

WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING

"In order that the deceits of the enemy may be avoided, it is necessary first of all that they be laid bare, since much is to be gained by denouncing these fallacies for the sake of the unwary; even though we prefer not to name these iniquities 'as becometh saints' (Eph 5:3), yet for the welfare of souls we cannot remain altogether silent" (Pope Pius XI: *Casti Connubii*, 48).

Here is how present-day Western society ("the world") sees sex and marriage.

IT IS ALL WRONG.

- The gratification of your sex instinct is essential to psychological stability and a healthy self-image.
- Your sex — male, female, or neither — is up to you; you can always have it changed by an operation, together with medication.
- You can gratify your sex instinct on your own, with another person of the same sex, or with a person of the other sex.
- You do not have to marry someone in order for the two of you to have satisfying sex.
- Before you make any kind of commitment to a sexual partner, you should live together for a time to see whether you are sexually compatible.
- You cannot commit yourself to one sexual partner for life, but only for as long as you stay in love.
- An infertile couple may have children by artificial insemination.
- It does not matter to children whether they are brought up by a same-sex couple or a heterosexual couple, as long as they are not hurt.
- You should not have a child until you feel sure your relationship with your partner is going to last.
- You should use contraception to avoid conceiving a child until you feel ready for it.
- If you do conceive a child before you feel ready for it, you should abort the pregnancy.
- If life with your partner becomes too irksome, you should move out, especially if there are children, because an atmosphere of unhappiness is bad for them.
- If, at any time, you find a better sexual partner, you should leave your present partner, breaking the connection by legal divorce, if necessary.
- Divorce and separation do not cause serious problems for children; they soon get over it.
- Your own happiness is the most important consideration in any decision you make.

*"The world" takes all this for granted —
to the point where it is hardly ever even stated.*

Does it sound reasonable?

If it does, you need to be warned:

*This view of sex and marriage is perverse, against nature
and against God's design.*

The Catholic Church teaches the truth about sex and marriage:

*Marriage is not just a state of mind
or a state of the feelings;
it is an objective reality.*

*Once you have received the Sacrament of Matrimony,
you are married for life,
whether you want to be or not,
for the two of you have become one.*

*The marriage act is a way of imitating in the body
the Creator's generosity and fertility.
The connection between its unitive meaning
and its procreative meaning
is willed by God
and unable to be broken by humans
on their own initiative.*

Accordingly, the Church condemns divorce, masturbation, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, homo-sex, artificial contraception, artificial insemination, and sex-change operations.

But the difference between the Church and "the world" goes much deeper — so deep that in our talk on "Matrimony," we will hardly mention these subjects.

*We will focus on the spiritual reality
that the Sacrament of Matrimony brings into being.*

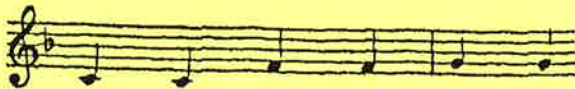
You have been warned.

BE PREPARED FOR SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT.

Note: We will have more to say in our talks on "God's Will," "The Last Seven Commandments," "Love of God and Neighbour," and "Marriage and the Family."

Session 20: Matrimony

HYMN: May the Grace of Christ



May the grace of Christ our Saviour
and the Father's boundless love,
with the Holy Spirit's favour,
rest upon them from above.

So may they abide in union
with each other and the Lord,
and possess, in sweet communion,
joys which earth cannot afford.

(Bow) Now with all the saints in
Heaven
thanks and praises do we sing
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Three in One, our triune King.

PRAYER: See Eph 1:20-20.

Let us pray: O God,
grant us a spirit
of wisdom and insight
to know You clearly.
Enlighten our innermost vision,
that we may know the great hope
to which You have called us,
the wealth of Your glorious heritage
to be distributed among the members
of the Church,
and the immeasurable scope
of Your power
in us who believe.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with You
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
— Amen

READING: Mk 10:2-12

The Lord be with you.
— *And with your spirit*
A Reading from the holy Gospel
according to Mark
— *Glory to You, O Lord*
The Pharisees approached Jesus
and asked,
"Is it lawful
for a husband to divorce his wife?"
They were testing Him.

He said to them in reply,
"What did Moses command you?"
They replied,
"Moses permitted him
to write a bill of divorce
and dismiss her."

But Jesus told them,
"Because of the hardness
of your hearts
he wrote you this commandment.
But from the beginning of creation,
'God made them male and female.
For this reason
a man shall leave
his father and mother
(and be joined to his wife),
and the two shall become one flesh.'
So they are no longer two,
but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined
together,
no human being must separate."

In the house
the disciples again questioned Him
about this.

He said to them,
"Whoever divorces his wife
and marries another
commits adultery against her;
and if she divorces her husband
and marries another,
she commits adultery."
The Gospel of the Lord
— *Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ*

IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

Matrimony is the Sacrament
that sanctifies the contract
of a Christian marriage
and gives God's special help
to those who receive it worthily,
to enable them to bear
the difficulties of their state,
to love
and be faithful to each other,
and to bring up their children
in the fear of God.

Once a sacramental marriage
has been consummated,
no power on earth can dissolve it,
for Jesus said,
"What God has joined together,
no human being must separate."

From the time that
a sacramental marriage —

Session 20

has been consummated,
it is an objective reality —
that is, something that exists
whether we know it,
recognize it,
feel it,
or admit it.

It is a sacrilege
to contract marriage in mortal sin,
or in disobedience
to the laws of the Church,
and, instead of a blessing,
the guilty parties
draw upon themselves
the anger of God.

For the marriage of a Catholic
to be valid,
it must take place in church,
in the presence of a priest
or a deacon.

BIBLE READING

Jer 19-35

This week
you will continue reading
the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

Its message is clear:
the wages of sin is death.
Sinful cities are destroyed,
the people put to the sword.

Nevertheless,
death is not the end of the story;
God is merciful.

Next week we will talk about
"Death and the End of the World."
We will see how
death "leads to endless day,"
as the Church says
in her Night Prayer.

Matrimony

Introduction

Matrimony is the Sacrament by which "a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life," which "by its nature" is directed toward "the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring."¹

It is one of the two "Sacraments at the Service of Communion," because it is "directed toward the service of others."² Like all Sacraments, it brings into being the spiritual reality it symbolizes.³

What is the spiritual reality that Matrimony brings into being? To understand the answer, we must consider love in its origin.

God is a family

"God in His deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a Family, since He has in Himself Fatherhood, Sonship, and the essence of the family, which is Love."⁴

"God is love."⁵ His very *Being* is love.⁶ He did not have to create in order to have someone to love: His own life is a loving communion of Persons.⁷

"The Father pours out the fullness of Himself; He holds nothing of His divinity back. He eternally fathers" — or begets — "the Son. The Father is, above all else, a life-giving Lover, and the Son is His perfect Image. So what else is the Son but a life-giving Lover? And He dynamically images the Father from all eternity, pouring out the life He has received from the Father," offering that life back to the Father "as a perfect expression of thanks and love. That life and love [that] the Son receives from the Father and returns to the Father is the Holy Spirit."⁸

Made in God's image

Now God created humans⁹ out of love, in order to draw us up into His Trinitarian life of love and thus make us share His bliss.¹⁰

In Genesis 1, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."¹¹ "In the divine image He created him; male and female He created them."¹²

In Genesis 2, He created man, but then He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."¹³ Accordingly, he made a woman, whom the man¹⁴ recognized as bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.¹⁵

"At the beginning of creation," Jesus said, "God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh."¹⁶

A human, then, is an image of God: not only God Who created and rules the world, "but also, and essentially," God Who is a "divine communion of Persons." A human images God "not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons" formed by man and woman.¹⁷ That communion is more profound than our communion with our father and mother, even though every cell in our body comes from the union of our parents' sperm and ovum.

