

Matrimony: A Promise of Faithfulness and Love

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WE GATHER

✚ **Leader:** Let us bless the Lord,
by whose goodness we live
and by whose grace we love one another.
Blessed be God for ever.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

Reader: A reading from the Book of
Deuteronomy

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the
LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the
LORD, your God, with all your heart, and
with all your soul, and with all your
strength. Take to heart these words which
I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your

children. Speak of them at home and
abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.”
(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

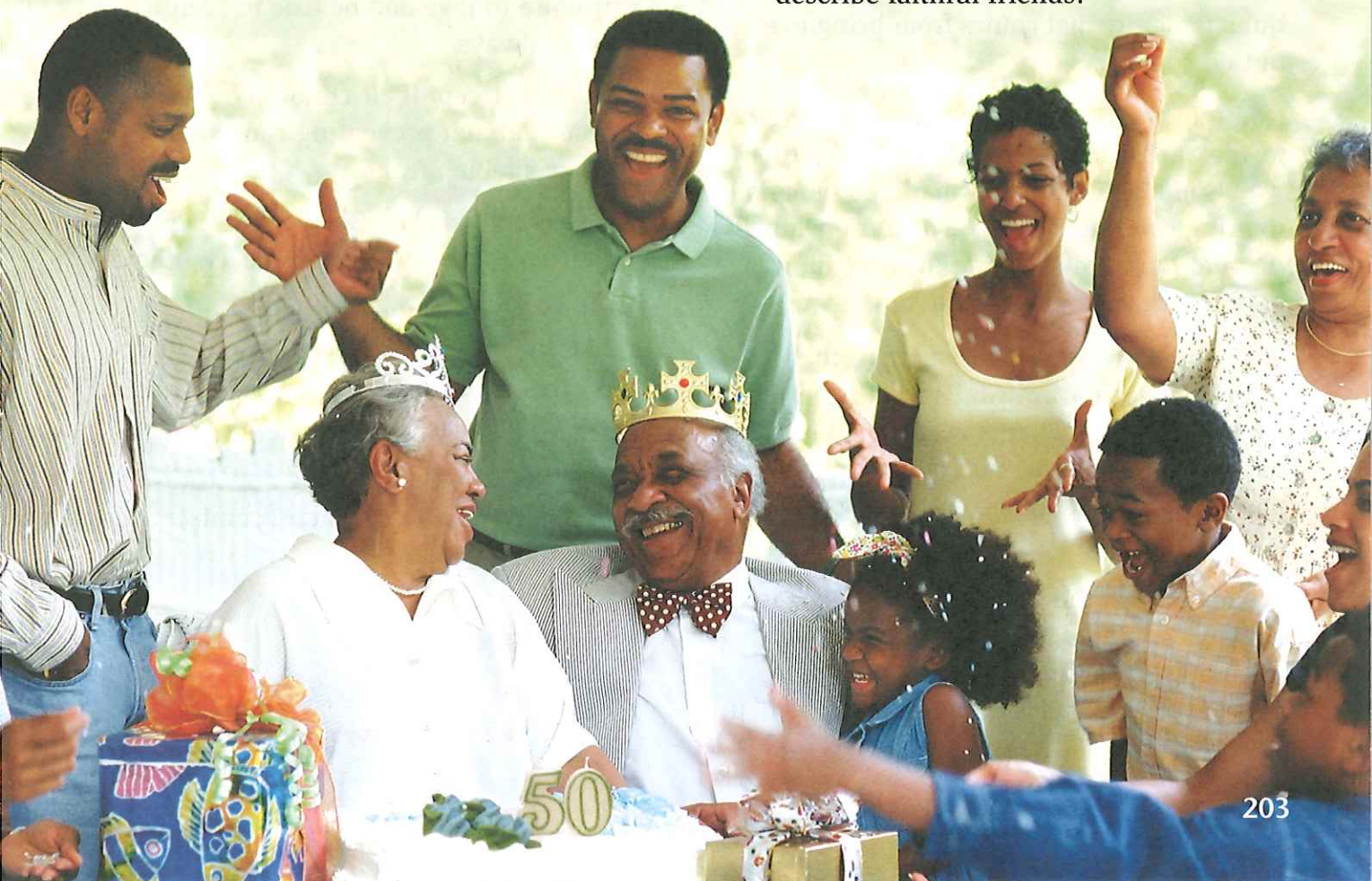
Leader: May the God of hope fill us with
every joy in believing.

