

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control” (Gal. 5:22). These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit and of marriage itself.

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*Then Almitra spoke again and said, “And what of marriage, master?”*

*And he answered saying:*

*“you were born together, and together you shall be for evermore.*

*You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.*

*Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.*

*But let there be spaces in your togetherness.*

*And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.*

*Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping.*

*For only the hand of life can contain your hearts.*

*And stand together, yet not too near together:*

*For the pillars of the temple stand apart,*

*And the oak tree and cypress grow not in each other’s shadow.*

From “The Prophet” by Kahlil Gibran

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How is Christ present in a marriage?

What makes marriage so attractive?

What makes it so challenging?

How can people be helped when they are undergoing difficulties?

“Love’s not possession”. How does that sum up the above poem?

Why is marriage unfashionable?

## Marriage

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12



Life is only for love,  
And time is only  
That we may find God.

St. Bernard

## Creation

At the very beginning of the Bible it is clearly stated that man and woman were created to complement each other. “He created them male and female, blessed them and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control ...” God looked at everything he had made and was very pleased.”



So it can be seen that this was man and woman’s first vocation from God. Their purpose was to become one in love. This “marriage” between one person and another is also used to describe the relationship between God and his people. It is a relationship of love. God has shown time and time again that he takes us for better or for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health.

In fact, what this means is that God’s love for us is unconditional. There are no “ifs” .. if you don’t sin I will love you ... if you pray to me I will love you ... There is none of that. God will always love us. Full stop. The marriage between a man and a woman is meant to reflect that, because we are made in the image of God, our love should be like God’s love, without conditions. A couple express all that in their marriage vows. Once those vows have been taken, there can be no going back .. it is “for better or for worse”.

## The Sacrament

God is love. A very simple statement about God that we can read in the Scriptures. It is a beautiful way of describing God. Yet it also says something about love. When we truly love someone God is present in that love. As we have already seen, in a marriage ceremony a couple express their love in a God-like way. It is a sacrament because in their love for each other God is present. This is then, we hope, lived out in their care for each other, their patience, trust, gentleness and unselfish behaviour. It is also beautifully expressed in sexual intercourse.

## Growth

A well-know and oft quoted saying of Cardinal Newman is: “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often”. This is certainly true in marriage. If either a husband or wife is unwilling to change it is hard to see how a marriage can survive. The relationship in a marriage is a dynamic one. Each is being continually changed by the other and enriched. Even what might be seen as our weakness can become a strength and an area for growth. One partner’s sin can be the opportunity to exercise humility and seek forgiveness, or for the other to be compassionate and understanding. Marriage offers a whole life of undisclosed opportunities for new discovery. When a couple see God as the third partner in their marriage, this sense of adventure and discovery becomes more apparent.



## Validity

In a discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus spoke about divorce and remarriage. He said that although the Jewish Law allowed divorce for a variety of reasons (because of the hardness of their hearts), in the beginning things were different. “Man must not separate what God has joined together”. (Matt. 19:6).

## Breakdown of Marriage

It is an unhappy fact that many marriages break down and end in divorce. The Church allows for this so long as there is no remarriage, so that the children and partners of the marriage may be protected from unnecessary suffering. It does frequently happen that people do remarry. Whatever the situation, great sensitivity is needed in dealing with the individuals involved. They must be made to feel a part of the Church to which they do belong.

## Fulfilment

The only word which can adequately describe the fulfilment of marriage is love. It takes a lifetime to discover all the implications of love. This fulfilment is by no means finally achieved on the wedding day. It is a never-ending experience of a relationship that has the power to lead to