And "God blessed them, saying, 'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue

1 CCC 1601

2 CCC 1534. The other one is Holy Orders.

3 See the talk on "Grace and the Sacraments."

4 Pope John Paul II: *Puebla: A Pilgrimage of Faith*

5 1 Jn 4:8, 16

6 See CCC 221.

7 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.

8 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part 3, 3. See the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity."

9 In Hebrew, *adam*, meaning "man" as opposed to animal, like the Latin *homo*.

10 See CCC 295, 1997.

11 Gn 1:26

12 See Gn 1:26-27.

13 See Gn 2:7, 18.

14 In Hebrew, *ish*, meaning "man" as opposed to "woman," like the Latin *vir*.

15 See Gn 2:21.

16 Mk 10:6-7

it."¹⁸ On this married couple, then, "right from the beginning, there descended the blessing of fertility, linked with human procreation."¹⁹ From the communion of a man and a woman, children would proceed — a dim analogy of how the God the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father and God the Son.

Now because God made us in His image, He wrote into our nature the "vocation,"²⁰ the "capacity," and the "responsibility" of "love and communion." Love is "the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being." We are called to love in our *integrity*,²¹ or wholeness — our "unified totality," body and soul.²²

One way of responding to this vocation is Matrimony.²³

God is a Lover

All through salvation history, God expresses His love for us in *marital* terms.²⁴

In the *Old Testament*, He calls Israel His bride.²⁵ "I remember the devotion of your youth, how you loved Me as a bride,"²⁶ He says. "But like a woman faithless to her Lover, even so have you been faithless to Me, O House of Israel."²⁷

He tries to win her back, to stop her prostitution with false gods.²⁸ "I will allure her," He says; "I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart.... She shall respond there as in the days of her youth, when she came up from the land of Egypt." Then "she shall call Me 'my Husband,' and never again 'my Baal'"²⁹ — "Lord" or "Master."

God comforts Israel like "a wife married in youth and then cast off."³⁰ "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great tenderness I will take you back."³¹ "I will espouse you to Me forever; I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord."³²

Here, the Hebrew for "know" is *yada*, the same as the word used when Adam "knew" his wife Eve so that she "conceived" and "gave birth."³³

In the *New Testament*, Jesus Himself described God's reign in terms of a wedding. It is like "a King Who gave a wedding banquet for His Son,"³⁴ He says, or "ten bridesmaids who took their torches and went out to welcome the Groom."³⁵

In the "new and eternal covenant"³⁶ that He ratified with His Blood³⁷ at the Last Supper/crucifixion,³⁸ Christ betrothed the Church to Himself as His Bride, making her one Flesh with Him by giving her His Body to eat. Then, just as after a Jewish betrothal,³⁹ He went "to prepare a place" for her; eventually He will return to take her with Him, so that where He is, she also may be.⁴⁰

Accordingly, John the Baptist called Jesus the Bridegroom,⁴¹ and Jesus accepted

17 Pope John Paul II: General Audience, November 14 1979, 3

18 Gn 1:28

19 Pope John Paul II: General Audience, November 14 1979, 3

20 That is, the "calling"; from the Latin *vocare* ("call").

21 The word is connected with the word *integer*, which means a whole number.

22 Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 11

23 The other is virginity "for the sake of the Kingdom of God" (see Mt 19:12). In both, we image the Trinity in our body and soul. Whoever denigrates one denigrates the other (see CCC 1620). Also see Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 7.

24 See Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 4.

25 See Ez 16.

26 Jer 2:2

27 Jer 3:20

28 See Hos 2.

29 Hos 2:16-18

30 Is 54:6

31 Is 54:7

32 Hos 2:21-22

33 See Gn 4:1,25. Conjugal love leads spouses "to the reciprocal 'knowledge' which makes them 'one flesh'" (Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 14).

34 See Mt 22:2-14.

35 See Mt 25:1-13.

36 See the words of consecration in the four Eucharistic Prayers.

37 See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

38 See the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

39 See the talk on "Mary and Joseph."

40 See Jn 14:3.

the title.^{4 2} Paul calls the Church Christ's bride.^{4 3}

Finally, John the Evangelist describes Heaven as the consummation of this betrothal. "I will show you the woman who is the bride of the Lamb,"^{4 4} an angel said to him, and he saw "the holy city Jerusalem" — the Church^{4 5} — "coming down from Heaven."^{4 6} He heard the shouts of a great crowd: "This is the wedding day of the Lamb; His bride has prepared herself."^{4 7}

Is all this marital language just a metaphor — simply our attempts to describe God's love in terms we will understand?

No. God loves "with the love of a Person." From "all the nations He chooses Israel and loves her"; His love "may certainly be called *eros*."^{4 8} Now *eros* is "that love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself."^{4 9} God, the "absolute and ultimate Source of all being," is "a Lover, with all the passion of a true love."^{5 0}

And this love "finds its definitive fulfilment in Jesus Christ," Who is God the Son made Man for our salvation.^{5 1}

Spiritual reality

Now we can answer the question we started with: what is the spiritual reality that the Sacrament of Matrimony brings into being between husband and wife?

It is the love Christ expressed when, "for us men and for our salvation," He left His Father and "came down from Heaven."^{5 2}

It is the love He expressed when, at the Last Supper, He made us "one Flesh" with Him^{5 3} through the Eucharist, in a new covenant ratified by His own Blood.

It is the love He expressed when, as He hung dead on the cross, the Church came forth from His pierced side, in blood and water.^{5 4}

Just as the Sacrament of Baptism makes us live with divine life — *Zoë* — so the Sacrament of Matrimony makes spouses love each other with divine love: specifically, the conjugal love between Christ and the Church.

Accordingly, this love is *exclusive* and *faithful*, for it images the love between Christ and His one Bride, the Church.^{5 5} It is *fruitful*, open to the birth of children, just as the love between Christ and the Church leads to the re-birth of children in Baptism.^{5 6} Finally, the covenant between them is *indissoluble*, for it makes them "one body,"^{5 7} "one flesh,"^{5 8} just like Christ-and-the-Church.^{5 9}

Natural requirements

Many people see fidelity, fertility, and indissolubility as "thoroughly negative"

41 See Jn 3:29.

42 See Mt 9:15; Mk 2:18-20; Lk 5:33-35; Jn 3:28-30.

43 See 1 Cor 6:15-17; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27.

44 See the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

45 For it has "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" on its foundation (see Rv 21:9-13).

46 See Rv 21:9-13.

47 Rv 19:6-7

48 See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 9.

49 See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 3. *Eros* is the source of "erotic."

50 Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 10

51 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 13. See also the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

52 See the Nicene Creed.

53 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 13. See also the talks on "The History of Our Salvation" and "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

54 See Jn 19:34. "As from the side of the first Adam, after having cast him into a deep sleep, God draws forth Eve (see Gn 2:21-24), so also from the side of the new Adam, sleeping the sleep of death on the cross, there is born the new Eve, the Church." We can imagine Christ saying, like the first Adam, "Here at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 14).

55 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

56 See the talk on "Baptism and Confirmation." Thus the Church "finds in the family, born from the Sacrament [of Matrimony], the cradle and the setting in which she can enter the human generations, and where these in their turn can enter the Church" (Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 15).

57 Gn 2:24

58 Mk 10:6-7

59 See the talk on "The Light of Faith."

requirements artificially imposed on *eros* by the Church.⁶⁰

To see how wrong they are, consider sexual intercourse, the characteristic expression of *eros*. It is not "purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person,"⁶¹ for it symbolizes the total gift of the body.⁶²

But for this gift to be truly human, and not merely animal, it must symbolize the total gift of the *person*. Therefore, it must be *lifelong* and *total*. Neither person can withhold part of it, such as his or her fertility. Neither person can reserve even the possibility of withholding it in the future.⁶³ And this total self-giving is possible only in marriage, the free and deliberate covenant of conjugal love by which spouses publicly commit themselves totally to each other until death.⁶⁴

"To be in love is both to intend and to promise lifelong fidelity," says C.S. Lewis. People in love promise it spontaneously. "I will love you forever," are almost the first words they say to each other — "not hypocritically, but sincerely."⁶⁵ Lovers make these vows lightly, not because they intend to break them, but because they are convinced "they will never *wish* to break them."⁶⁶

As a matter of observable fact, then, fidelity, fertility, and indissolubility are natural to *eros*.⁶⁷ However, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, they have a new significance, for they become "the expression of specifically Christian values,"⁶⁸ and the Church insists that they be taken seriously.

Headship

Eros, then, the natural love between spouses, can be compared to the supernatural love between Christ and the Church — but only as ghosts can be compared to solid people.⁶⁹ Accordingly, Paul uses Christ's love for the Church to teach husbands and wives about Matrimony, not *vice versa*.

Some of what he says may be repugnant, but hear it before we say any more.⁷⁰

"The husband is head of his wife just as Christ is Head of His Body the Church, as well as its Saviour. As the Church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loves the Church.... Husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Observe that no one ever hates his own flesh; no, he nourishes it and takes care of it as Christ cares for the Church — for we are members of His Body.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be made into one."⁷¹ This is a great foreshadowing; I mean that it refers to Christ and the Church."⁷²

The Sacrament of Matrimony brings into being between spouses the "very relationship of Christ with the Church."⁷³ Within "the unity of the two,"⁷⁴ then, the husband is "head of his wife" just as Christ is "Head of His Body the Church."⁷⁵

60 See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 3.

61 Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 11. See Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 3.

62 "Wherever a man lies with a woman... a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured" (C.S. Lewis: *The Screwtape Letters*, 18).

63 Consider this analogy, from probability theory. The experiment of throwing ten dice all at once is held to be equivalent to the experiment of throwing one die ten times. Failing to throw the one die the tenth time would be equivalent to withdrawing one of the dice from the ten in the first place. Analogously, withholding anything of oneself in the future is equivalent to withholding part of oneself now.

64 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.

65 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, "Eros"

66 Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VII, "The (False) Sanction of Eros"

67 See Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 3.

68 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 13.

69 See C.S. Lewis: *The Great Divorce*, 3.

70 See Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 4-5.

71 Gn 2:24

72 Eph 5:23-32

73 Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 13. Also see Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 4-5.

74 Pope John Paul II: *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 23, 26, 29. The phrase occurs 14 times.

75 Eph 5:23

To see what Paul means by "head," consider something else he said: "The Head of every man is Christ; the head of a woman is her husband; and the Head of Christ is the Father."⁷⁶ If God the Father is the "Head" of Christ, Who is God the Son, "head" *cannot* mean boss or superior, for within the Holy Trinity, "None comes before or after; None is greater or inferior, but all three Persons are co-equal and co-eternal."⁷⁷

Paul, then, does not mean that a woman's husband is her boss or superior. And neither does God, for, speaking of Israel's return to Him, He said, "Then she shall call Me 'my Husband,' and never again 'my Baal'"⁷⁸ — my "lord" or "master."

"The husband is, above all, *he who loves*," while "the wife is *she who is loved*." In the context of the whole of Paul's letter, "the wife's submission to her husband" means "above all, the *experiencing of love*."⁷⁹

In fact, if husbands treated their wives as God the Father treats God the Son and Christ treats the Church, no one would object to their headship. If we do, it is because husbands and wives belong to a fallen race.

However, we cannot solve the problem by trying to re-invent marriage. Marriage was "established by the Creator and endowed by Him with its own proper laws"; "God Himself is the Author of marriage."⁸⁰

'Impossible to deny'

Sheldon and "Davy" Vanauken discovered this for themselves in their profound and lifelong attempt to eliminate headship from their marriage.⁸¹

The two devoted all their minds and hearts to keeping their "in-love-ness," Vanauken said. When they married, in 1937, feminism was simply "not on," but he was determined to renounce husbandly authority. They would discuss everything and not act until they agreed, and they would share housework and cooking as well as sailing and boatwork. They called themselves "comrade-lovers," not husband and wife. They gave up everything they could not experience identically — including children.

"Davy did not demand this in the name of women's rights," Vanauken stressed; "it was my initiative," done "in the name of love."⁸²

Both agnostics, they began studying Christianity together out of interest, but soon became convinced of its truth and started going to church. Davy died in 1955 at the age of 40, but Sheldon lived for another 41 years. In 1981 he became a Catholic.

The two never consciously changed their minds about marriage, and Vanauken remained an ardent feminist for many decades. But he came to see that before Davy had died, she had been starting "to *want to be wifely and obedient*."⁸³

"I truly believe" that she had found it "*liberating to be a traditional Christian wife*," he said. "Not a comrade, not a partner, but a *wife*."⁸⁴

Paul's "headship" means not "bossing,"⁸⁵ he explained, but "initiating" or "leading." There was a certain irony, therefore, in the fact that *he* had initiated their feminism. He *had* exercised a sort of headship, which Davy had accepted and even *desired* without either of them realizing it.⁸⁶

His conclusion was that male leadership is inbuilt in creation; it can be denied, but only at heavy cost to love. He and Davy, loving so deeply, had found it impossible to deny, try as they might.⁸⁷

76 1 Cor 11:3

77 Athanasian Creed

78 Hos 2:18

79 Pope John Paul II: General Audience, September 1 1982

80 Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 48

81 See Sheldon Vanauken: *A Severe Mercy and Under the Mercy*.

82 Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII

83 Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII

84 Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII

85 Bossing is the "debasing of headship" and "clinging-vine-ism" the "debasing of wifely response" (Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII).

86 See Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII.

87 See Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII.

'We've got to do it'

Vanauken also tells of four women⁸⁸ who met weekly to study the Bible. One evening they came to Paul's statement that the husband is head of the wife.⁸⁹

They paused and read it again. There was a silence.

"Every one of those women — they all knew it — was the head in her marriage. They regarded their husbands as amiable and no doubt lovable blunderers who couldn't be trusted to think of things and run things competently."

They found other, similar passages.⁹⁰ Finally, one said, "Well, girls, what do we do?" Another said, "We've got to do it." A third said, "*They've* got to — the men."

They got their husbands together and talked. "Then came the miracle." In less than a year all four women were telling everyone about it "with amazement and delight." Every husband had "grown taller in his wife's eyes: bigger, stronger, wiser, more humorous." Each wife felt "that her marriage had come to a new depth of happiness — a joy — that it had never had before. A *rightness*."

Later, they realized that "their husbands had never demanded and never would have demanded the headship; it could only be a free gift from wife to husband."⁹¹

"This is what Davy first intuitively understood and then came in the last years of her life to understand more deeply through her beloved St. Paul," Vanauken said.⁹²

Serve, not be served

Of course, for this "miracle" to happen, men, too, must heed St. Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church" and "gave Himself up for her."⁹³

"Among the Gentiles, those who seem to exercise authority make their importance felt," Jesus said. "It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest," for the Son of Man came "not to be served, but to serve — to give His life in ransom for the many."⁹⁴

"The husband is head of the wife just insofar as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church" — and Christ gave His *life* for her.⁹⁵ Moreover, He did it "while we were still sinners,"⁹⁶ not because He *found* the Church beautiful, but because He wanted to *make* her beautiful.⁹⁷

* * * * *

Decision-making

If the "head" is not the "boss," what does Paul mean by saying, "As the Church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything"?⁹⁸

In practice, for marriage to be permanent, the family's head must, "in the last resort, have the power of deciding the family policy." A permanent association requires a "constitution," and "in a council of two, there can be no majority."⁹⁹

Does a wife, then, have no part or power in family decision-making? Take another look at Matrimony's prototype: Christ and the Church.¹⁰⁰

Jesus told His apostles that what they bound or loosed on earth would be bound or loosed in Heaven.¹⁰¹ And He kept His word.¹⁰²

The Church, therefore, does have power: "to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal

88 See Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII.

89 1 Cor 11:3

90 Col 3:18, Eph 5:22-32, 1 Tim 2:11-15. (In Gal 3:28, Paul asserted the unimportance of gender in *eligibility for salvation, not in marriage*.)

91 Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII

92 See Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII. Also see Laura Doyle: *The Surrendered Wife*, with its "Catholic Preface."

93 Eph 5:25

94 Mk 10:42-45

95 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, 5

96 Rom 5:8

97 See Rom 5:8 and Appendix 1.

98 Eph 5:24

99 C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 6

100 See Eph 5:32, Rv 19:6-8.

101 Mt 16:19. Also see Mt 18:18; Lk 10:16; Jn 20-23.

102 See Mt 17:24-27; Acts 10:9-48.

judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions."¹⁰³ Accordingly, the apostles could say, after determining that non-Jewish Christians did not have to follow the entire Law of Moses, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too."¹⁰⁴

Paul, then, *cannot* mean that wives should have no opinions of their own, no part or power in determining family policy.

To understand his meaning, realize that decision-making is more than just making a choice. Beforehand, there is 1) gathering factual data and 2) proposing creative ideas. Afterward, there is 3) implementing the choice and 4) evaluating the choice.

"Influence and power, far from being concentrated solely in the moment of choice, are diffused through all the stages" of decision-making.¹⁰⁵

Husband and wife share responsibility for family policy — not as in a democracy, where identical voters cast equal votes, but as in a body, where organs are different, yet complementary, and each contributes its own unique gifts.¹⁰⁶

Equal and complementary

"God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity." Both are persons, "man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness" of God.¹⁰⁷

But man and woman are different, just as Christ and the Church are different, and the difference is "soul-deep."¹⁰⁸ Spiritually — not just psychologically or physically — they are as different as a nut and a bolt, which are equally necessary to hold things together, or a violin and a bow, which are equally necessary to make music, or a lock and a key, which are equally necessary to make things secure.¹⁰⁹

"Man and woman were made for each other — not that God left them half-made and incomplete," but that "He created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be helpmate to the other, for they are equal as persons and complementary as masculine and feminine."¹¹⁰

Sacramental sign

Jesus performed his first public miracle during a wedding feast at Cana, in Galilee.¹¹¹ In His presence there, the Church sees a confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that henceforth Matrimony will be a sacramental, or efficacious, sign of His presence.¹¹² At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, she officially recognized the institution of marriage as it had been ordained by God from the beginning as one of the seven Sacraments.¹¹³

The sacramental sign of Matrimony is the *consent* by which a baptized man and a baptized woman give themselves to each other — "I take you to be my wife"; "I take you to be my husband" — fulfilled, or consummated, by *the marriage act*.¹¹⁴

The Sacrament of Matrimony is not just a contract, in which goods are exchanged, but a covenant, in which persons are exchanged in their integrity or totality.¹¹⁵ It is not administered to the couple by a priest or a deacon, but by the man and the woman to each other.¹¹⁶

103 CCC 553.

104 Acts 15:28

105 Robert T. Kennedy: *Shared Responsibility in Ecclesial Decision-Making*, a talk delivered in Vancouver November 17 1995. See Appendix 2.

106 See 1 Cor 12:12-27. Also see the talk on "The Communion Among the Saints in the Body of Christ."

107 CCC 2334

108 Sheldon Vanauken: *Under the Mercy*, VIII

109 See Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 3.

110 CCC 372. Helpmate "does not mean "cook, laundress, and scullery-made"; in the Old Testament, it is God Who is most often called our *helper*. See Mary Healy: *Men and Women Are From Eden*, Two.

111 See Jn 2:1-11.

112 See CCC 1613. In Matrimony, husband and wife "abide in union with each other and the Lord" (see the hymn "May the Grace of Christ," verse 2). Bishop Fulton Sheen called his book *Three to Get Married*.

113 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 13.

114 "In that sign" they transfer "the light of truth and beauty, expressed in liturgical language" to "the language of the body" (see Rom 8:23). "In this way, conjugal life becomes in a certain sense liturgical" (Pope John Paul II: *Theology of the Body*, General Audience, July 4 1984).

115 See CCC 1627. Also see the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

Both must understand that "marriage is a permanent partnership between a man and a woman" that is "ordered to the procreation of children" through sexual union.¹¹⁷ They must be free to marry and their consent must be given freely (*e.g.* without coercion, grave fear, or serious reservation).¹¹⁸ Without this freedom, the marriage is *null*; that is, it does not exist.¹¹⁹

The spouses must have the mental, psychological, and moral capacity for marriage. They must also have the physical capacity for sexual intercourse, which by its nature points toward marriage's dual purpose: the manifestation of conjugal love and the procreation and education of children.¹²⁰

Once a sacramental marriage has been consummated, *no power on earth can dissolve it*, for it brings into being between the spouses the indissoluble covenant between Christ and His Church. However, if any of the necessary conditions for a sacramental marriage is absent, the Church can¹²¹ declare the marriage null. In that case, the contracting parties are free to marry, provided any natural obligations of the previous union (*e.g.* to children) are fulfilled.¹²²

A *decree of nullity* is based on the lack of one or more necessary conditions at the beginning — unlike a legal decree of divorce, which may be based on a condition that develops afterward.¹²³

Matrimony in a fallen world

When Adam and Eve fell, they ruptured the original communion between man and woman. Their relation became distorted by recriminations,¹²⁴ domination, and lust.¹²⁵ Their vocation to multiply and subdue the earth¹²⁶ was burdened by the pain of childbirth and the toil of getting food.¹²⁷ Ever since, marriage has been threatened by discord, infidelity, and jealousy.¹²⁸

Accordingly, Moses permitted divorce.¹²⁹ However, he "wrote that commandment for you because of your stubbornness," Jesus said. Then, referring to marriage as it had been "at the beginning of creation," He said, "Let no man separate what God has joined."¹³⁰ To His apostles, He made it even clearer: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and the woman who divorces her husband and marries another commits adultery."¹³¹

Though seriously disturbed, marriage's original nature persists.¹³² Spouses *can* achieve the union for which God created them, and they must never stop trying.

God gives them all the help they need. The very consequences of the Fall — pain in childbearing and toil in getting food¹³³ — help them overcome self-absorption, egoism, and the pursuit of their own pleasure and lead them to give themselves to each other and help each other.¹³⁴

116 The priest or deacon is merely a witness on behalf of the Church.

117 See *Code of Canon Law*, 1096.

118 See *Code of Canon Law*, 1102-1103.

119 See CCC 1625, 1628.

120 See CCC 1601.

121 After an examination of the situation by a competent tribunal.

122 See CCC 1629.

123 Accordingly, the Church "issues a decree of nullity" rather than "grants an annulment."

124 See Gn 3:12.

125 See CCC 400.

126 See Gn 1:28.

127 See CCC 1607, Gn 3:16-19.

128 See CCC 1606.

129 See Dt 22:13-29, 24:1-5.

130 Mk 10:5-9; see Lk 16:18, 1 Cor 7:10-16.

131 Mk 10:10-12. A parallel verse (Mt 5:32) is usually translated, "Everyone who divorces his wife — lewd conduct is a separate case — forces her to commit adultery," but Ronald Knox has, "The man who puts away his wife (setting aside the matter of unfaithfulness) makes an adulteress of her," explaining that the Greek in parentheses, commonly taken to mean "unless she is unfaithful," can also mean "whether she is unfaithful or not," implying that infidelity can be "set aside" as being irrelevant to the immorality of divorce. (We can imagine Jesus waving it aside as someone in His audience questions it.)

132 See CCC 1608.

133 See Gn 3:16-17.

134 See CCC 1609.

Through the Sacrament of Matrimony,¹³⁵ Christ gives spouses strength to take up their crosses and follow Him,¹³⁶ rise again after they have fallen, bear with each other,¹³⁷ get rid of bitterness and malice,¹³⁸ forgive each other,¹³⁹ bear each other's burdens,¹⁴⁰ submit to each other out of reverence for Christ,¹⁴¹ encourage each other, build each other up,¹⁴² and love each other with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love.¹⁴³

"It can seem difficult, even impossible, to bind oneself for life to another human being," but that makes it "all the more important" for Christian spouses to witness to God's faithful and life-giving love by their own fidelity and fertility. Spouses who do so, "often in very difficult conditions," deserve the "gratitude and support" of the Church¹⁴⁴ and society.

Celebration of the Sacrament

The Church requires that spouses administer the Sacrament of Matrimony to each other in church, before a priest (or a deacon), because:

- it is a liturgical act, connected with the Eucharist,¹⁴⁵ for that is how Christ the Bridegroom gives Himself to His bride the Church. It is fitting, therefore, that Matrimony be celebrated during Mass, where the new spouses show that they form "one body" in Christ¹⁴⁶ by partaking of His Body and Blood.¹⁴⁷
- it puts the spouses into a new spiritual state of life, with new rights and duties toward each other and their children, about which the Church has to be certain.
- public consent helps guard against temptation to infidelity.¹⁴⁸

The priest or deacon witnesses the consent of the spouses in the name of the Church, bestows the Church's blessing,¹⁴⁹ and shows by his presence that Matrimony is a spiritual reality.¹⁵⁰

For this world only?

Once a sacramental marriage has been consummated, *no power on earth can dissolve it*. However, when one spouse dies, the survivor can remarry.

"The children of this age marry," Jesus said in answer to a question from the Sadducees, "but those judged worthy of a place in the age to come and of resurrection from the dead do not."¹⁵¹

Jesus was rejecting the Sadducees' "caricature" of Heaven, in which marriage was simply a "continuation of the earthly relationship," said Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pope's household. He was not implying that death puts an end to spousal communion, as if it "will all be forgotten once we have

135 See CCC 1076, 1642.

136 See Mt 16:24.

137 See Col 3:13.

138 See Eph 4:31.

139 See Col 3:13.

140 See Gal 6:2.

141 See Eph 5:21.

142 See 1 Thes 5:11.

143 See CCC 1642.

144 See CCC 1648.

145 "All the Sacraments in a sense spring from the Eucharist and lead back to it" (Pope John Paul II: *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday*, 2002, 2).

146 See CCC 1621.

147 "At the moment of Holy Communion, the priest or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion holds the Body of Christ before the communicant and says: 'The Body of Christ.' The communicant answers: 'Amen.' This means yes. 'Yes, I believe it. Yes, I accept it. Yes, I accept the gift of Your love and I return it to You. I give you my body as you have given Your Body to me.' A married couple find in all this a very special added meaning. Each gives his or her body to the other in love. Each accepts the gift of the other's love and returns it to the married partner. Communion by the couple in the Eucharist is extended into every aspect of their communion of life together" (Irish bishops: *Love is For Life*, 269). Also see the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

148 See CCC 1630-1631.

149 See CCC 1624.

150 See CCC 1630.

151 Lk 20:27-36

crossed the threshold into eternal life."¹⁵²

For those "in Christ," the cardinal noted, "life is changed" by death, "not ended."¹⁵³ In Heaven, Matrimony — which is one response to our vocation to love¹⁵⁴ — "will be transfigured, not nullified."¹⁵⁵

We cannot imagine "transfigured" marriage,¹⁵⁶ any more than a young boy can imagine earthly marriage. The most intense pleasure the boy knows comes from chocolate. Told that eating chocolate is not part of marital pleasure, he begins to characterize marriage as *fasting from chocolate*. He is familiar with chocolate; he cannot even begin to imagine a pleasure that excludes it.¹⁵⁷

Similarly, we know the pleasure of earthly marriage; we do not yet know the bliss of the "wedding day of the Lamb,"¹⁵⁸ which, in Heaven, will overwhelm the earthly pleasure¹⁵⁹ as an incoming wave overwhelms a spent, outgoing wave.

"Flesh and blood, in the Scriptural sense of human weakness, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God;¹⁶⁰ but flesh and blood made glorious by their link with Christ's Flesh and Blood *do* inherit the Kingdom."¹⁶¹ The Church affirms "the true resurrection of this flesh" — male or female — "that we now possess."¹⁶²

But that is all we know. In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis imagines that the lizard of sexual appetite (once mastered) is "transfigured" as a magnificent stallion.¹⁶³ To see how marriage is transfigured,¹⁶⁴ we must wait for "the renewal of all things"¹⁶⁵ at the end of time.¹⁶⁶

Marriage with a non-Catholic

"Do not yoke yourselves in a mismatch with unbelievers," Paul advises. "What fellowship can light have with darkness?"¹⁶⁷

The difficulties of marriage with a non-Catholic "must not be underestimated." Differences of belief can tempt spouses to "religious indifference" and lead to tension, especially in educating children.¹⁶⁸

Accordingly, the Church requires a Catholic who wants to marry a non-Catholic to apply to the *bishop for permission*, or even a *dispensation*.

1) With an unbaptized person

The Church's expectation is that when Catholics marry, their marriages will be sacramental. That means that both parties must be baptized, for only baptized people can receive a Sacrament.