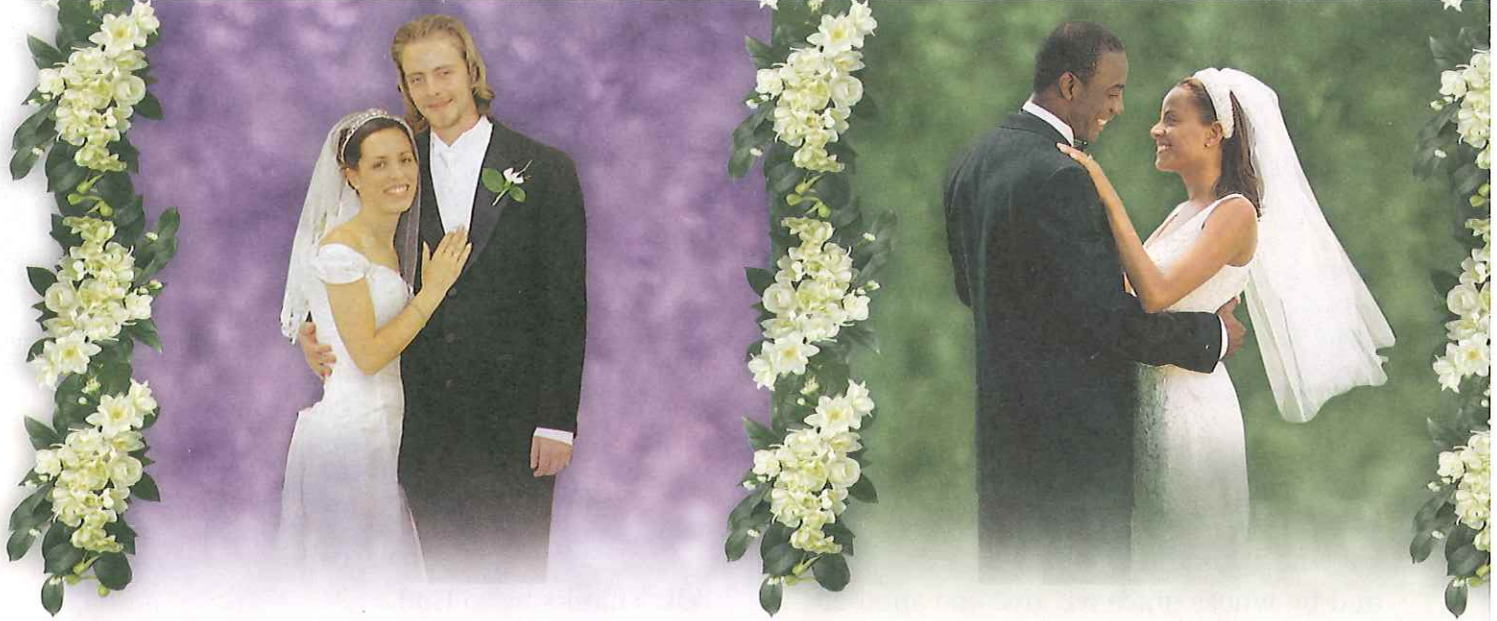
May the peace of Christ abound in
our hearts.

May the Holy Spirit enrich us with his gifts,
now and for ever.

All: Amen.

☀ What words would you use to explain
what faithfulness means? How would you
describe faithful friends?





WE BELIEVE

Marriage was part of God's plan from the very beginning.

When God created the first humans, he made them male and female. God created them to be different but equal, and he found this very good. The differences between girls and boys, women and men are good. These differences are part of God's plan. Even though we are different, we are equal. We share the same human dignity that comes from being made in God's image.

God told the first man and woman to "Be fertile and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). In this way God blessed the first man and woman to bring new life into the world. He wanted them to have children and to share in his plan for creating the human family.

We learn from the Old Testament that marriage was part of God's plan from the very beginning. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body." (Genesis 2:24)


We learn from the New Testament that Jesus showed the importance of marriage by attending a wedding in Cana and helping the couple who had been married. Since that

time marriage has been an effective sign of Jesus' love and presence. Jesus' love is made present through the love of a husband and wife. This is what the Church celebrates in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

In the Sacrament of **Matrimony**, a man and woman become husband and wife. They promise to be faithful to each other for the rest of their lives. They

- promise to love and be true to each other always
- lovingly accept their children as a gift from God, not preventing conception by unacceptable means
- are strengthened by God's grace to live out their promises to Christ and each other.

With members of the Church community present, their love is blessed and strengthened by the grace of this sacrament.

