

"...whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another, commits adultery..." Jesus is not compromising but inferring that some unions, like incest or concubinage, are both immoral and invalid. Such illicit unions were common in the pagan world but are not true marriages. Divorce in these cases would not break a valid union or later lead to adultery.

Contraception and divorce directly attack the procreative and unitive values, respectively. Polygamy destroys the unitive purpose because it is not exclusive nor undivided (CCC 1645). It also undermines the equal but complimentary nature of man and woman (CCC 369, 2387). In same-sex unions, the sexual acts (sins of Sodom) are not marital acts. These chosen acts, which are claimed to be "unitive" and a giving-exchange between the couple, are not life-giving acts to the community, because these types of acts are not procreative. Since the couple is not intending to preserve the life of the community, then they should not expect any special recognition from the community as a couple. They may be giving to the community as individuals but not as a couple in one flesh. At least, a married man and woman, who practiced contraception, can repent and reform their marriage. A naturally infertile couple may still hope in having children (CCC 2374-9).

Jesus points to "the beginning" to show us the true meaning of marriage. No matter how much we claim to love each other or be consenting adults in the relationship, illicit unions destroy the personal integrity of the persons involved. Without both meanings, sexual acts lose their true value as life-giving love. The body becomes an instrument or even a toy to control, instead of becoming

part of the whole human person (CCC 2369, 2337-45). With both meanings, a man and woman become a husband-and-wife in hope of becoming a father-and-mother. Due to the potential of child-bearing, marriage, unlike friendship, has a unique public importance.

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CATHOLIC PRAYER FOR MARRIAGE

We thank you, O God,
for the Love You have implanted in our hearts. May it always inspire us to be kind in our words, considerate of feeling, and concerned for each other's needs and wishes.

Help us to be understanding and forgiving of human weaknesses and failings. Increase our faith and trust in You and may Your Prudence guide our life and love.

Bless our marriage O God,
with Peace and Happiness,
and make our love fruitful
for Your glory and
our joy both here in and eternity.
Amen

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Marriage: One-Flesh Union

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Then the man (Adam) said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife (Eve) were both naked, and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:23-25

Recently laws and court cases are being considered that attempt to define the nature of marriage (e.g. The Marriage Amendment). Divorce and the use of contraceptives are common place in our society. Elsewhere in the world, polygamy is an issue. In order to better understand this confusion, it is valuable to review the true purpose of marriage from a Christian perspective.

According to the **Catechism**, the Catholic Church states: *"In His preaching Jesus unequivocally taught the original meaning of the union of man and woman as the Creator willed from the beginning; permission given by Moses to divorce one's wife was a concession to the hardness of hearts. (Mt 19:8) The matrimonial union of man and*

woman is indissoluble: God Himself has determined it: 'what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder. (Mt 19:6)'"[CCC 1614; also see 1612-7] In Mark 10:2-12, Jesus, like the Prophet Malachi (Mal 2:14-16), condemns divorce without exceptions and points to the "beginning", before Original Sin, to show what God intended. Elsewhere, the Church teaches that the crowning glory of marriage is children: *"By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory."* [CCC 1652] Because of the importance of children in marriage, the Church acknowledges the pain of infertility: *"Couples who discover that they are sterile suffer greatly."* [CCC 2374] Jesus' words on marriage are immediately followed by His blessing of children - perhaps a subtle hint against contraception: *"...Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God..."*[Mark 10:13-14]

According to Christian anthropology, *"God created man in His image...male and female He created them."* [Gen 1:27] Jesus commented: *"Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female...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."* [Matt 19:4-6; NAB] As Adam exclaimed: *"bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."* [Gen 2:23] God created us in His divine image; therefore, every human person has an intrinsic dignity apart from money, achievement or creed. But He also created us as a pair: male and female (CCC 355,

383, 1416, 2331-6). Men are not the fullness of humanity; Women are not the fullness of humanity. Instead, God created man and woman as complementary partners. This complementary nature is physically obvious in reproduction: a man and a woman are needed to naturally have a baby. Two men cannot do it; more people are not required. This complementary nature extends ultimately to the entire person. Recent pop psychology, like "Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus", is starting to recognize this fact.

Marriage is a gift from God that enables a man and a woman to unite intimately into a whole humanity - the one-flesh union - to preserve the life of humanity. Once united, a couple should not separate (Mark 10:9). Two men cannot unite in a one-flesh union. Three or more people are not needed in a one-flesh union. However, a naturally sterile man and woman can still form a one-flesh union. Their married love would still be the type of act that is essentially procreative. Medically, their organs are still called "reproductive" even though actually infertile due to age or pathology. Typically, the one-flesh union is fertile. There are examples in the Bible of couples who were thought to be sterile but eventually had a child: Abraham and Sarah; Elizabeth and Zechariah. The one-flesh union safeguards against a member of an infertile couple from having children with someone else. Also, the chaste single-life (celibacy) does not violate the one-flesh union since no attempt is made for any type of fleshly union (CCC 1620). Celibacy can still be a self-giving gift offered for the kingdom of God (Matt 19:12). The marital act is the one-flesh act that transmits human life. It has two meanings or values: procreative and unitive (CCC 2363-9).

As procreative, the marital act gives new people to the community. Eating or breathing is a good act of an individual that preserves the life of the individual. Procreation, on the other hand, has social importance. It preserves the life of the community. It is a life-giving act between a man and a woman in a life-long, committed relationship recognized by the community, i.e. a marriage. Procreation is more than the begetting of children but also includes the responsibility of raising them to maturity (CCC 1652). Even though not every act is fertile, due to age or pathology or the time in the woman's natural cycle, it is still the only type of intimate act that can be fertile. Sins of Sodom are never procreative.

As unitive, the marital act helps to strengthen the marriage bond between husband and wife. They offer themselves to each other as a gift. This love, trust and protection naturally extends to their children. A stronger marriage bond is good for the raising of children, since children need stability during their personal formation. The problems caused by divorce are proof of this point. In America, over 90% of single-parents are single-moms. Women and children are more adversely affected by the erosion of the marriage bond.

As a side issue, in Matt 19:9, Jesus appears to compromise on divorce: *"...whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery..."* [RSV]. According to a footnote in the New American Bible, the key phrase is literally "except for *porneia*" where *porneia* is Greek for immorality, fornication and even incest. The RNAB edition may have a better insight by rendering this phrase as: