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The Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Catholic Church's Teachings Concerning Marriage

The theological and legal approach are dominant in the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage. The former has two main aspects: a speculative and a practical one. The speculative aspect above all encompasses Biblical-dogmatic and moral fundamentals, while the practical aspect includes issues relating to threats to the Christian conception of marriage along with the Church's pastoral care for the family. The legal approach is not only a matter of the validity of the sacrament of marriage, but it is also a form of conceptualizing the essence of this relationship, which in no way can be disrupted. Of this, the following article deals only with the Biblical and dogmatic fundamentals of the Church's teachings on marriage.

1. Catholic Teaching on Marriage Based on Biblical Fundaments

Above all, we should note that from the very beginning the Church has rejected intellectual and religious currents that are disdainful of marriage.¹ According to Wincenty Grant, such currents include Persian gnosis in antiquity, whose supporters believed that marriage was evil.² St. Paul spoke in defense of marriage as something correct on several occasions. He criticized prohibitions against getting married, comparing them to prohibitions on eating certain

1 One exception here is to remain unmarried for the Kingdom of God, but this was not synonymous with disdain for marriage – cf. G. Łęcicki, *Małżeństwo i rodzina w nauczaniu oraz doświadczeniu Kościoła*, Sandomierz 2011, p. 63.

2 Cf. W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, vol. 2, Lublin 1974, p. 341.

foods that the Mosaic Law considered unclean, yet came from what God had originated (see: 1 Timothy 4 : 2–3). The Apostle to the Nations described these currents as “demonic instructions” (1 Timothy 4 : 1). Meanwhile, St. John Paul II claims that the Bible clearly shows that God has established marriage in the act of creation.³ God’s commandment to be fertile and multiply and have dominion over the earth thus becomes an incentive for man (see: 1 Genesis 1 : 28). Sacred Scripture discusses the great value of the marital bond, which in its nature is closer than any family bond. Man leaves his mother and father and is bound to his wife so closely that “the two of them become one body” (Genesis 2 : 24). Christ’s teachings on marriage are similar (see: Matthew 19 : 3–10).

As I have already mentioned, the anthropological and Biblical basis for the sacrament of marriage is the fact that humans were created as man and woman.⁴ According to the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, God is the Creator of marriage because He is the Creator of man.⁵ The wide variety of approaches to marriage in different cultures and human opinions described by Janusz Mariański⁶ does not contradict the fact that marriage and how it is understood by the Church are part of the very nature of man and woman.⁷ Although not all cultures and religions treat marriage in the same way as the Catholic Church, which as a result of God’s will raises it to the rank of a sacrament, as the Council Fathers have noted, every culture notes the significance of the bond of marriage, or at least shows an understanding of it.⁸

Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created out of love (see: 1 John 4 : 8, 16) and “in [God’s] image” (Genesis 1 : 27). This shows that the purpose of the act of creation was the good of man. Stanisław Wielgus notes, however, that today it is very difficult to describe purpose in man’s consciousness.⁹ Meanwhile, the catechism teaches that since marriage is inscribed into the act of creation, its purpose is also the good of the entire person.¹⁰ Because

3 Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 11

4 Cf. A. Sarmiento, *Małżeństwo chrześcijańskie. Podręcznik teologii małżeństwa i rodziny*, tłum. J. Łazarów, Kraków 2002, p. 30.

5 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

6 Cf. J. Mariański, *Między sekularyzacją i ewangelizacją. Wartości prorodzinne w świadomości młodzieży szkół średnich*, Lublin 2003, p. 224–225.

7 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1603.

8 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 47.

9 Cf. S. Wielgus, *Pedagogia i formacja młodzieży*, „Pedagogika Katolicka” 2007 nr 1, p. 15.

10 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1601; cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 1055, § 1.