 Discuss why it is important to keep our promises. Then quietly pray and ask God to help all people live out their promises to him and to one another.



Matrimony (p. 269)

marriage covenant (p. 269)



The marriage covenant is built on Christ's love for the Church.

Christians believe there is a new covenant between Jesus Christ and the Church. It is based on the Son of God's complete love for his Church. Jesus promises to love us always and be with us. In return, we, the Church, promise to love Jesus and one another. We promise to follow and be faithful to his teachings and the teachings of the Church.

The Church sees marriage as a covenant, too. The **marriage covenant** is the life-long commitment between a man and woman to live as faithful and loving partners. The marriage covenant reminds us of Christ's covenant with the Church.

The love between a husband and a wife is a sign of Christ's love for his Church. The love between a husband and wife is meant to be generous, faithful, and complete. A married couple promises to share and express this love only with each other. That is why polygamy, having more than one spouse at the same time, is against the marriage covenant.

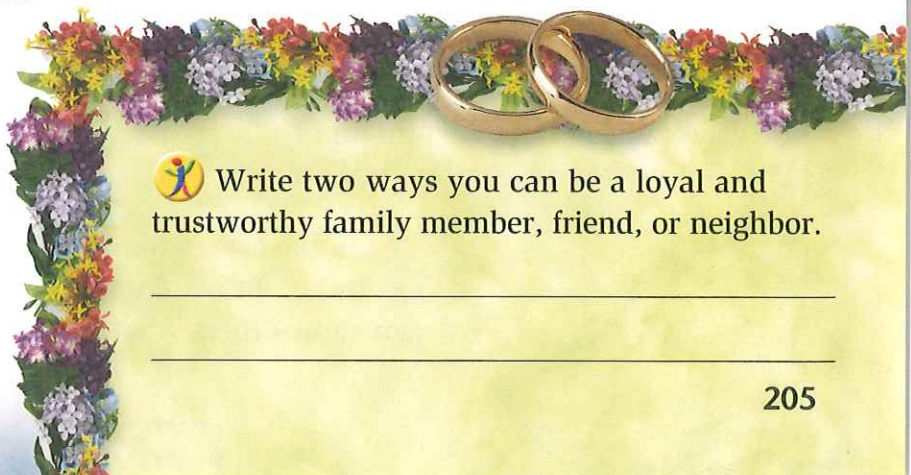
Christ will always love us. He will forever keep his promise to share God's life and love with us. So Christ's love for the Church is permanent. In the same way, the marriage covenant is meant to be permanent, too. Divorce breaks the marriage covenant. Catholics who


are divorced and remarried are not separated from the Church, but cannot receive the Eucharist.

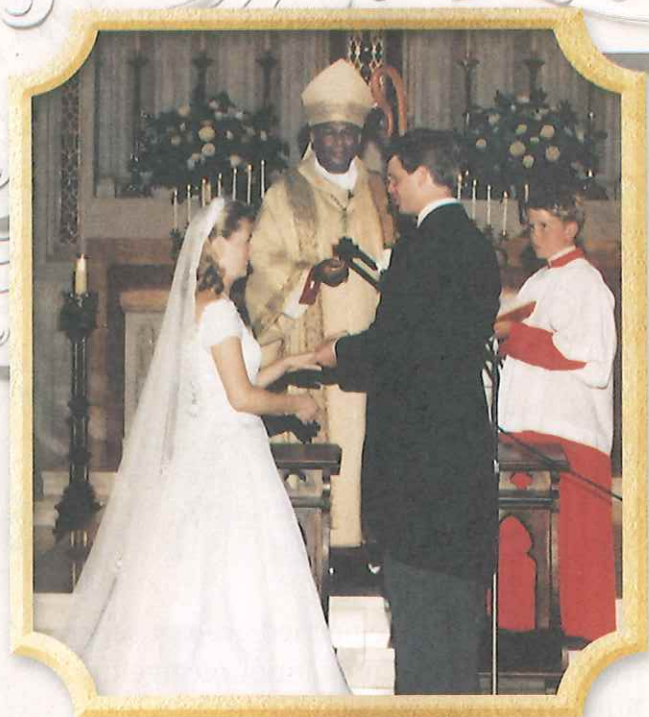
Once Jesus was teaching about marriage, and he said, "what God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Matthew 19:6). Christ and the Church teach us that the marriage covenant is not to be broken.

Married couples can turn to their family and parish community for prayer and support. They can turn to the Sacraments of Eucharist and Penance to strengthen and heal their relationship.

