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Marriage as a Covenant of Love (Mal 2,14): A New Way of Understanding Marital
fidelity inspired in John Paul II's vision of Marriage

Thesis ad Licentiam

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SYNTHETIC STRUCTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is seen as the image of God's relationship with His people. Therefore, the covenant is an important criterion for a better understanding of conjugal relationship. Togetherness of man and woman is the image of God, because their love relationship reflects God's love for men. In the same way, the covenant between man and woman reflects the covenant between God and His People. Biblical perspective of covenant is God and His chosen people. In the Book of Malachi based on God's covenantal relationship between Israel presented as a marital relationship. Spousal relationship is a covenant between husband and wife to participate in the creation of God. The covenant relationship between Israel and Yahweh is its constitution, its vocation, and its salvation. The covenant is the expression of God's steadfast love and fidelity. Old Testament covenant is steadfast love to Yahweh's people. New Testament covenant is Christ's love to Church¹.

Christian marriage is a sacrament a visible sign of the love of Christ to the New Israel. "The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature men and women as they from the hand of the creator. Marriage is not purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures and spiritual attitudes"². Marriage is instituted by God, a call to holiness. Family is smallest form of the church. "The intimate partnership of married life and life has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent"³.

¹ J.R.STOCK, T. OTTO, W.J. HARTGROVE, *Inhabiting the Church: Biblical wisdom for a New Monasticism*, Cascade books, USA,2007,17.

² CCC, 1603.

³ GS, No.48.

Pope Francis presents the beauty of marital covenant, “The image of God is the Married couple: the man and the woman; not only the man, not only the woman, but both together. This is the image of God: love, God’s covenant with us is represented in that covenant between man and woman. And this is very beautiful! We are created in order to love, as a reflection of God and His love. And in the marital union man and woman fulfil this vocation through their mutual reciprocity and their full and definitive communion of life”⁴.

The Church has in this light distinguished certain elements of marriage which she considers as essential, changeless and universal. The focus regarding the essential properties of marriage is a metaphysical approach which at the same time examines the essential qualities of marriage. In this sense the focus on the purpose of marriage is a dynamic approach which examines the natural ordering of marriage to the attainment of determined ends. The essential properties of marriage: unity and indissolubility (cf. CIC can. 1056; CCEO can. 776§3) are considered as a good for the spouses, for children, for the Church and for the whole of humanity.

The objective of this study is to understand the marital covenant, to know the meaning of the covenant, to understand how prophet Malachi explains covenant and to conceptualise how the marital covenant becomes the source of love. Our intention is to explore the understanding of the covenantal view which would help us to understand the marriage and its purposes.

The scope and Relevance of the topic is marriage, one of the most discussed themes in the present world. Many people question the divine institution of marriage because for them, it is merely a contract between a man and woman legally approved. They continue to hold that if the couples cannot lead a happy life due to the various reasons, they can get divorce and remarry. There are many who argue for just cohabitation, same sex union, etc. According to their opinion, personal freedom is important, and it determines what kind of lifestyle they should choose. Therefore, the unity and indissolubility of marriage becomes a challenge for the present world. The scope of this thesis is to study marital covenant in detail to get an authentic view about it.

⁴ W. G. SUTTON, *A House Divided: Sexuality Morality and Christian Cultures*, Pickwick Publications, USA, 2016, 153.

Source and Methodology of the study of the thesis mainly depends on several biblical commentaries and on books that explain the term 'covenant'. With the help of magisterial teachings and documents, marriage is presented as the covenant which God instituted as such. The methodology used here is historical-critical and analytical.

This work is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter we will investigate Marriage as a covenant as presented in the book of Malachi. In this I discuss the concept of covenant and how the prophet explains it. For him it is steadfast love. This love is God's covenantal love with Israel. We also deal with the Covenant in the Bible and its formula, and Witnesses. Also, we deal with the characteristics of marriage and covenant. Then our discussion continues with the bond relationship, faithfulness, holiness and unconditional love of marriage. Finally, we will focus on the relationship between marriage and covenant. Here, we would like to explore the covenantal meaning and covenant theme in the book of Malachi.

The second chapter focus on the Indissolubility of marriage based on the teaching of Pope John Paul II and it deals with the natural substance of indissolubility and discuss about the concept of love. Finally, we will focus on the relationship between conjugal love and Indissolubility.

Finally, in the third chapter I discussed the indissolubility of Christian Marriage and Covenantal Love and Self-giving Life. Here we will discuss Christian marriage as an indissoluble covenant established between husband and wife. Then we will focus on the responsibility to give Life and discuss the bond of marriage. Finally, we deal with the relationship between indissolubility and fidelity.