according to God's plan man is to develop, multiply, have dominion over the earth, and create a society (Genesis 1 : 28), the good of marriage and the family is an integral factor of man's well being. St. John Paul II taught that many elements that are positive with regards to the essence of human elements compose the good resulting from the sacrament of marriage. Among them are reciprocity, equality, community, the connectedness of the body, participation in God's plan of Creation, and above all love. The need for reciprocity results from man's personal dignity. It cannot be fully realized without the presence and participation of the other person. Although God Himself can be the person that man opens himself up to in his interpersonal relationships,¹¹ Marcin Wolicki notes that man needs another human person who is ontologically closer to him and directly available.¹² Sacred Scripture describes man's loneliness in the created world, although before original sin he remains in God's presence (see: 2 Genesis 2 : 18). Next, we should mention the equality of man and woman, which Sacred Scripture mentions in the description of woman from man's rib (Genesis 2 : 22–23). Furthermore, the interpersonal community that was formed between Adam and Eve and that should be dominant in every other marriage consists of mutual assistance. According to St. John Paul II, this assistance becomes the "representation" of God's help, readily available to the person at any moment (see: Psalm 121 : 2).¹³ An important factor that builds up the good of spouses is their unification in the flesh. It is so deep that in this act man and woman become "one body" (Genesis 2 : 24; see: Matthew 19 : 6). Thus, as the Church teaches, the bodily union of spouses for them becomes the closest possible relationship; it is closer than other family relationships, including the love of parents (see: Genesis 2 : 24).¹⁴ In marriage, man plays his creative role in God's plan. It is a plan of behavior and enabling of creation as well as ordering it in the way intended by the Creator.¹⁵ Marriage contributes to this, as it fulfills the commandment

11 Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 9.

12 Cf. M. Wolicki, *Komunikacja interpersonalna w ujęciu psychologicznym*, [in:] *Komunikacja w katolicyzmie*, materiały pod red. J. Zimnego, Sandomierz 2003, p. 74–75.

13 Cf. John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, 4.

14 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1606.

15 Cf. D. Kołodziej, *Rodzina chrześcijańska – uczestnictwo w misji Kościoła na podstawie Adhortacji apostołskiej Jana Pawła II Familiaris consortio*, [in:] *Wokół pojęcia świętości. W nawiązaniu do życia i myśli św. Jana Pawła II*, red. W. Dłubacz, Stalowa Wola 2014, p. 152.

to be fertile, multiply, populate the earth, and have dominion over it given in Eden (Genesis 1 : 28).¹⁶

Love is what brings the most good to man. God, who Himself “is love” (1 John 4 : 8, 16) created man out of love and called him to love. The vocation to love is one and the same act as the creation of many by God in His image that, as Jan Graubner notes, “is most fully expressed in the person of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Love requires another person, which is why the vocation to love is realized in marriage and the family (see: Psalm 128 : 1–6). In this way, love in marriage radiates into all other factors of human good that have been mentioned above. For this reason, in his adhortation *Amoris letitia* Pope Francis considers Psalm 128 to be an important fragment of the Word of God, which is the basis for the theologization of teachings on marriage.¹⁸

In Sacred Scripture, marriage is compared to Christ’s relationship to the Church (Ephesians 5 : 25, 32). According to St. Paul, this fact has ethical consequences. Spouses are called to love each other in a way that models Christ’s love for the Church. The Redeemer loved the Church to the degree that He gave His own life for the Church (see: Ephesians 5 : 25). In the next part of the same epistle, St. Paul encourages husbands to love their wives in response to the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself. The apostle relates this commandment to the teaching on the mystical Body of Christ, or the Church itself.¹⁹ In the same way that Christ loves the Church, His own mystical Body, husbands should love their wives in the way that they love their “own bodies.”²⁰ This love is revealed in concern for nourishment and cherishing; in other words, in broadly understood care (see: Ephesians 5 : 29). St. Paul’s teachings on marriage have certain characteristics of a patriarchal understanding, but they do not stop at the level of human nature. In fact, he describes marriage as “a great mystery” (Ephesians 5 : 31–32).²¹

The texts in Sacred Scripture on marriage are the basis for the Church’s dogmatic teachings on this sacrament. St. John Paul II notes that both the

16 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1604.

17 J. Graubner, *Czy Europa potrzebuje pedagogiki katolickiej*, „Pedagogika Katolicka” 2007 nr 1a, p. 23.

18 Cf. Francis, *Amoris letitia*, 8–10.

19 Cf. R. Sieroń, *Wychowanie do bycia świętym w świetle eksploracji źródeł biblijnych*, [in:] *Wokół pojęcia świętości w nawiązaniu do życia i myśli św. Jana Pawła II*, op. cit., p. 57–58.