Often during difficult times children do not understand what is happening to their parents. They may be confused and sad. So it is important for them to understand that they are not to blame for these difficulties. And they are not responsible if their parents get separated or divorced. Though separation and divorce are very painful, God continues to offer his healing to all who need it.



 Write two ways you can be a loyal and trustworthy family member, friend, or neighbor.



In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a man and woman promise to always love and be true to each other.

As a man and woman prepare to celebrate Matrimony, the priest or deacon explains the Church's teachings about marriage and makes sure that they are free to marry one another. The couple learns the holiness and duties of Christian marriage. They often participate in a program or retreat and celebrate the Sacrament of Penance.

In all the other sacraments, Jesus acts through his ordained ministers to offer the grace of the sacrament. But in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the bride and groom are the celebrants. Jesus acts through the couple and through their promise to always love and be true to each other. The priest or deacon is the official witness of the sacrament, and he blesses the union that God has joined together.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony often takes place within the

Mass. When it does, the Liturgy of the Word includes readings selected by the couple themselves. The Rite of Marriage takes place after the Gospel is proclaimed.

The deacon or priest asks the couple three important questions. Are they free to give themselves in marriage? Will they love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of their lives? Will they lovingly accept children from God and raise them in the faith? After answering, the bride and groom then pledge their love for each other by exchanging their vows. They may say words such as these: "I take you to be my husband (or wife). I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life."

The deacon or priest receives the couple's promises and asks God to strengthen their love and faithfulness and to fill them with many blessings. The rings are then blessed, and the couple exchanges them as a sign of their love and fidelity. **Fidelity** is faithfulness to a person and to duties, obligations, or promises. In marriage, fidelity is loyalty and the willingness to be true to each other always.

The whole assembly prays the Prayer of the Faithful, and the Mass continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After the Lord's Prayer, the priest faces the couple and prays a special prayer asking for God's favor on this new marriage. The bride and groom, if they are Catholic, receive Holy Communion. Their Communion is a sign of their union with Jesus who is the source of their love.



In the Rite of Marriage the priest prays "Let them be living examples of Christian life." Name some ways that married couples can show others what it means to be an example of Christian life.

Families are very important communities.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a Sacrament at the Service of Communion. Those who celebrate this sacrament are strengthened to serve God and the Church. They are called to live out their fidelity to God and each other in their home, in their jobs, and in their neighborhoods. By creating a loving family, married couples express their love. When they share the goodness of their love with others, their own love for each other and for Christ grows.

Being part of a family means having duties and responsibilities. Parents and guardians try to provide a safe, loving home for the children. They protect and care for their children. Parents and guardians are the first teachers of their children. They are called to live by their faith and to share their belief with their children. Children learn what it means to be a disciple of Christ and member of the Church by the example of their parents, guardians, and family members.



Children have many duties and responsibilities, too. They are called to honor their parents and guardians by loving and obeying them. They are to do the just and good things that are asked of them, and to cooperate with their parents and guardians. They try to help out around the house by doing chores and showing their appreciation for their family members and all of their relatives.

As children grow older, the ways they show their love and appreciation often change. But the love between children and their parents and guardians is meant to stay strong and to continue to grow.

As Catholics...

Christian families are called to be communities of faith, hope, and love. Every family is called to be a domestic Church, or a "Church in the home." It is in the family that we can first feel love and acceptance. We can experience Jesus' love when our family members love and care for us. We can learn to forgive and be forgiven, to grow in faith as we pray and worship together. In our families we can learn to be disciples of Jesus and to help and comfort those in need.

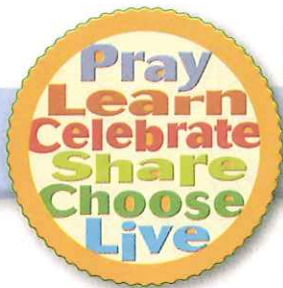
Talk with your family about the ways that you can be a domestic Church.

WE RESPOND




Design a billboard to show others what wonderful things can happen in families where there is love for God and one another.