CHAPTER I

MARRIAGE AS COVENANT: ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Introduction

Marriage is an institution established by God. The most beautiful thing that God has instituted, as evident in the Bible, is the family. Covenant relationship always functions in faith and trust. We trust and believe those whom we commit ourselves. to trust is to give oneself whole heartedly to the other. The relationship between God and His people of Israel is called covenantal relation. The concept of covenant is the dominant and consistent theme in the theology of the Old Testament (OT)⁵ . It actualised through the people of Israel and their relationship with Yahweh.

In this chapter we discuss the concept of covenant and how Malachi explains covenant of marriage. For him it is a steadfast and exclusive love. This love is God's covenantal love with Israel. God has a special kind of love towards Israel. Here we discuss the meaning of covenant, its formula and covenantal aspects of marriage. Finally, we focus on the characteristics of covenant marriage.

Marriage is a covenant. The clarification of the nature of marriage, becoming one flesh (Gen 2:24) and in NT (Mt.19:5) reveals the Biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant relationship. Being a sacred covenant, human marriage serves in the OT and NT as the prism through which God reveals His covenant relationship with His people and Christ with His church. Here we would like to explore the covenantal meaning and covenant theme in Malachi.

Prophet Malachi the messenger of God, stood before the people of the Hebrew community in postexilic period (550 BC) (during in the Persian period 515-330Bc). After

⁵ G. HAZEL, *Old Testament theology*, Eerdmans Publications, Grand Rapids New York ,1972,20.

renovation of the Jerusalem Temple, time around contemporaneous prophet Malachi was along with the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah to renew the covenantal relationship with God⁶. Prophet Malachi recalls all the covenant that made by God to patriarchs and to the people of Israel. God's covenantal love invokes a reciprocal love from the Israel, but after exile to Babylonia people of Israel lost their identity as chosen by God and privileged property of God. God admonish the covenantal people to return to the covenantal relationship. Malachi 1: 2 we read Edom rejected his covenantal call.

The major themes of book of Malachi highlighted the covenant, specially the covenant Jacob (1:2), covenant of Levi (2:5), the covenant of marriage (2:14), and the covenant of Moses (4:4). "The idea of a covenant is essentially that of a treaty or pact that establishes a relationship between parties with attendant obligations and responsibilities"⁷. The covenant is understood based on right relationship. The prophet recognized God as both the maker and keeper of his covenant with Israel 1:2, and Israel as an "adopted child" by virtue of that covenant relationship (1:6). Yahweh's covenant that expect Israel's obedience to the covenantal stipulations and re-establish when it breaks up.

I.1. Covenant and its Meaning

A covenant involves agreement or promise made between two parties by which they swear allegiance to one another. According to Holman Biblical Dictionary, biblical covenants are

"Agreements or promise made between two parties (normally God and his people) which establish a relationship between them. Covenants are enacted at least one of the parties swears an oath, under the threat of a divine curse to uphold their obligation to other party which is then ratified by a visual ritual. In this way a covenant establishes a new, binding relationship between two people, which includes within its blessings for obedience and curse as a consequence of disobedience"⁸.

⁶ R.D. PATTERSON,A.E.HILL, "Minor prophets Hosea-Malachi, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary", P.W.COMFORT(ed), Vol,10, (Tyndale Houde Publishers, Coastal Carolina University,1996).

⁷ R.D. PATTERSON,A.E.HILL, "Minor prophets Hosea-Malachi", Cornerstone Biblical Commentary.....Cit.

⁸ T.C.BUTLER," Holman illustrated Bible Dictionary", C.BRAND (ed), B&H Publishing group, Nashville, 2015, 356.

I.2. Covenant themes in Malachi

The concept of covenant is the important and prepared theme in the theology of the OT⁹. The Hebrew word “berit” “Covenant” is used in the OT which focus steadfast love of God. God established the covenant with His people “I Am your God and you are my people” (Jeremiah 24:7). In Malachi the Hebrew word ‘berit’ (covenant) occurs almost six times (2:4; 2:5; 2:8; 2:10; 2:14; 3:1)¹⁰.

In the book of Malachi 2:14 reads: “You ask, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant”. Here prophet Malachi understands marriage as a covenant between three treaties: God, Husband and wife. Using the imagery of Israel Malachi underscores the importance and responsibility of spousal relationship. Holiness and faithfulness of partners in the marriage covenant will be considered as the faithfulness to God that should not break up. “Prophet addressed the issue of right relationships in marriage by decrying divorce and encouraging loyalty on the part of spouses” (2:10-16)¹¹. Malachi uses the expression, do not act faithlessly 2:14 intended to say partners should be faithful. So, the essential characteristic of marriage relationship is faithfulness. Malachi does not use ‘berit’ in a univocal manner. While the word ‘berit’ used in Malachi 2:10 may refer to Yahweh’s covenant with Israel, Yahweh is defined in 2:14a as a witness between husband and the wife. So, marriage is a covenant.