Therefore, before a Catholic can contract a valid marriage with an unbaptized person, he must be *dispensed* from fulfilling the Church's expectation. The bishop normally grants this *dispensation*, provided:

- the Catholic declares formally that his faith will not be endangered and promises to do all he can to have the children baptized and brought up Catholic;
- the unbaptized person is told about the declaration and the promise beforehand, so that he is aware of the obligations they entail; and

152 Raniero Cantalamessa: *Homily*, November 10 2006

153 CCC 1012

154 See Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.

155 Raniero Cantalamessa: *Homily*, November 10 2006.

156 It has not so much as dawned on us "what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9).

157 See C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, XVI.

158 Rv 19:7. See also Rv 19:9, 21:9-14.

159 C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, XVI.

160 See 1 Cor 15:50.

161 Vincent Hawswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 2.

162 CCC 1017; see Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27. See Mary Healy: *Men and Women Are From Eden*, Five.

163 C.S. Lewis: *The Great Divorce*, 11.

164 "Sexuality is the instrument both of virginity and of conjugal virtue; neither men nor women will be asked to throw away weapons they have used victoriously. It is the beaten and the fugitives who throw away their swords. The conquerors sheathe theirs and retain them" (C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, XVI).

165 See CCC 1042-1043.

166 See the talk on "Death and the End of the World."

167 See 2 Cor 6:1-15.

168 See CCC 1634.

• both parties are instructed about the nature and purposes of marriage.¹⁶⁹
 However, even if the bishop grants the dispensation and the marriage takes place in a Catholic church, it is not sacramental.

In such a marriage, the Catholic spouse has a special task,¹⁷⁰ for "the unbelieving husband is consecrated by his believing wife" and "the unbelieving wife" by "her believing husband."¹⁷¹

If the unbaptized spouse is converted and baptized, the marriage automatically becomes sacramental at the time of the Baptism.¹⁷²

2) With a baptized non-Catholic

Baptism in other Christian denominations is valid,¹⁷³ so the marriage of a Catholic with a baptized non-Catholic is sacramental. However, the bishop must grant his permission, which he normally does under the conditions listed above.

Separation

Once a sacramental marriage has been consummated, *no power on earth can dissolve it*, for it brings into being between the spouses the indissoluble covenant between Christ and His Church.

Legal divorce cannot break that covenant, but it does injure it. Any new union adds to the gravity of the injury, for it constitutes public, ongoing adultery.¹⁷⁴

Divorce disturbs the order of the family and society, harms the deserted spouse, and traumatizes children. It is contagious: truly a plague in our society.¹⁷⁵

It is seriously wrong for a spouse to abandon a valid marriage, *even if no new union is contracted*. However, no wrong is committed by a spouse who tries to be faithful, but is unjustly abandoned or unwillingly divorced.¹⁷⁶

If, as a matter of fact, it becomes impossible for spouses to live together, the Church lets them separate and live apart.¹⁷⁷ She even tolerates divorce if it is necessary to ensure personal safety, the care of children, or legal rights.¹⁷⁸ However, divorce does not dissolve the union before God and the spouses are not free to contract new unions. The best solution is still reconciliation, if possible.¹⁷⁹

Divorced Catholics who do contract new unions¹⁸⁰ cannot receive Communion until they have repented their sin in the Sacrament of Penance and committed themselves to complete continence.¹⁸¹

However, even before repentance, the Church shows them "attentive solicitude," so that they will not feel completely cut off, but will continue to pray, do penance, ask for God's grace, attend Mass, hear God's word, work for charity and justice, and bring up their children as Catholics.¹⁸²

Infertility

God, wanting to associate man and woman in His creative work, told Adam and Eve to "be fertile and multiply."¹⁸³ One of the purposes of marriage, therefore, is "the procreation and education" of children.¹⁸⁴

However, a child is not an object to which spouses have a right.¹⁸⁵ He is a gift

169 See *Code of Canon Law*, 1125.

170 See CCC 1637.

171 1 Cor 7:14

172 See *Code of Canon Law*, 1055. Also see Pope Francis: *Amoris Laetitia*, 75.

173 That is, normally; it must include immersion or affusion in water with the words "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" repeated with the intention of baptizing.

174 See CCC 2384.

175 See CCC 2385.

176 See CCC 2386.

177 See CCC 1649, 2383.

178 See CCC 2383.

179 See CCC 1649.

180 Even if they are legal.

181 "The virtue by which a person controls the unruly movements of sexual desire." See CCC 1650.

182 See CCC 1651.

183 Gn 1:28

184 CCC 1652. See Joseph Ratzinger: *God and the World*, Part III, 17, "Marriage."

from God¹⁸⁵ and "a living testimony of the mutual giving of his parents." He has the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents."¹⁸⁷

Even when procreation is impossible, conjugal life retains its value¹⁸⁸ and meaning,¹⁸⁹ for the Sacrament of Matrimony not only increases the *human* family, but also brings about the spiritual reality it signifies: namely the increase of *God's* family. In a special way, infertile spouses can share the Lord's cross — the source of all spiritual fruitfulness¹⁹⁰ — by service such as adoption,¹⁹¹ education, assistance to other families, and help to poor or handicapped children.¹⁹²

Conclusion

Marriage is part of *Bios*, the life of mortals.¹⁹³ However, *Bios* is only a faint shadow of *Zoë*, the life of God.¹⁹⁴ For the baptized, "authentic married love is caught up into divine love,"¹⁹⁵ and marriage becomes Matrimony, an efficacious sign of the covenant and communion between Christ and His Church.

Before Matrimony, a man may say, "I am going to marry her because I love her," referring to the natural love we call *eros*. After Matrimony, he can say, "I love her because I married her," referring to the supernatural love of Christ for His Church.¹⁹⁶

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185 That "would be contrary to the child's dignity and nature" (Pope John Paul II: *Donum Vitae*, 8).

186 "The supreme gift and the most gratuitous gift of marriage" (Pope John Paul II: *Donum Vitae*, 8).

187 Pope John Paul II: *Donum Vitae*, 8.

188 See Pope John Paul II: *Donum Vitae*, 8.

189 "Spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning, in both human and Christian terms" (CCC 1654).

190 "Their marriage can radiate a fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality, and of sacrifice" (CCC 1654).

191 "In sexual intercourse, each spouse contributes from his or her biological substance to a unique gift, which God may or may not use for the creation of a new human person. The spouses do not create the child; they only procreate. As a result, they do not own the child, any more than they own each other. Consequently, they must, in a sense, *adopt* their child. Ultimately, this is the basis for all adoption. An adopted child has different genetic materials from his adoptive parents, and so his physical body is more different from theirs than the bodies of their biological offspring are. However, as a human person, an adopted child is no more distinct from his adoptive parents than the natural offspring are" (Vincent Hawkswell and Maureen Creelman: *Human Sexuality: Its Christian Meaning*, 3).

192 See Pope John Paul II: *Donum Vitae*, 8.

193 "People were made to live two by two," says Mrs. Gibbs (Thornton Wilder: *Our Town*, Part II, Act 2). In a myth mentioned by Plato (Plato, *Symposium*, XIV-XV, 189c-192d), man was originally spherical, because he was complete in himself and self-sufficient. But as a punishment for pride, he was split in two by Zeus, so that now he longs for his other half, striving with all his being to possess it and thus regain his integrity (Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 11).

