

IMAGES ON EARTH OF THE WONDER OF GOD

1. THE GREAT WEDDING

No longer are you to be named 'Forsaken',
nor your land 'Abandoned'
but you shall be called 'My Delight'
and your land 'The Wedded',
for the Lord takes delight in you
and your land shall have its wedding.
Like a young man marrying a virgin,
so will the one who built you wed you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,
so will your God rejoice in you.

(Isaiah chapter 62, verses 4-5)

2. A GREAT MYSTERY

Husbands should love their wives
just as Christ loved the Church
and sacrificed himself for her
to make her holy...

Husbands must love their wives
as they love their own bodies;
for a man to love his wife
is for him to love himself.

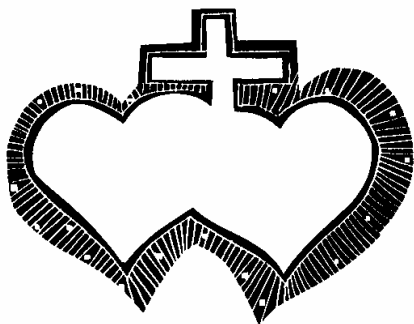
A man never hates his own body,
but he feeds it and looks after it;
and that is the way Christ treats the Church,
because it is his body

- and we are its living parts.

For this reason a man must
leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two will become one body.

This mystery has many implications,
but I am saying it applies
to Christ and the Church.

(St Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 5 verses 25-32)



3. CALLED TO LOVE

God himself is the author of marriage.
The vocation to marriage
is written into the very nature
of man and woman
as they came from the hand of the Creator.
God who created man and woman out of love
also calls them to love -
the fundamental and innate
vocation of every human being.
For we are created in the image and likeness
of God who is himself love.
Since God created us man and woman,
their mutual love becomes an image
of the absolute and unfailing love
with which God loves us.
It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes.
And this love which God blesses
is intended to be fruitful
and to be realised in the common work
of watching over creation.

*(adapted from 'The Catechism of the Catholic Church',
nos. 1603, 1604)*

4. OUR HIGH DESTINY

Father, all-powerful & everliving God,
we do well always & everywhere
to give you thanks.
You created us in love
to share your divine life.
We see our high destiny
in the love of husband & wife
which bears the imprint of your divine love.
Love is our origin,
love is our constant calling,
love is our fulfilment in heaven.
The love of man and woman
is made holy in the sacrament of marriage
and becomes
the mirror of your everlasting love.

(adapted from Eucharistic Preface III for Marriage)

5. A HOLY MYSTERY

Father,
you have made the bond of marriage
a holy mystery,
a symbol of Christ's love for his Church.
Hear our prayers for John and Mary.
With faith in you and in each other
they pledge their love today.
May their lives always bear witness
to the reality of that love.

(Opening Prayer of Catholic marriage)

6. A MEANS OF HIS GRACE

The Scriptures teach us that marriage is a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace, a holy mystery in which man and woman become one flesh.

It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love throughout their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.

(Church of England Rite of Marriage)

7. TOTAL SELF-GIVING TILL DEATH

Are you ready freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Are you ready to love and honour each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?

Are you ready to accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

(Questions from Catholic marriage rite)

8. ALL THAT I AM I GIVE TO YOU

I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage. With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that have I share with you, within the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(Church of England Rite of Marriage – giving of rings)

9. MARRIAGE MISSION

Living Father, you created us in your image and made man and woman to be joined as husband and wife in union of body and heart, and so fulfil their mission in this world.

(Nuptial Blessing)

10. A HOLY SACRAMENT

In a marriage, a man and a woman pledge themselves to one another in an unbreakable alliance of total mutual self-giving.

A total union of love!

Love that is not a passing emotion or temporary infatuation but a responsible and free decision to bind oneself completely 'in good times and in bad' to one's partner.

It is the gift of oneself to the other.

It is a love proclaimed before the eyes of the whole world.

It is unconditional.

To be capable of such love calls for careful preparation from early childhood to wedding day.

The love of husband and wife in God's plan leads beyond itself and new life is generated, a family born...

Marriage is a holy sacrament. Those baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus are married in his name also.

Their love is a sharing in the love of God. He is its source.

The marriages of Christian couples... are images on earth of the wonder of God, the loving, life-giving communion of three persons in God, and of God's covenant in Christ with the Church.

Christian marriage is a sacrament of salvation. It is the pathway to holiness for all members of the family.

(Pope John Paul II at York in 1982)



Authentic married love is caught up into divine love.

(Second Vatican Council: 'Gaudium et Spes' no. 48)