I.2.1. Covenant formula

The famous covenantal formula, ‘I will be Your God and you will be my people’ (Jer 24:7) is also seen in another form in marriage. God’s relationship to Israel is cast in absolute terms: Israel will be the covenant people of his ownership, or the objects of his wrath¹². In Malachi Yahweh declares his ownership of those who fear him, ‘They shall be mine’. The new exodus reverses the curses of the covenant and the restored

⁹ Cfr. H. GERHARD, *Old Testament Theology*, Eerdmans publication, Grand Rapids New York 1972, 20.

¹⁰ Cfr. H.N. WALLACE, -S.L. MACKENZIE, “Covenant themes in Malachi”, *CBQ* 45/4 (1983): 549-563, 549.

¹¹ R.D. PATTERSON, A.E. HILL, *Minor prophets Hosea-Malachi*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, P.W. COMFORT(ed), Vol, 10...Cit

¹² Cfr. D.W. MC MANIGAL, *A Baptism of Judgment in the fire of the Holy spirit: John’s eschatological proclamation in Matthew 3*, 43.

relationship is underscored when the covenantal formula is announced¹³. God says, 'Israel is described as my treasured possession'. Through the marriage the spouses are entering into a covenant which is given and recognised by God Himself and they lead a covenantal life according to His command¹⁴. The man is asked whether he is ready to accept the woman as his own with full freedom and complete knowledge and the woman is asked whether she is ready to accept the man as her own with full freedom and complete knowledge¹⁵. Thus, through the marital covenant the husband becomes the wife's and the wife becomes the husband's (1Cor 7:4).

I.2.2. Covenant Witnesses

Normally, covenants between individuals are said to be divinely witnessed. Malachi 2:14b emphasizes that there are different interpretations; Yahweh is presented as the witness to the faithfulness of the addressee to his wife and other maintain that Yahweh conceived of as acting is a witness to marriage, which verses are understood as the covenant between husband and wife¹⁶.

Malachi proclaims that, "the Lord witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (2:14)¹⁷. These two things suggest that marriage is a covenant, the statement that God was a witness to the covenant agreement. Calling God to witness a covenant agreement may be the reason why many covenants promise between individuals were celebrated in the house of the Lord 2 Kings 11:4; Chr 23:3; Jer 34:15)¹⁸. Witnesses are so important in marital covenant also. The spouses enter the marital covenant in the

¹³ Cfr. D.W. MC MANIGAL, A Baptism of Judgment in the fire of the Holy spirit: John's eschatological proclamation in Matthew 3, 43.

¹⁴ I. A. BUSENITZ, "Introduction to the biblical Covenants; The Noahic Covenant and The Priestly covenant", in TMSJ 10, 2 (Fall 1999) 173-189. 178.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Syro-Malabar secretariat Commission for Liturgy*, Syro -Malabar Sabayude Koodasakal, Alwayeters, Aluva 2011, 176

¹⁶ K.W. WEYDE, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic authority, from problems, and the use of traditions in the book of Malachi*, Berlin, New York, 2000, 254.

¹⁷ J. WITTE, *Covenant Marriage in comparative perspective*, William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Cambridge, UK, 2005, 74.

¹⁸ When a Covenant was violated, God often called upon creation to testify against the guilty party (Cfr. Mic 6:1,2).

existence of God and the Priest, who administer the sacrament as a characteristic of the Church, and two official witnesses are essential for the validity of marriage¹⁹ .

I.3. Characteristics of Covenant

The covenants in the Bible have certain peculiar characteristics that are rich in its meaning. The covenants were based upon the blood sacrifice. This awakened gratitude, love and conviction lead to self-distrust, humble confession of sin and deep repentance. The blood points to Christ's freely given divine life and His Justification, forgiving, cleansing and saving power. We need to recognize the new covenant as an everlasting covenant even though it was not approved until the cross. The New eternal Covenants were founded on the Ten Commandment, lamp and light, law of liberty and love²⁰ . Surprisingly some of them have close similarity with the present-day tradition of the sacrament of marriage. It is very meaningful to understand these characteristics in order to explain the marital covenant in its depth.

I.3.1. Bond relationship of marriage

Marriage is entered into by a solemn promise, established with an oath or vow by which the parties call God to witness the necessary nature of the commitment they must enter into an agreement with one another²¹ . Here Prophet has not merely stated the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel, but using the terms “witness”, “partner”, “faithfulness”, “companion” (2:14) which clearly instituted marriage as a divine covenant that is, a symbol of God's love which last through lifelong faithfulness to each other. Marital Bond has its divine origin in Gene 2:24 “their fore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh” Malachi also intended to say the oneness of the spouse is the skull of the marriage covenant. Leaving the biological father and mother, spouses through marriage entering into a covenant bond for lifelong. From this view, divorce is an act of extreme violence against the marital covenant and breaks the will of God. Because the God of Israel hates divorce (2:16). The

¹⁹ Cfr. *Syro-Malabar Secretariat commission for liturgy*, Syro-Malabar Sabayude...., cit., 176.

²⁰ W. JEFF, “Characteristics of the Covenants”, in *Maranata media* 17 (2013), 458.

²¹ T. MARSHALL, *Explaining Covenants*, Sovereign World, ISBN, 2003, 56.

heart of the marriage relationship is the bond of personal faithfulness between husband and wife, because the vows the marriage covenant is distinguished and permanent.

I.3.2. Faithfulness

God has been faithful to His promises. God has made a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15: 2, 5, 6) and promised, “He will be their God and they will be His people” (Jere24:7). Unfaithfulness of covenantal relationship is considered as the failure to love fellow covenantal members and the violation of their sacred obligation. The inclusive anxiety of this passage is the importance of faithfulness in all form’s relationship, both with fellow human beings and with Yahweh. So, in this concept faithfulness in all relationships is a part of the ethical that holds a human society together. For Israel, faithfulness towards Yahweh reflects his primary faithfulness because this was the essential foundation upon which every substantial of all human relationship could be established. This material was broken in Malachi and the ideological importance was disloyalty to one another and faithfulness to Yahweh, at the same time.

The book of Malachi says, ‘my covenant with him was a covenant of life and well-being which I gave him; this called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name’ (Malachi 2:5). Gods’ covenantal promises provides prosperity and peace in the lives of the spouses . Life and peace should prevail in the covenantal treaties. Unfaithfulness is against the covenantal goal. Because the faithful God is the witness of the marital covenant. And again in Malachi 2:15, “Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirits is his. And does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So, look to yourselves, and in your spirit and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth” (Malachi 2:15). Family should be build up on the basis of Gods’ steadfast love and spousal faithfulness. Mutual faithfulness between the spouses makes a marital covenant more meaningful and irrevocable. The whole picture is a relationship between a husband and a wife before God with his Spirit blessed this union. So, a husband is responsible to God for the way she loves her husband. Thus, the husband and the wife should have God as their centre; should be guided by Holy Spirit in their relationship. When a husband is unfaithful to his wife, he is also unfaithful to God and vice versa.

I.3.3. Holiness

God is Holy. The essence of God's holiness is love. Malachi consistently roots the covenantal sacredness of marriage in the very unity of Yahweh. "Qodesh Yahweh"²² the Hebrew word Holiness of Yahweh, it may refer to the second temple in Jerusalem as the symbol of the Lord's holiness in postexilic community. Judah has been faithless has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord (Malachi 2: 11) Judah married daughter of foreign God indicates social afire which negated holiness of God of Israel. Intermarriage of Israelites with pagans was unacceptable to God. God established the marriage laws for the people he loved in order that they might be separate to him. Now, however, Israel had profaned the holiness of the God's Sanctuary and made themselves corrupted. So, in this concept when we sin against our marriage and our marriage vows, we sin against an institution because of its establishment by God. Because He is Holy, and we are called to His holiness. The holiness of Israel is always something for which she is destined, not something she has ever actually attained or possessed²³.

I.3.4. The unconditional love

In the Sacred scriptures God is presented pre-eminently as a God of love related to his chosen people²⁴. In the book of Malachi is essentially theology of Yehweh and one who read this book gets an invitation the covenant relationship with Yehweh²⁵. It is based on the unconditional love of God for Israel which enabled them to enter into a covenant.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word "ahb" means "love" is used in the context of covenant. In the book of Hosea this word means "allude" "persuading love". In the covenantal relationship Yahweh's love to his chosen people explained as Yahweh's unconditional love²⁶. In the OT God is one who walked with his people as companion. In the book of Deuteronomy love of Yahweh for Israel is portrait as continuation of his

²² R.R.DEUTSCH, A Promise of hope a call to obidience A commentary on the book of Jole and Malachi, (Handsen Press Ltd., Edinburgh, 1987).94.

²³ J. M. P SMITH, J. A. BEWER, "A critical and exegetical commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah" Vol.49, (C. Scribner's sons, New York,1912).

²⁴ K. KACHAPPILLY, *God of Love Revisited*, Dhararam Publications, Bangalore,1996,137

²⁵ R.D. PATTERSON, A. E HILL. "Minor prophets Hosea- Malachi", cornerstone biblical commentary, Vol.10, (Tyndale house publishers, USA, 2008), 621.

²⁶ P.J.KAKKANATTU. "God's enduring Love in the book of Hosea. A Synchronic and diachronic analysis of Hosea 11:1-11", Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2006,39.

love for the patriarchs²⁷ . The visible sign of Yahweh's' love we seen in Deut 7:8. The unconditional love of God leads to election of His people. "The love of Yahweh is thus a love which prefers, and this preferential love is the root of the election of Israel"²⁸ . The word of Yahweh: "I have loved you" (Malachi 1:2) this affirmation of God's choice reveals His unconditional love²⁹ . Unconditional love of God expressed the father hood of God for Israel. Malachi 2: 10 "same God" 'el'ekhad the Hebrew word translate a divine title unique to Malachi in the OT³⁰ . The expression used in Malachi "Same Father" or "One Father" make assurance that Yahweh as Creator and Israel's God. In the Old Testament, "love" the equilant Hebrew word "ahb" is used in the context of covenant.