194 See the talk on "Supernatural Life."

195 CCC 1639

196 "How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father? How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit" (see CCC 1642).

Appendix 1: Johnny Lingo's Eight-Cow Wife

by Patricia McGerr

Condensed from *Woman's Day*, November 1965
Reader's Digest February 1988, pp. 138-141, and others

When I sailed to Kiniwata, an island in the Pacific, I took along a notebook. After I got back it was filled with descriptions of flora and fauna, native customs and costumes. But the only note that still interests me is the one that says: "Johnny Lingo gave eight cows to Sarita's father."

And I don't need to have it in writing. I'm reminded of it every time I see a woman belittling her husband or a wife withering under her husband's scorn. I want to say to them, "You should know why Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for his wife."

Johnny Lingo wasn't exactly his name. But that's what Shenkin, the manager of the guest house on Kiniwata, called him. Shenkin was from Chicago and had a habit of Americanizing the names of the islanders.

But Johnny was mentioned by many people in many connections. If I wanted to spend a few days on the neighbouring island of Nurabandi, Johnny Lingo could put me up. If I wanted to fish, he could show me where the biting was best. If it was pearls I sought, he would bring me the best buys.

The people of Kiniwata all spoke highly of Johnny Lingo. Yet when they spoke they smiled, and the smiles were slightly mocking.

"Get Johnny Lingo to help you find what you want and let him do the bargaining," advised Shenkin. "Johnny knows how to make a deal."

"Johnny Lingo!" A boy seated nearby hooted the name and rocked with laughter.

"What goes on?" I demanded. "Everybody tells me to get in touch with Johnny Lingo and then breaks up. Let me in on the joke."

"Oh, the people love to laugh," Shenkin said, shrugging. "Johnny's the brightest, the strongest young man in the islands. And for his age, the richest."

"But if he's all you say, what is there to laugh about?"

"Only one thing. Five months ago, at fall festival, Johnny came to Kiniwata and found himself a wife. He paid her father eight cows!"

I knew enough about island customs to be impressed. Two or three cows would buy a fair-to-middling wife, four or five a highly satisfactory one.

"Good Lord!" I said, "Eight cows! She must have beauty that takes your breath away."

"She's not ugly," he conceded, and smiled a little. "But even the kindest could only call Sarita plain. Sam Karoo, her father, was afraid she'd be left on his hands."

"But then he got eight cows for her? Isn't that extraordinary?"

"Never been paid before."

"Yet you call Johnny's wife plain?"

"I said it would be kindness to call her plain. She was skinny. She walked with her shoulders hunched and her head ducked. She was scared of her own shadow."

"Well," I said, "I guess there's no accounting for love."

"True enough," agreed the man. "And that's why the villagers grin when they talk about Johnny. They get special satisfaction from the fact that the sharpest trader in the islands was bested by dull old Sam Karoo."

"But how?"

"No one knows and everyone wonders. All the cousins were urging Sam to ask for three cows and hold out for two until he was sure Johnny'd pay only one. Then Johnny came to Sam Karoo and said 'Father of Sarita, I offer eight cows for your daughter.'"

"Eight cows," I murmured. "I'd like to meet this Johnny Lingo."

I wanted fish. I wanted pearls. So the next afternoon I beached my boat at Nurabandi. And I noticed as I asked directions to Johnny's house that his name brought no sly smile to the lips of his fellow Nurabandians. And when I met the

slim, serious young man, when he welcomed me with grace to his home, I was glad that from his own people he had respect unmingled with mockery.

We sat in his house and talked. Then he asked, "You come here from Kiniwata?"

"Yes."

"They speak of me on that island?"

"They say there's nothing I might want that you can't help me get."

He smiled gently. "My wife is from Kiniwata."

"Yes, I know."

"They speak of her?"

"A little."

"What do they say?"

"Why, just...." The question caught me off balance. "They told me you were married at festival time."

"Nothing more?" The curve of his eyebrows told me he knew there had to be more.

"They also say the marriage settlement was eight cows." I paused. "They wonder why."

"They ask that?" His eyes lighted with pleasure. "Everyone in Kiniwata knows about the eight cows?"

I nodded.

"And in Nurabandi everyone knows it too." His chest expanded with satisfaction. "Always and forever, when they speak of marriage settlements, it will be remembered that Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for Sarita."

So that's the answer, I thought: vanity.

And then I saw her. I watched her enter the room to place flowers on the table. She stood a moment to smile at the young man beside me. Then she went swiftly out again. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. The lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, the sparkle of her eyes, all spelled a pride to which no one could deny her the right.

I turned back to Johnny Lingo and found him looking at me. "You admire her?" he murmured.

"She ... she's glorious. But she's not Sarita from Kiniwata," I said.

"There's only one Sarita. Perhaps she does not look the way they say she looked in Kiniwata."

"She doesn't. I heard she was homely. They all make fun of you because you let yourself be cheated by Sam Karoo."

"You think eight cows were too many?" A smile slid over his lips.

"No. But how can she be so different?"

"Do you ever think," he asked, "what it must mean to a woman to know that her husband has settled on the lowest price for which she can be bought? And then later, when the women talk, they boast of what their husbands paid for them. One says four cows, another maybe six. How does she feel, the woman who was sold for one or two? This could not happen to my Sarita."

"Then you did this just to make your wife happy?"

"I wanted Sarita to be happy, yes. But I wanted more than that. You say she is different. This is true. Many things can change a woman. Things happen inside, things happen outside. But the thing that matters most is what she thinks of herself. In Kiniwata, Sarita believed she was worth nothing. Now she knows she is worth more than any other woman in the islands."

"Then you wanted —"

"I wanted to marry Sarita. I loved her and no other woman."

"But —" I was close to understanding.

"But," he finished softly, "I wanted an eight-cow wife."

A feature-length remake of the film called The Legend of Johnny Lingo (2003) is available on home video.

Appendix 2

Shared Responsibility in Decision-Making

These are excerpts from a public talk given by Father Robert T. Kennedy, a canon lawyer at The Catholic University of America in Washington DC, at Surrey's Holy Cross High School, to about 50 people November 17 1995. Its original title was "Shared Responsibility in Ecclesial Decision-Making;" its analysis of decision-making was applied to Church bodies (dioceses, parishes) throughout; and it was much longer. These excerpts can be applied to decision-making in families.

Edited for ease of reading

Introduction

People often regard making a decision as nothing more than making a choice. They view decision-making "power" narrowly, as simply "choice-making" power — the power to make the final choice, or at least vote on it. A consultative body, they think, is something quite different from a decision-making body.

Of course, participation in the choice-making is one way — an important way — to share responsibility in decision-making. But it is not the only way, and not necessarily the most important or influential way.

Decision-making is a complex process, with several stages. The making of the choice is only one of them. All of them entail influence and power.

This purpose of this talk is to elucidate that truth.

Creative idea production

Often, the most obvious is the most overlooked.

One example, seldom mentioned, is the fact that in order *to make a choice*, we must perceive at least two options. We do not truly choose unless we reject, as well as accept.

The alternatives may be as simple as *to do* and *not to do*. The greater the number of options we perceive, the higher the probability that we will make a good choice.

Therefore, *the creative ability to envisage options* is extremely important in decision-making.

For example, imagine a group that has been debating an issue for some time. A stranger appears and asks to address them. The group grants permission, and the stranger proposes an option the group has not yet considered. He presents his idea persuasively and the group listens to him attentively. Then he leaves.