20 Cf. A. Zwoliński, *Wychowanie do czystości*, „Pedagogika Katolicka” 2009 nr 4, p. 78.

21 W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 350.

image of Christ's love to the Church serving as a form of love in marriage²² and the fulfillment of the vocation to sanctity in marriage have their origins in Biblical texts. The Second Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* says that "Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, whereby they signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church, help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children. By reason of their state and rank in life they have their own special gift among the people of God."²³

2. The Attributes of Marriage in the Church's Teachings

The good that results from the sacrament of marriage is both natural and supernatural. If we look for teachings on the very essence of marriage in the Word of God, we should direct our attention towards the teaching on the essential attributes of marriage, which begins in the description of the act of creation²⁴ and its effects. When it comes to the effects of the sacrament of marriage, Jerzy Kułaczkowski notes that the Bible speaks of unity and indissolubility, love and fidelity, and fertility.²⁵

The teaching on the unity and indissolubility of marriage "matured" along with the appearance of new books of Sacred Scripture, but it implicitly contains within itself its entirety. The catechism speaks of a growing in awareness of indissoluble and monogamous marriage "under the pedagogy of the Law."²⁶ The Old Testament externally tolerated the polygamous marriages of patriarchs and kings, and even sometimes considered a large number of wives to be a sign of God's blessing (see: 2 Samuel 12 : 8). However, there are fragments of Sacred Scripture that speak of true love between one man and one woman. This is so in the case of Manoh and his wife, the parents of the Biblical Samson (1 Judges 13 : 2); Elkanah and Hanna, Samuel's parents

22 Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 17–18.

23 Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, 11.

24 Cf. H. Szmulewicz, *Stworzenie i odkupienie idą razem*, „Pedagogika katolicka” 2010 nr 6, p. 111.

25 Cf. J. Kułaczkowski, *Rozumienie funkcji wychowawczej rodziny*, „Społeczeństwo i Rodzina” 2005 nr 1, p. 67.

26 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1609; cf. S. Sojka, *Życie moralne drogą do mądrości*, [in:] *Formatio catholica w duchu świętego Pawła*, pod red. J. Zimnego, Sandomierz–Stalowa Wola 2008, p. 51.

(see: 1 Samuel 1 : 5); or Tobit and Sarah (see: Tobit 8 : 4). Furthermore, the Bible mentions situations in which polygamous marriages became the source of problems. Such was the case of Abraham's relationship with Hagar (see: Genesis 16 : 4ff.) or King Salomon's other numerous relationships (see: 1 Kings: 11, 3). The catechism speaks of the "hardness of hearts"²⁷ of men who in Israel's patriarchal society required the legality of divorce.²⁸ Apart from divorces, the Mosaic Law protected women from the licentious domination of man in a way that was unparalleled at the time; the Law speaks of the rights of women: wives, mothers, widows, and daughters (see: Exodus 22, Leviticus 18, Numbers 36, and others).²⁹

Both the Old and New Testaments clearly emphasize the indissolubility of marriage. In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ makes reference to divorces permitted by the Jewish law (Matthew 19 : 6). When the Pharisees ask if it is permissible to dismiss one's wife for any reason, they in a way acknowledge the possibility of divorce. They are solely interested if the reason for a divorce should be a serious or petty one. Christ notes that the law on marriage comes not from God but from Moses and was first written because of the hardness of hearts (see: Deuteronomy 24), which, as Benedict XVI notes, is a form of "egotistical self-absorption."³⁰ The Bible does not say that Moses, who, after all, in a way dies punished by God, was infallible (see: Numbers 20 : 12–13). Furthermore, Psalms notes that Moses spoke with "due thought" (see: Psalm 106 : 33). However, the Chosen People always bear responsibility for his errors and imprudence. When referring to the act of creation of man as man and women, Christ the Lord notes that the marriage planned by God for our first parents was indissoluble: "[B]ut at the beginning it was not so" (see: 2 Genesis 2 : 24, Matthew 19 : 8). Christ the Lord references an anthropological argument in favor of the indissolubility of marriage, speaking of family ties, which are natural: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19 : 5). If the bond between parents and children, which naturally are very strong, cannot be severed, the Lord Jesus emphasizes the existence of marriage, which is stronger still. It is stronger than the relationship between parents

27 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1610.

28 Cf. J. Kułaczkowski, *Idealna kobieta*, Stalowa Wola 2001, p. 42–43.

29 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1610.