I.3.4.1. The chosen people of Israel (1:2b-3a)

"In the Covenant accompanied by love. Out of love, Yahweh makes the Covenant with Israel; for Israel he becomes a Bridegroom and Husband who is most affectionate, attentive, and generous towards his bride"³¹ . And Yahweh's love for Israel is an eternal love, but they failed to love Him many times, but He still retained His covenant with Israel and chose to use them in a glorious way, that is those who believed in Him and were ready to serve Him.

I.4. Marriage as a Covenant

God's covenant with the people of Israel, founding a new reality in which He will be their God and they will be His people. The Bible describes covenant as promise between parties closed by God. In the salvation history God always progresses through covenantal relationship, but there was faithlessness to Yahweh from the part people of Israel.

A covenant is a relationship of obligation sealed with an oath, a covenant is similar to a contract, through a covenant is bound specifically by an oath before god. These are some

²⁷ K. KACHAPPILLY, *God of Love Revisited.....*, Cit.,137.

²⁸ K. KACHAPPILLY, *God of Love Revisited.....*, Cit.,137.

²⁹ A.E:HILL, "Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary",The Anchor Yale Bible, (Yale University Press,London, 1998).

³⁰ R.D. PATTERSON,A.E.HILL, "Minor prophets Hosea-Malachi", Cornerstone Biblical Commentary.....,Cit.

³¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created Them A Theology of the Body*, M. WALDSTEIN (Trs), Pauline Book Media,boston,USA,2006,275.

definitions of covenant. Marriage is a covenant because marriage partner to whom one pledges covenantal loyalty before God (2:11-12).

“Malachi 2:14 used a verb “witness”, a phrase “wife of your covenant”, “your partner” are root to covenantal relationship in marriage. 2:14 used an expression “wife of your covenant”. This phrase occurs only once in the OT. Faithlessness is an oath to Yahweh and his covenant. The verb “bgd” signifies faithlessness or treacherous behaviour in marriage exodus 21:8, covenant relationship with Yaweh Jeremiah 3: 8”³². The Hebrew marriage contract is a solemn covenant to which God is witness (Prov 2:17). Faith in Christ and Christian commitment as clearly makes a difference in the lives of Husband and wife. This proclaims that couples choosing a covenant marriage powerfully influenced by their covenantal Christian faith. This was the God’s faithful unity in marriage (Malachi 2:14-16). Malachi consistently roots the covenantal holiness of marriage in the very unity of Yahweh. The deeper sense of unity in marriage is an expression of commitment to the covenant³³.

Conclusion

Sacred Scripture is the salvation history of humanity. God revealed Himself and He entered the lives of the people of Israel through covenantal promises. The nature of God’s covenant is steadfast love, faithfulness and holiness. God is always faithful to the covenant even if the people of Israel was unfaithful to the covenant. So we can say that, from the beginning to the end the Sacred Scripture states that God is faithful to His covenant. A covenant essentially is not a covenant without God. God’s covenant with the people of Israel, founding a new reality in which He will be their God and they will be his people. The Bible describes covenant as a promise between parties sealed by God. Covenant requires obedience from the treaties. Israel unfaithfulness to God, they tested God. In His mercy God tendered people of Israel. Yahweh’s unconditional commitment and faithfulness to Israel forever. Yahweh’s commitment to his people through the covenant is further stressed: ‘For I, the lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of

³² R.S. GARCIA, “Creation and Covenant in Malachi”, A paper Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Course GSEM630 Documentary Research and writing, August 2014,19.

³³ C.C. PETER, “The Twelve Prophets,” in The Daily Study Bible, the Westminster press, Philadelphia, 1985, 236.

Jacob, are not consumed' (Malachi 3: 6). The verse reveals stability of Yahweh's covenant and Yahweh's unfailing character. Yahweh has not change in his promise.

According to Malachi, Yahweh has not changed the nature of Yahweh's being. And he shows Yahweh's faithfulness to his covenant agreement with Israel. Yahweh has not changed the agreement, but he remained dedicated and faithful to his oath of loyalty. Yahweh's unchanging nature is the unending protection of Israel. Malachi 2:11, people of Israel was faithful to the covenant pre-exilic period. After exportation Israel lost their identity as the chosen people God, they violated their fathers promises. They worshiped foreign gods profaned the holy name of Yahweh.

Christianity conceives marriage as a covenantal relationship, it is an institution of the Church. it is a bond between two people sealed by God. In Malachi 2: 14 there are elements which pointing to a covenant, the word "witness", the phrase "wife of your youth", the word "faithless", "partner". Recalling all the covenants in the OT in Malachi, prophet exalting the spouses to be faithful in the covenantal relationship as God always remained faithful to the people of Israel. It is not the agreement between man and woman, but on God's gracious power to honour and secure their oneness. Husband and wife are the partners in the covenant of marriage agrees with God the third party or the "witness" of the covenant. Marital union become a special expression of God's relationship with his people. This is presented in the indissoluble character of the covenant of marriage.