The group discusses his idea. Then, when the moment for final choice arrives, they choose the stranger's option.

Who exercised "power"? Certainly not just those who made the choice; they would never have chosen as they did had it not been for the stranger with his idea.

Even though he had no voice in making the final choice, he exerted enormous influence on it. Truly, he exercised power in the making of the decision.

Choice-makers are often dependent (for better or for worse) on idea-people. Persuasive consultation often runs the world.

No matter what the decision to be made, we cannot overestimate the value of involving several creative idea-people.

Nevertheless, in our example, the stranger with the idea did not exercise all the power. Without the perceptive wisdom of the choice-makers, his idea would have remained simply an idea, unchosen and therefore ineffective.

In our example, then, power was shared between the idea-person and the choice-makers. They were co-responsible for the decision.¹

¹ History offers many striking illustrations of the same truth. One such illustration concerns the adoption of the constitution of the United States.

Decision-making power is shared by creative idea-people and those who choose the final course of action. Both kinds of talent are needed.

However, they are rarely found in one person.

A good choice-maker need not be creative himself, but he must be conscious of his dependence on the creativity of others. He must have intuitive realism, matured by experience, so that he can accurately assess the advantages and disadvantages of various courses of action.

A good idea-person need not be a good choice-maker. Creative, imaginative people are often unrealistic about their visions. They dream of things that "are not" and ask "why not," but they need people who, on occasion, can point out precisely "why not." Not every dream deserves to be realized.

Factual data

Decision-making, then, includes creative idea-production and realistic choice-making. But that is not all. Even (both logically and chronologically) before the proposal of creative ideas comes *the researching and presentation of relevant facts*.

It is facts that determine the problem to be solved, the need to be met, the goal or objective to be realized. It is facts that set the context and the limits for creative solutions. It is facts that dictate the program or policy most likely to be effective and the actions necessary to implement it.

Facts are the raw material of good decision-making. The factual data available are crucial. We must know the facts about the situation, the community in which they are situated, the persons involved, and the resources available.

It is not easy, however, to perceive and acknowledge facts. We tend to assert as fact what we want, rather than what we ascertain; to accept half-truths, unsubstantiated rumours, and unquestioned statistics, provided they are desirable; and to regard investigation of unfounded assertions as insulting lack of confidence in someone else's truthfulness.

Consequently, the gathering of facts is often careless, incomplete, or erroneous. What are taken as facts are often imprecise and misleading. Such inaccuracy can lead to the misperception of the cause or extent of a problem or need, to the proposal of inappropriate solutions, and to the adoption of an ineffective solution.

Whether done well or done poorly, the gathering of factual data has enormous influence on the decision. Data people — the people who know, or are considered to know, the facts — are among the most powerful in any decision-making. The others depend on their contribution: idea-people, for creative solutions to the problems or needs revealed by the facts; and choice-makers, in choosing an option tailored to the facts.

The discernment of factual data is a talent distinct from both creative idea-production and the practical realism necessary for good choice-making. Rarely is such a combination of talent found in a single individual.

Again, therefore, decision-making requires the participation of several persons endowed with different gifts. They all influence the course of action that is chosen, and therefore they share responsibility for it.

The constitutional convention which met in the city of Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 proposed an unprecedented constitution for an unprecedented form of union of interdependent states.

The names of many members of that convention are known the world over — names like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison; they are national heroes to citizens of the United States and they are esteemed by citizens of many other nations.

Seldom adverted to, however, is the fact that the 1787 constitutional convention had authority to "decide" nothing. It was wholly and solely "consultative." It proposed: the legislative assemblies of the 13 former colonies chose.

The members of those 13 legislative assemblies who made the final choice are virtually forgotten, except, perhaps, to the most esoteric of historians.

So it often is with choice-makers; their fame, like their contribution to a decision, is often considerably less than that of those whose ideas persuaded them.

Implementation

However, the making of the choice is not the end of the decision-making process.

The making of the choice results in nothing more than a good intention. Before the decision is finalized, that good intention must be put into action; in other words, the choice must be implemented.

Implementation entails selection and deployment of personnel, allocation and coordination of duties, delegation of authority, effective communication, sensitivity to persons, attention to detail, and adaptation or adjustment to changing or unforeseen circumstances — all of which requires many diverse abilities.

However, the effectiveness of any decision depends heavily on their presence and proper use. Those responsible for implementing a chosen course of action exert powerful influence: they can make the decision or break it.

If we think that the decision-making process is finished when the choice is made, we all too often leave the choice to be improperly implemented. For successful implementation, all those involved must be informed of the factual data on which the choice is based, the other options that were considered, and the reasons for the choice.

Otherwise, they will not have the background necessary for the adaptation and adjustment that accompany implementation; they will waste time and energy questioning the basis of the choice and the motivation of those who made it.

Evaluation

The final stage in the decision-making process is *evaluation*. It is also the most frequently neglected.

The implementation of the chosen course of action, even if it is skillfully done, must be monitored and evaluated, for considerable alteration — even total reconsideration — may be necessary.

Evaluation is generally carried out in terms of goals — both the overriding goal, or basic purpose, and the intermediate goals or objectives that further it. The evaluation is positive to the extent that the choice and its implementation have achieved the goal, and negative to the extent that they fall short.

Even when we have been careful to "discern the will of God" — in establishing the facts, proposing creative ideas, and making and implementing the choice — it is quite possible in theory, and amply confirmed in practice, that God makes His will known not in any of these previous stages, but only at the moment of evaluation. At that point, realizing that our choice is mistaken, we must pick up the pieces and start again.

Like the other stages in decision-making, evaluation requires distinct talents, and those who possess them exert enormous influence on the so-called "finalized" decision.

Implications

Our analysis of decision-making — *gathering factual data, proposing creative ideas, making a choice, implementing the choice, and evaluating the choice* — shows the need for many and diverse talents. The improbability of finding all these talents in a single individual makes it imperative that many people participate. Influence and power, far from being concentrated solely in the moment of choice, are present in all the stages of the decision-making process.

Responsibility for a decision does not rest solely with the choice-makers: data and idea people, no less than implementers and evaluators, share with choice-makers the responsibility for the whole decision.

Leadership

But our analysis has one further implication: the necessity for *leadership*.

It is generally assumed that the leader in the decision-making process is the person who makes the choice. However, our analysis shows that no one makes the

decision alone. The choice-maker must act in conscious dependence on others for factual data, creative ideas, implementation, and evaluation. All of them share the responsibility for the decision.

Shared responsibility cannot be equated with democracy, but neither is it compatible with autocracy.

In fact, far from simply making the choice, a leader *facilitates* the whole decision-making process. He discerns the necessary gifts among members of the community, motivates those who are gifted to offer them in service, and co-ordinates their service.

A leader need not be a choice-maker, a data or idea person, an implementer or evaluator. His role is quite different, requiring quite different talents.

Perhaps the best example is the conductor of an orchestra during an opera, often called the orchestra "leader." He plays no musical instrument, sings no aria, recites no lines, and appears in no chorus or ballet.

He does none of those things. Indeed, for want of the talents they require, he is incapable of doing most of them.

Nevertheless, his role is indispensable: he draws out the gifts of others, co-ordinates, motivates, inspires. Quietly and almost unnoticed, he makes the entire production happen.²

² Watch the movie *Executive Suite*.