30 Benedykt XVI, *Rodzina chrześcijańska wspólnotą wychowania i wiary*, „Pedagogika Katolicka” 2008 nr 2, p. 18.

and children.³¹ As a result of the indissolubility of marriage created by God, Who created the bond between a man and a woman in such a way, the Church opposes divorce and “remarriage.” This is regardless of the existence of possible problems in married life that, as Justyna Maciaszek notes, the Church tries to find solutions for.³² In Christ’s view, marriage can be dissolved only through death. According to the Gospels, in Christ’s view, a second marriage entered into by either spouse does not exist. Christ refers to new relationships as “adultery” (Mark 10, 12), which is evidence of a negative moral evaluation of them. According to the catechism, the Redeemer uses this word because persons living in a new sexual relationship violate God’s law.³³

The unity of spouses in God’s image extends to their families. The Christian family tied together by the sacramental knot of marriage is an image of the communion of the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit; thus its activity in the aspect of procreation and raising children is a reflection of the Holy Trinity’s creative activity. Christ’s redeeming work is a continuation of the work of creation. The catechism teaches that the Christian family “is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. [...] The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.”³⁴ In his redeeming work, Christ the Lord did not intend to change the order of nature once established by God the Father, nor did He plan on changing any of God the Father’s commandments. In His Sermon on the Mount, the Redeemer explained God’s eternal plan when speaking about marriage. This is why the Church’s tradition passes on its conviction that the Sixth Commandment not only defends marital fidelity, but it encompasses the entire field of human sexuality.³⁵

Biblical teachings on marital love and the indissolubility of the sacrament go hand in hand with teachings on fertility in marriage. When instructing the apostles about vocation, Christ spoke of “giv[ing] up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands” (Matthew 19 : 29). Meanwhile, in the Book of Genesis, Sacred Scripture speaks of “man [leaving] his father and mother” (Genesis 2 : 24) for the purpose of marriage. Thus if an

31 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1644.

32 Cf. J. Maciaszek, *Wiktymologiczne aspekty przemocy w rodzinie*, [in:] *Zjawisko przemocy we współczesnym świecie. Wybrane aspekty*, pod red. J. Maciaszek, Stalowa Wola 2010, p. 38.

33 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1650.

34 *Ibidem*, 2205.

35 *Ibidem*, 2336; cf. A. Nossol, *Miejsce rodziny w Mysterium Salutis*, [in:] *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, vol. 2, pod red. K. Majdańskiego, Warszawa 1990, p. 30.

apostle's vocation requires eschewing marriage, we can suppose that, as the Aparecida Document states, in Christ's words, the family, children, and land are related to the effects of the sacrament of marriage.³⁶ These words are in essence parallel to God the Father's words of blessing to Adam and Eve, the first husband and wife: „Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1 : 28). Human fertility and man's openness to another person are evidence of God's concern for His work. This concern is visible from the very beginning of the Book of Genesis, when God says that it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2 : 18).³⁷ Not only a husband and wife, but the entire family into which children are born is a community that man needs to live and grow. Fertility is related to marriage and sexuality. In the Book of Genesis, it is God's concern for man's loneliness that leads to His plan to create another person. St. John Paul II deals with this topic in one of his encyclicals. Woman was not supposed to be just any other creature, because from the very beginning all creatures were made from clay. This creative act was in its nature supposed to be similar to the “division” of an already existing person.³⁸ God's commandment to multiply and subdue the earth was the culmination of the act of creation. Man's loneliness was the only lack of good in a created world that was in its nature good. Thus if good was the purpose of creation, its fulfillment was the creation of man and his sexual distinction as well as the commandment to be fertile; in other words, filling the earth and subduing it.³⁹ Man was given something of a “demiurgical” activity, or the task of processing, improving, and complementing God's work of creation. This activity is also related to the family, the first marriage of a man and woman. Responding to this commandment to fill the earth is dependent on fertility. For this reason, marital fertility is generally understood as a *conditio sine qua non* of the act of co-creation to which man is called. Summarizing this part of my reflections, it is worth quoting the opinion of Karol Wojtyła, who believed that human sexuality and human marriage are a good that is a part of the natural good of creation and is a necessary part of man's co-creation of the world given to

36 Cf. Aparecida. V Ogólna Konferencja Episkopatów Ameryki Łacińskiej i Karaibów, *Jesteśmy uczniami i misjonarzami Jezusa Chrystusa, aby nasze narody miały w Nim życie*, 432–435.

37 Cf. M. Pokrywka, *Antropologiczne podstawy moralności małżeństwa i rodziny*, Lublin 2010, p. 112–113; J. Goleń, *Motywy zawarcia małżeństwa sakramentalnego. Studium z duszpasterstwa rodzin w świetle badań narzeczonych*, Lublin 2013, p. 35.

38 Cf. John Paul II, *Solicitudinis rei socialis*, 29.

39 Cf. *Kardynał w sercu Kościoła. Kardynał Raymond Leo Burke w rozmowie z Guillaume'm d'Alençon'em*, Sadnomierz 2015, p. 138–139.

him by God.⁴⁰ This state of affairs is somewhat confirmed by God's blessing of the first spouses (Genesis 1 : 28). It can be inferred that for this reason the definition of marriage given by the Code of Canon Law situates fertility and parenthood in third place after community and the good of the spouses in its definition of marriage.⁴¹

Giving birth to and bringing up children was never mentioned as the first aim of marriage. Although it is contained within the general good of the spouses, one should not forget that the capability of procreation is essential enough that when positively rejected it can render the marriage invalid.⁴² Meanwhile, the Church's teachings on fertility and procreation as well as on the defense of human life from the moment of conception can be difficult to accept in today's world. However, we should not forget that Christians understand the meaning of sacrifice in their religion and should look at their lives not only from the earthly perspective, but also in light of eternity. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that "the well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family."⁴³

The laws of nature are a reflection of God's wisdom; thus their realization always leads to the fulfillment of a good. As has been mentioned above, marriage is the result of nature and thus has its natural purposes. As St. John Paul II teaches, man is an individual being (person) as well as a social one, and so marriage brings him good in the social and individual order.⁴⁴ When teaching about marriage, Catholic dogmatic theology above all speaks of a common good that consists of the mutual perfection of the personality of spouses and their fulfillment. Mutual fulfillment and perfection should occur in their biological and spiritual dimensions. In this case, giving birth to children and bringing them up should be contained within the first aim that is the good of the spouses.⁴⁵ According to the Second Vatican Council, marriage should not

40 Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Kraków 1969, p. 110–111; cf. S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek w myśli współczesnej. Filozofia współczesna o człowieku*, Warszawa 1990, p. 430–431.

41 Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 1055.

42 Cf. W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 342.

43 Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 47.

44 Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 14.

45 W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 344; cf. M. Wolicki, *Uwarunkowania wolności człowieka w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, „Społeczeństwo i Rodzina” 2011 nr 2, p. 53.

be conceived of as solely serving to give birth to children. This is also because the very nature of a bond of love between a man and a woman requires that their love be appropriately expressed, develop, and mature. Furthermore, it also necessitates the good of children. Consequently, the Second Vatican Council claims that even if there are no children marriage maintains its value as a bond and community that last throughout life.⁴⁶

3. The Sacramentality of Marriage

When writing about marriage in the teachings of St. John Paul II, Angela Scola recalls the Church's teaching about the fact that the grace of the sacrament of marriage, which raises the natural relationship between a man and a woman up to a supernatural level, requires responsibility, concern for mutual fidelity, and the chastity of spouses.⁴⁷ The Book of Exodus describes God's commandments, mentioning "covet[ing] your neighbor's house" (Exodus 20 : 17), which is expressed in [coveting] your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20 : 17a). St. John wrote about lust and described three forms of it: enticement for the eyes, sensual lust, and a pretentious life (1 John 2 : 16). The Church reminds us that the sacrament of marriage is in this case protected by God's ninth commandment, which prohibits sensual lust.⁴⁸ In anthropology, lust is understood to be every kind of desire. Meanwhile, St. Paul understands it in even greater detail, in a way that can be described in the following words: "desires [of the flesh] against the Spirit" (see: Galatians 5 : 16, 17, 24; Ephesians 2 : 3).⁴⁹ Lust is considered to be an effect of original sin that creates moral disorder in man's dominion, although according to the Church's teaching it is not in itself a sin, although it inclines man to sin (see: Genesis 3 : 11).⁵⁰ Because of original sin, human nature has been wounded in its desires. The catechism teaches: "Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man's moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit

46 Cf. Vatican Council II, const. *Gaudium et Spes*, 50.

47 Cf. A. Scola, *Boża tajemnica miłości w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, [in:] *Miłować ludzką miłość. Dziedzictwo myśli Jana Pawła II o małżeństwie i rodzinie*, pod red. L. Meliny i S. Grygiela, Warszawa 2010, p. 31.

48 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2514.

49 Cf. O. Myla, *Czystość małżeńska podstawą właściwej relacji*, [in:] *Rodzina miłością wielką (?)*, red. W. Surmiak, Katowice 2014, p. 215–216.

50 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2515.

sins.”⁵¹ In this situation, God comes to help man through the effects of the sacrament of marriage. Edwards Ozorowski mentions two such effects. They are the existence of the bond of marriage and sacramental grace.⁵² According to the Church’s teachings, the bond of marriage is in its nature eternal and exclusive. Meanwhile, the grace of strengthening spouses in a way consecrates them to the duties of their state and dignity.⁵³

The bride and groom’s consent is the essence of the knot of marriage. As a result of this consent, the spouses give themselves to each other and take in each other.⁵⁴ This consent is sealed by God Himself (see: Mark 10 : 9). However, Christian anthropology recognizes the existence of man’s supernatural dignity, which does not allow for the treatment of the human person as an object. Consequently, the person cannot be treated, in whole or in part, as anyone’s property. The only exception is a person’s gift of oneself. However, this has to be an integral gift, one that encompasses the entirety of the human being. It should be done publicly and be confirmed by the appropriate witnesses. It is on this basis that it is accepted and sealed by God. In accordance with God’s will from a sealed and authenticated covenant, a permanent institution is formed between a man and a woman. In the thought of Vatican II, its permanence relates not only to the spouses themselves, but to the rest of society as well.⁵⁵ The covenant of spouses is incorporated into God’s covenant with man. This is why the catechism incorporates true married love into God’s love.⁵⁶ The Church’s teaching is unequivocal with regards to the bond of marriage discussed here. It is above all established by God. Thus a marriage of baptized people once forged and fulfilled can never be dissolved. This is because this bond is the result of a human, and therefore sapient and free, act of the spouses’ agreement to be a lifelong community from the human act of complementing marriage. For this reason, according to the Church’s teaching marriage is an irrevocable reality and initiates a covenant guaranteed

51 Ibidem, 405.

52 Cf. E. Ozorowski, *Kościół domowy w Kościele Powszechnym*, [in:] *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 46–47.

53 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1638.

54 Cf. M. Wójtowicz, *Uczciwość jako cecha relacji małżeńskiej*, [in:] *Rodzina miłością wielką (?)*, op. cit., p. 99.

55 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

56 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1639.

by fidelity and God's truthfulness.⁵⁷ In the Church's teaching, fidelity is being consistent in keeping one's word. God is faithful in all His words; the first who experienced this was the Virgin Mary.⁵⁸ Because the sacrament of marriage initiates spouses in the mystery of the fidelity of Christ and His Church, spouses give witness to this mystery in their fidelity.⁵⁹ The Church, which has the right to speak on all human topics, does not have the right to speak against something established by God's wisdom; marriage is precisely such a thing.⁶⁰ The Church also teaches that the natural covenant of love established between a man and a woman has been elevated to the rank of a sacrament by Christ. In the constitution *Lumen gentium*, the Second Vatican Council claims that Christian spouses "[b]y reason of their state and rank in life they have their own special gift among the people of God."⁶¹ The entirety of human life is influenced by the benevolent grace of Christ the Lord. In this way, in the Church's teaching it becomes linked with marriage, which is an important sphere of human life.⁶² In the catechism, this grace "proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couple's love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity."⁶³ As the council teaches, it helps spouses to help each other, which results from their natural bond and in giving birth to children and raising them for sanctity.⁶⁴ Supernatural goods, and thus above all God's graces, are elaborated by Christ⁶⁵ and given by God to the faithful in various forms; among them are the sacraments. According to Wincenty Granat, they are "visible signs of a symbolic nature through which God gives the highest goods."⁶⁶

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the sacrament of the New Covenant have been established by Christ the Lord and encompass all the important moments in a Christian's life. In this way, they present a certain

57 Cf. J. Burggraf, *Matka Pięknej Miłości*, [in:] *Miłować ludzką miłość. Dziedzictwo myśli Jana Pawła II o małżeństwie i rodzinie*, op. cit., p. 267.