CHAPTER II

JOHN PAUL II ON INDISSOLUBILITY AND CONJUGAL LOVE IN COVENANTAL MARRIAGE

Introduction

Marriage is a union in nature of the spouses for the whole life, which of its own nature is considered to the wellbeing of the spouses. Men and women are created for one another, for love: to give themselves conjugally in a union that is total as man and woman, in one flesh³⁴ . “...the indissolubility of marriage is a fruit, a sign and a condition of the faithful love that God has for Israel and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church”³⁵ . Vatican Council II *Gaudium et Spes* Chapter one explains the dignity of marriage and the family. John Paul II in his allocution to the Rota of 2000 clearly states that the Church’s essential duty is to authorize strongly the principle of the absolute indissolubility of accepted and gifted marriage as definitive truth³⁶ .

In this chapter we discuss the Indissolubility of Covenantal Marriage based on Pope John Paul II’s teachings about indissolubility of marriage. He connects the necessity of indissolubility with the faithful love of God towards His own people and states that indissolubility of marriage is the ultimate truth in the plan that God has manifested in his revelation³⁷ . We have also dealt with the concept of love and the relationship between conjugal love and indissolubility. Finally, we focus on the characteristics of the conjugal love.

The sacrament of marriage has its foundation in the New Covenant of Christ and the Church. “This is a great mystery” (Eph.5:32). The spousal love of Christ and the Church is a Nuptial mystery. The Christian marriage becomes an efficacious sign of the sacrament

³⁴ Cfr.. VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), (07.12. 1965), n.48, (AAS 57 (1965).

³⁵ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (FC), (22.11.1981), n.20, AAS 74 (1982).

³⁶ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, Allocution, (January 21,2000), No.3, in AAS 92 (2000), pp. 350-355, 350.

³⁷ FC,19.

of the covenant of Christ and the Church³⁸. The nuptial covenant between God and His people of Israel had prepared a way for the new and everlasting covenant culminated in Christ and Church³⁹. The marriage between baptized persons is a sacrament⁴⁰. The Marriage bond has been established by God himself in such way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved⁴¹. It is a permanent, faithful union of love between husband and wife.

II.1. John Paul II on Indissolubility of Covenantal Marriage

John Paul II develops the Catholic prohibition of divorce in a systematic and in-depth manner. Throughout his writings, however, he proposes the basic reasons for the indissolubility of Christian marriage and prohibition of divorce. His theological argument for indissolubility upholds on the role of the grace of God. To imitate and live out the love of Christ is not possible for man by his own gift alone⁴².

John Paul II recognizes unity and indissolubility of marriage as a good of the spouses, for children, for the Church and for the whole of the humanity. A positive presentation of the indissoluble union is important in order to remember its goodness and beauty. The view of Indissolubility as a limit of the freedom of the contracting parties, and so as a burden that at times can become unbearable⁴³, it should be overcome. Pope John Paul II, during his pontificate, certainly understood the preoccupation of Paul VI and was determined to continue with what he had started in his magisterial teachings on marriage and the family. His pontificate marked or showed a lot of interest regarding the family⁴⁴. This is quite evident in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), His *Letters to the Family* (1994), and in many other documents. We shall examine his contributions regarding the indissolubility of marriage beginning from *Familiaris Consortio*, *Man and Women He created them a theology of body* and to his *Letters to the Family*. The

³⁸ CCC,796

³⁹ CCC,612.

⁴⁰ A.N.DACANAY, *Canon Law Marriage: Introductory Notes and Comments*, Loyola School of Theology, Manila Philippianse,2003,5.

⁴¹ CCC,1640.

⁴² Cfr. C.E. CURRAN, *Moral Theology of John Paul II*, T&T Clark, London,2006,173.

⁴³ JOHN PAUL II, *The tribunal of the Roman Rota*, (January 28-2002) 2002, no 2.

⁴⁴ Cfr. K. WOJTYLA, Pologne: Reflexions du cardinal Wojtyla, archeveque de Cracovie, sur la verite de l'encyclique, *Humane Vitae*, Déclarations épiscopales du monde entier commentaires theologiques (ed) J. GROOTAERS, G. THILS, Gembloux,1970, 185-193

theological anthropology of John Paul II is equally significant about the theology of the body which he developed in his Wednesday audiences.

