on work hours. These boundaries aren't about mistrust — they're about protecting the relationship from unnecessary strain or temptation. Strong couples agree on these safeguards and stick to them because they value their marriage above everything else.

They Keep Learning Together

Life changes, and so do people. Couples who keep growing together stay interested in each other. They might read a devotional side by side, attend a marriage retreat, or simply talk about what God's teaching them lately. Learning as a team keeps their faith and their relationship from getting stagnant, reminding them there's always more to discover.

They Serve Others as a Couple

Serving together creates a different kind of closeness. It's dropping off a casserole to a sick friend or spending a Saturday repainting the church nursery with paint still drying on your jeans. You're laughing over spilled coffee for one minute and quietly helping someone in need the next. It pulls your attention away from who forgot to do the dishes and reminds you that you're both here to love God and love people.

They Keep Speaking Words of Encouragement

It's easy to notice flaws, but couples who stay strong make a habit of pointing out the good. A simple "I appreciate you" or "I'm proud of you" can carry more weight than grand speeches. Encouragement builds a foundation of affirmation, reminding each spouse that they're valued not just for what they do, but for who they are.

They Face Hard Seasons as a Team

Every marriage hits challenges — health scares, financial strain, and family issues. Couples who endure these seasons well decide from the start that they'll face them together, not as opponents. They pray, plan, and lean on God side by side. Even if the solution isn't immediate, knowing they're united gives them strength to keep going until the storm passes.

They Keep God at the Center

For Christian couples, faith isn't something they squeeze in — it's the thing holding everything else up. When the bills pile up or a health scare hit, they pray together because they know they can't do it all themselves. Some nights, it's a quiet "God, help us" whispered before bed. The struggles don't vanish but there's a sense they're not facing them alone and that changes everything. -Internet.

Hasidic story: about the creation of a man and woman

A woman was not taken from the foot of a man to be stepped upon nor from the head of a man to be told what to do, rather she was taken from the side of a man – symbol of equality – Sarah and Sam (not their real names) stand side by side and soon they will turn to each other when they exchange their vows of love and fidelity; in addition to standing side by side, they will turn and look to all of you to affirm and confirm their promises to one another; together they look to the mystery of the future with its unknowns; as Emerson reminds us—yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery, and today is the gift of faith, hope, and love as reflected in the first reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthians

A story - Sarah and Sam are sitting on a swing. They are eating cheese curds. Time passes as heart speaks to heart, Sarah says to Sam, "you don't hold my hand anymore." Sam reaches out and holds her hand tight. More silence and more heart speaking to heart. Sarah says to Sam, "you don't hug me anymore." Sam holds her tight. More silence and speaking heart to heart. Sarah says, "remember when we were young, foolish, and fooled around and you nibbled at my ear." Sam jumps up and heads for the house. Sarah exclaims, "did I offend you?" "Heck no," says Sam, "I am going to get my teeth.

2019 – survey of two hundred couples married for over 20 years – what can we learn from the qualities that were mentioned most often by these couples. These guidelines are for all of us gathered here today – let each of us reflect, review, renew our relationships with one another.

1. Commitment to one's spouse.
2. Loyalty to one's spouse.

3. **Strong moral values.**
4. **Solid companionship.**
5. **Respect for spouse as a best friend.**
6. **Commitment to sexual fidelity.**
7. **Desire to be a good parent; and dog lover.**
8. **Faith in higher power and spiritual commitment.**
9. **Desire to please the other.**
10. **Willingness to forgive and forget.**

A Perfect Marriage?

A man and woman had been married for more than 60 years. They had shared everything. They talked about everything. They had kept no secrets from each other, except that the little old woman had a shoe box in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about.

For all these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day, the little old woman got sick, and the doctor said she would not recover.

In trying to sort out their affairs, the little old man took down the shoe box and took it to his wife's bedside.

She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box. When he opened it, he found two crocheted dolls and a stack of money totaling \$95,000.

He asked her about the contents. "When we were to be married," she said, "my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doll."

The little old man was so moved; he had to fight back tears. Only two precious dolls were in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in all those years of living and loving. He almost burst with happiness.

"Honey," he said, "that explains the dolls, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?"

"Oh," she said. "That's the money I made from selling the dolls."

Pray with and for Andy Vanden Busch and Paula Santis Jaime who will express and promise their vows of love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, and compassion on March 13, 2026, at 10AM in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

My wife Mary and her sister Jane will be attending the wedding festivities, I will remain here, and we will be setting up technology for us to be present at the wedding. I will be part of the wedding ceremony. If you are interested in joining us, please let me know in advance. It will be at Resurrection Parish.

As the father of the groom, I have written the following poem in honor of them.

A Mystical Moment of Love

Andy, on bended knee, searches for Paula's eager
and willing eyes, "Will you marry me?"

She clasps his hands, "Yes, I will!" Her heart cries
out, "He asks me, he needs me, and he loves me."

Mom and Dad have offered their blessings to let her go,
and her sisters have become a bouquet of joy and happiness.

There is the mystic kiss of love, passion, and intimacy expressing
the daily and delicate days they will share, as time melts away.

The waves dance happily on the sandy shore rejoicing as
the candles illuminate this very precious moment.

The stormy clouds are suddenly painted with the colors of the
rainbow symbolizing Trinity, the angels, and the saints.

They announce and proclaim this blessed union as two lovers
are face to face, heart to heart, and soul to soul – for All if Grace.

The Nuptial Blessing

**O God, who consecrated the bond of Marriage
by so great a mystery
that in the wedding covenant you foreshadowed
the Sacrament of Christ and his Church.**

**Look now with favor on these your servants,
joined together in Marriage,
who ask to be strengthened by your blessing.
Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit
and pour your love into their hearts,
that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant.**

**And now, Lord, we implore you:
may these your servants
hold fast to the faith and keep your commandments;
made one in the flesh,
may they be blameless in all they do;
and with the strength that comes from the Gospel,
may they bear true witness to Christ before all;
(may they be blessed with children,
and prove themselves virtuous parents,
who live to see their children's children.)**

From this day forward may their lives be tied together into

Seconds of life

Minutes of love

Hours of longing

Days of sharing

Weeks of supporting

Months of sacrifice

Years of togetherness

Forever in Love as Time melts away.

**And grant that,
reaching at last together the fullness of years
for which they hope,
they may come to the life of the blessed
in the Kingdom of Heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Amen.