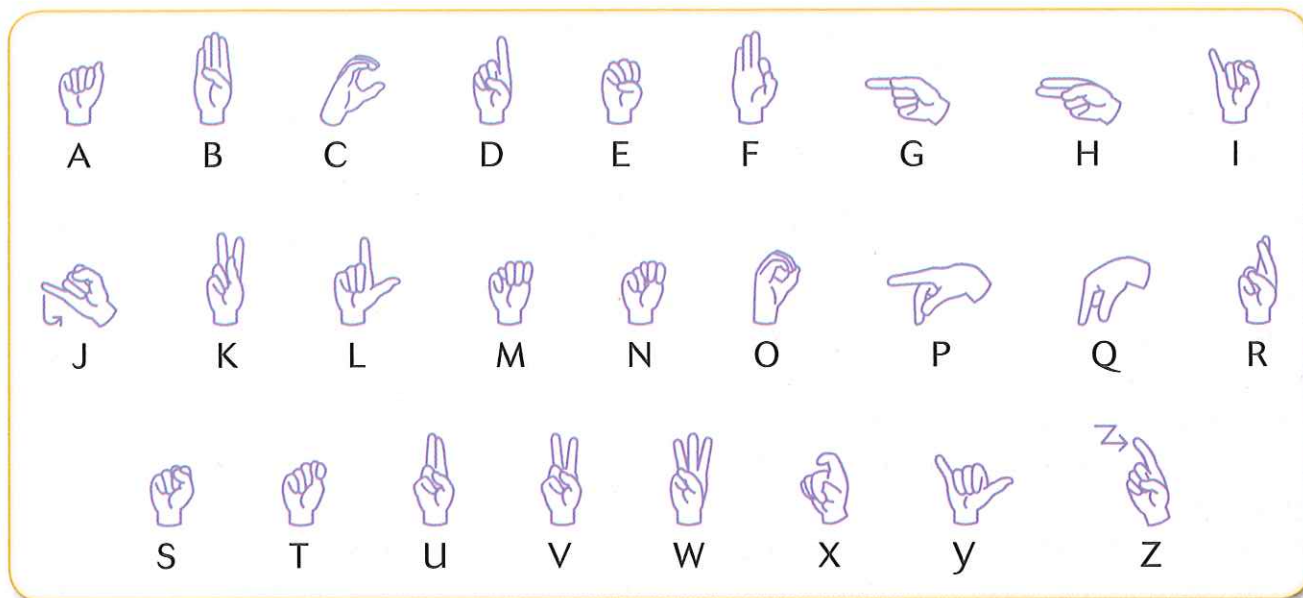
Key Word
fidelity (p. 268)



PROJECT

Show What *you* Know

Use your hands to communicate. Can you sign the  **Key Words** :
Matrimony, marriage covenant, and fidelity?




Then, write a sentence for each Key Word on the lines below.

What's *the* Word?

Brides and grooms often select the following as a reading for the Rite of Marriage.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

 **DISCIPLE CHALLENGE** Why is the above passage appropriate for the Sacrament of Matrimony?

Saint Stories

Margaret was an English princess born in 1045. When she was older, she and her mother moved to Scotland where Margaret married King Malcolm. As Queen of Scotland, Margaret worked to make Scotland a better place. She gave her husband wise advice and helped him to live a life of virtue. They prayed together and fed the poor. Margaret and Malcolm had eight children. She was devoted to her family, her faith, and the people of Scotland. She wanted the Scots to learn and practice their faith, so she made great efforts to get good teachers and had churches built. Margaret is a great example to wives and mothers.



DISCIPLE CHALLENGE

- Underline the phrase that describes how Margaret helped the Scots learn and practice their faith.

Visit the *Lives of the Saints* on www.webelieveweb.com to answer the questions about Saint Margaret.

- When is the feast day of Saint Margaret?

- What was the name of her son who became a saint?

Fast Facts

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "Marriage is based on the consent of the contracting parties, that is, on their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love" (CCC, 1662).



Take Home

Talk with your family about some ways that a family can be a domestic Church, or "a Church in the home."

Make a list here:

Put a check next to each way your family shows it is a domestic Church.

CHAPTER TEST

Short Answers

1. How do children first learn what it means to be a disciple of Christ and a member of the Church?

2. What is the role of the priest or deacon in the Sacrament of Matrimony?

3. What are the three questions the couple is asked by a priest or deacon at the beginning of the Rite of Marriage?

4. How does the marriage covenant remind us of Christ's love for the Church?

Write True or False for the following sentences.

Then change the false sentences to make them true.

5. _____ Marriage is an effective sign of Jesus' love and presence.

6. _____ Fidelity is the sacrament in which a man and woman become husband and wife, and promise to be faithful to each other for the rest of their lives.

7. _____ The Sacrament of Matrimony is a Sacrament of Christian Initiation.

8. _____ Being part of a family means having duties and responsibilities.

Write a sentence to answer each question.

9. How can a man and woman prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony?

10. In the Rite of Marriage, what do the bride and groom promise each other?
