



THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

By Father Gabriel Calvo

In order to carry out God's vision of unity and openness in marriage, couples must realize that mutual trust and dialogue alone are inadequate. But if you invite God into your lives and turn over everything to Him (the significance of the Cana story), He will change the water of your human effort into overflowing wine of the very best quality, that is, marital happiness.

The Sacrament of Marriage consecrates and sanctifies the couple as a couple; that is their bond, their union, their interpersonal relationship, their conjugal love.

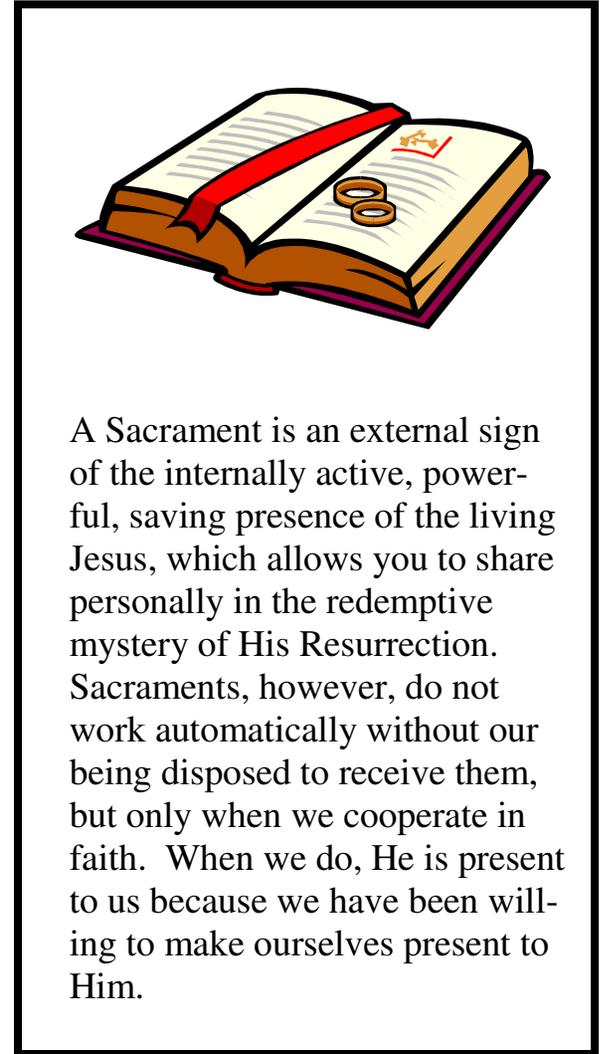
Jesus wants to actually live within you and through you, to show to one another, your children, and others, His Presence and His Actions in your married life and home life.

The presence of JESUS within an individual person is not a concept that is easily or readily grasped. But we are talking about something much deeper and more mysterious here -- the real living Presence of JESUS within; and not only within the individual (as it takes place with Baptism) but within the couple as a separate identity in themselves, because of their special relationship with Jesus. (Matt. 18:20)

There is always a danger that a consideration of the ideal may have a discouraging rather than a helpful effect. The ideal says nothing about the struggles and tensions of even the best marriages; still less about the ones that seem to be suffering. In fact, any happily married couple looking back over the years will remember times of agony and bitterness; times when love seemed a bad joke; when financial troubles or sickness or clashes of temperament or over-work made the struggle to stay together seem beyond their powers.

Mature Christians realize that if their marriage is truly to image the bridal feast of the risen LORD, they can only get there in the way that He did -- through the cross. I believe there is no other way. When they work through their crises they are often surprised that they have come to know and love each other more deeply than before.

In fact, because of JESUS Presence within you, He becomes an indispensable Third Person in your marriage, making your married relationship something profoundly sacred. You are called to become a sign of GOD's Love, making it possible for others to see JESUS living within you.



A Sacrament is an external sign of the internally active, powerful, saving presence of the living Jesus, which allows you to share personally in the redemptive mystery of His Resurrection. Sacraments, however, do not work automatically without our being disposed to receive them, but only when we cooperate in faith. When we do, He is present to us because we have been willing to make ourselves present to Him.

The ways you are “signs” to each other are manifold: by work and prayer and tenderness; by listening and serving and healing; by giving life and forgiving wrong; by accepting sorrow and the pain of rejection and failure, by sharing the peace and joy that flows out of a love that is tried, etc. This profound way of life and mission is a permanent commitment -- lasting until the death of one or the other of the partners. What a responsibility! What a mystery you share in!

You are called to be "signs," not just to one another, but to your children and to your community.

Couples are called to be signs of the love of CHRIST on earth. JESUS is not yours alone. He belongs also to those who do not know Him. You have to witness Him to the world, to speak about your experience of the Sacrament of Marriage in your lives, so everybody can discover that they too are in GOD's Plan. You must show your marriage as a Faith relationship, being signs of GOD's Love to the world, in such a way that love will be manifestly apparent to others.

Marriage in God's vision is common to all married couples, even those not of the Christian faith. But the Sacrament of Matrimony is different because it denotes a very definite relationship with Jesus. It is specific to all married Christians, even those who are not aware of their Christian condition.

However, Jesus is not just for the Christians; He belongs to everyone. And Christians, especially Christian married couples, are responsible for being witnesses of Jesus to the world. Of course, those who do not believe this, cannot speak from their experience.

On the other hand, there is a great need for married couples to speak to others about their experience of the Sacrament of Marriage in their lives. They must speak to Christian couples, to remind them of the great treasure they have in their married relationship. They must speak to non-Christians or unbelievers to help them discover that they too are in God's Loving vision.



**The Sacrament of Marriage
is the Sacrament of Hope.**

**How am I a Sign of God's Love to
my Spouse?**

**How have we as a couple been a
sign of God's love to others?**

**Website for Fr. Calvo and FIRES
www.family-experiences.org**