58 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 27.

59 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2365.

60 Cf. *ibidem*, 1640.

61 Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, 11.

62 Cf. W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 348.

63 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1641; cf. G. Bressan, A. Riva, *Drogi wiodące ku miłości*, [in:] *Małżeństwo chrześcijańskie. Komentarze egzegetyczno-duszpasterskie do czytań biblijnych*, oprac. M. Massini, przeł. S. Gaudyn, Warszawa 1983, p. 39.

64 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 41.

65 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1642.

66 W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 348.

similarity and parallel between man's natural life and his spiritual, supernatural life.⁶⁷ The Church recognizes a certain order serving the human community in the person's life. Thus it distinguishes the sacraments serving communion, which are also called the gifts of sending. These are the sacraments of holy orders and of marriage.⁶⁸ These two sacraments serve the salvation of other people, and through service of others contribute to man's personal salvation. Therefore, marriage serves a special vocation in the Church and the building of the people of God.⁶⁹ Although baptism gives the person the grace of purification from all sin, it does not by itself get rid of lust. The baptized person is summoned to fight against lust, despite the prevailing opinions.⁷⁰ This is possible thanks to virtue and the gift of purity, the purity of intentions, the purity of one's glances, and prayer.⁷¹

The Church became gradually aware of the sacramentality of Christian marriage. Wincenty Granat cites the words of Sacred Scripture and the Church Fathers in summarizing the dogmatic basis for the sacramentality of marriage. Here, it is worth noting that he sees its beginning in the presence of Christ the Lord at the wedding at Cana and in the equation between marital love and the love of Christ and the Church in St. Paul's writings.⁷² Meanwhile, the Second Vatican Council teaches that Christ the Lord generously blesses noble human love. It was forged of God's love as its source and was ordered in the image of Christ's love for the Church. Christ responds to spouses with the grace of the sacrament, just as God once responded to people with the grace of His covenant.⁷³

Because a marriage that was entered into validly cannot be separated from the sacrament, the Church has the right to establish the conditions under which it is valid. Thus we should reference the Church's teaching that the substance and form of the sacrament of marriage is the bride and groom's externally expressed and mutually accepted agreement. According to Granat, this agreement is a natural being that becomes the overriding cause of God's

67 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1210.

68 Cf. *ibidem*, 1211; cf. Z. Narecki, *Urzeczywistnianie sakramentalnych wymiarów małżeństwa w świetle adhortacji Jana Pawła II Familiaris consortio*, „Społeczeństwo i Rodzina” 2011 nr 2, p. 37.

69 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1534.

70 Cf. T. Styczeń, *Kryzys w teologii moralnej?*, [in:] *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 100, 106.

71 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2551.

72 W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit. vol. 2, p. 349.

73 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

grace given to people.⁷⁴ The catechism adds that “in a Christian marriage the spouses are strengthened and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and the dignity of their state by a special sacrament.”⁷⁵ Catholic teachings on the sacrament of marriage result from the fact that Christian anthropology is not limited to earthly life. It presents a perspective of absolute good that becomes close through certain symbols belonging to earthly reality. Consequently, the sacrament of marriage can be described as a valid marital contract that is an effective sign from Christ’s will.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we should note that the Church’s teaching on marriage, which is deeply rooted in the Bible, is one that continually develops. The proclamations of councils, statements of popes, and theological reflections on marriage always have their basis in Sacred Scripture. Also important is the fact that the sacrament of marriage was elevated to the dignity of a sacrament by Christ. Thus spouses have all the information in order to realize in their lives and in the lives of their families the vocation that they have received from God.

Abstract

The Biblical and Theological Foundations of the of the Catholic Church’s Teachings Concerning Marriage

Marriage is very deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. Over the centuries, the Church’s tradition has developed a Bible-based doctrine concerning marriage and the family. The provisions of Church councils and the expression of various popes have specified this teaching. It should also be emphasized that Catholic marriage is a sacrament in which God gives the newlyweds a special grace to pursue their vocation. The purpose of this article is to present the biblical foundations of marriage and the sacrament’s roots in the teachings of the Church.

Keywords: Bible; Catholic Church; marriage

74 Cf. W. Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie. Zarys dogmatyki katolickiej*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 350.

75 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1638.

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