II.1.1. Familiaris Consortio

The apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* came to birth in the Fifth Synod of Bishops, celebrated at Rome in 1980. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, the Pope wrote that the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family⁴⁵. This opinion is in, the basis of his endless attention to the well-being of the family from the very beginning of his pontificate. It is a document of the Supreme Pontiff which gathers the proposals and the suggestions presented to him by the Synod Fathers from the Episcopate of five lands⁴⁶. It contains a summary of all the doctrines of the Church, and a Summa in which the clear teachings of Vatican Council II on marriage and the family is deepened and improved⁴⁷. Through *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II hoped that young people preparing for marriage and family life will find a new vision of loving and serving life⁴⁸. It is an exultation to the family to hold the most precious human values willed by God in the very act of creation. Marriage and family are interiorly ordained to fulfilment in Christ and have need of His grace in order to be healed from the wounds of sin.

In John Paul II's view, the Christian family is a miniature of the domestic Church, since it is the first community called to proclaim the Gospel to the child. The Christian family in effect, does what the Church does. It evangelizes, catechizes, ministers, educates for greater love and justice even though it does this on a smaller scale⁴⁹. Christian marriage is described in this Apostolic Exhortation as a conjugal covenant. Marriage is a community of persons brought to life by love and at the service of life. Christ raised marriage as a sacrament and established it as a way of holiness. *Familiaris Consortio* begins its presentation of the theology of the family with a consideration of the original design of God for marriage and the family⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ FC, 75

⁴⁶ Cfr, FC, 2

⁴⁷ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, *Endiridion Familiae*, no7, 4.3416,18.

⁴⁸ Cfr. J.S. HAMLON, "A call to families", Study guide and commentary for *Familiaris Consortio*, Minnesota,1984,4.

⁴⁹ Cfr. J.S. HAMLON, "A call to families", Study guide and commentary for *Familiaris Consortio*....., Cit.,4.

⁵⁰ FC, 10.4

In numbers 11-14, the Pope points out in the constitution that the man as a created being in the image and likeness of God. As John Paul II clearly states that human sexuality is never purely biological but concerns the inner most being of the human person as such”⁵¹. “Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter- appeal of the body and instinct, the power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It then aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union of one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive in mutual giving; and it is open to fertility”⁵² .

When any of these essential elements such as: self-gift, sexual differentiation, personal bodily unity, indissolubility and fecundity are rejected or contradicted by the society, it is a clear sign of a culture of death that is beginning to take root.

II.1.1.1. Man, the Image of God

‘God created man in his own image, male and female he created them’ (Gen 1:27). It is an invitation to participate to the love of God and share it with his fellow beings. God called him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love. “He created male and female”- was clearly distinguished from the animals set apart for a function different from the lower creates. God assigned for man and women the participation of His act of creation⁵³ . “Gens.2:27 states the principle of the unity and in dissolubility of marriage as the very content of this word of God”⁵⁴ .

John Paul II’s theology of the family begins with the concept of the human person who is made in the image and likeness of God. ‘God created man in his own image of God he created him, male and female he created them’ (Gen 1:27). This means that both male and female humanity possess equal personal dignity (CCC 369, 2334) at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of being in the visible created order⁵⁵ . *Familiaris Consortio* shows the motive of creation: “God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to

⁵¹ FC,11

⁵² CCC,1643

⁵³ C.J. JESKE, “The peoples Bible: Genesis”, (north-western publishing house, Millwaukee,1991).

⁵⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Man and Woman He Created Them A Theology of the Body....., Cit.,275.

⁵⁵ P.J. CAHALL, *The mystery of Marriage: A Theology of the Body and the Sacrament*, Hillenbrand, Chicago,2014,26.

existence through love, he called him at the same time for love. God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communication”⁵⁶.

From the beginning itself Gods plan oriented towards for the well-being of spouses.

“God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating humans in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being”⁵⁷ .

Here Pope shows that at the heart of human nature, there is the vocation to personal love and communion.

John Paul II says that we are made in the image of God, so human being should form a communion in imitation of the Trinity. Thus, marriage is the expression of mutual self-donation of a man and a woman through their bodies. In the mutual donation of husband and wife, they give themselves to one another not only their biological powers but also themselves to each other.

Pope John Paul II says that, “When couples, by means of recourse to contraception separate these two meanings that God the creator has inscribed in the being of man and women and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as arbiters of divine plan and they manipulate and degrade human sexuality and with it themselves their married partner by altering its value of total self-giving. Thus the innate language that, to express the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is over laid, through contraception, by an objectively contractor language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of Conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality”⁵⁸ .

So, we can say that marriage is essentially a vocation to love. And God inscribed in the humanity of man and women the vocation and the capacity and the responsibility of love and communion⁵⁹ . Pope John Paul II in His apostolic exhortation clearly affirms that

⁵⁶ FC, 11

⁵⁷ FC,11.

⁵⁸ FC,32

⁵⁹ “Indian Journal of family studies”, Vol 19 No.1 (March 2018),CANA Publications,Changanacherry,2018,54.

love is intimately connected to the concept of self-gift and is constituted by the value of total self-giving.

II.1.1.2. The Sacramentality of Matrimony

The mutual love of man and woman is not too insignificant or too concrete for Christ's grace and power. In CCC 1601 explain the sacramentality of matrimony,

“ The matrimonial covenant , by which a man and women establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of sacrament”⁶⁰ .

Christ is the sacrament of God and Church is the sacrament of Christ. Through the sacrament we receive Forgiveness, Grace, Holiness, sanctification by the power of Holy Spirit. Eph.5:22-23 as a testimony of the sacramentality of marriage based on the “great mystery” of Christ and Church⁶¹ .

The conjugal love reaches its proper perfection in His own love and makes marriage a true road to holiness⁶² . In the book ‘The Gift of Blessed John Paul II’, Wuerl says, ‘In God’s plan, the wonder of human love is raised to the level of a sacrament so that among the baptized, marriage becomes a covenant assigning the man and the woman to live with one another in a bond of love whose nature is recognized by God. This covenant is a symbol of the eternal covenantal love established by Christ with his Church in the paschal mystery’⁶³ .

Through the sacrament of marriage, Christian family is fortified and receives a kind holiness. In the sacrament of marriage spouses are bound to one another in an indissoluble manner. A husband and wife commit themselves to each other out of love and Christ the Redeemer also commits Himself to them and abides with them throughout the duration

⁶⁰ CCC,1601

⁶¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created Them A Theology of the Body*.....Cit., 517.

⁶² “Indian Journal of family studies”, Vol 19 No.1.....Cit.,54.

⁶³ D. WUERL, *The Gift of blessed John Paul II: A Celebration of His Enduring Legacy*, The Word Among Us press, Frederick, 2011, 83.

of their married life⁶⁴ . Through the sacrament of marriage, spouses and their families receive God's grace.

II.1.2. Man and Woman, He created them

A theology of the body is the main expression of this commitment to the beauty of love in John Paul II's teaching. The basis of his reflection is the Gospel proclamation about the unity and indissolubility of marriage⁶⁵ . One of the main goals of the theology of the body is the defence of Paul VI's prophetic encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. The teaching of *Humanae Vitae* as John Paul II knows it, is created on the spousal meaning of the human body, that is, on the God-given power of the body to be a sign of the essential gift of self between man and woman⁶⁶ .

John Paul II unfolds a theological argument based on Book of Tobit chapter 9. The image of God is found in man woman above all in the communion of love between the person of the Trinity (9:3). In God's design, the spousal union of man and woman is the original effective sign through which holiness entered into the world (Tob 9:5). This visible sign of marriage relates to the visible sign of Christ's Spousal love for the Church and is thus the foundation of the whole sacramental order (Tob 9:5). Through the mystery of the incarnate person and the biblical analogy of the spousal love, John Paul II's catechesis illuminates that the entirety of God's plan for human life from origin to the eschaton with an imposing supernatural light⁶⁷ .

“Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the Divine gift because He bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift. And with it he carries into the world his particular likeness to god, with which he transience and also rules his “visibility” in the world, His bodylines, his musicality or femininity, his nakedness. A reflection of this likeness is also in the primordial awareness of the spousal meaning of the body pervaded by the mystery of original innocence Thus in this Dimension, a primordial of sanctification in the duties and dignity of its state, to be able to live out their path to sacrament is

⁶⁴ A. CHUNDELIKATT, “Family as the Domestic Church”, (ed) *Ministering the Families*, Cana Publications, Changanacherry, 2009,198-218. 213.

⁶⁵ R.A. SPINELLO, “The Encyclicals of John Paull II”: An Introduction and Commentary, Rowman & Littlefield, INC, UK,2012,47.

⁶⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body*.....,Cit., 25.

⁶⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body*, Cit., 25.

constituted, understood as assign that efficaciously transmits in the visible word the invisible mystery hidden in God from eternity”⁶⁸ .

II.1.3. Allocution to the Roman Rota

In this part of the work we shall examine the allocutions of Pope John Paul II to the Roman Rota regarding the indissolubility of marriage. In all his allocutions intrude implicitly the indissolubility of marriage even when he is talking of other topics such as the favour of marriage and so forth⁶⁹ .

In his allocution to the allocation to the Roman Rota of January 24, 1981, he expressed the idea that, as Vatican II emphasizes, from matrimony springs the family in which

The Council explains: “the well-being of the person and of human and Christian society is intimately connected with the healthy state of the community of marriage and family”⁷⁰ . It is well known how, since the beginnings the Church confirmed by the word of the Gospel (Mt 19:5; 5:32) has always taught and confirmed explicitly and precept of Jesus on the unity and indissolubility of marriage without which there can never be a secure family, the healthy and truly vital cell of the society. According to him therefore, there is need to respect the laws willed by God for the coming together of men and women and for the continuance of their union as new element that Christianity introduced to the institution of marriage. According to the Vatican Council II, marriage is:

“the covenant or irrevocable personal consent of marriage sets up an intimate shearing of married life and love as instituted by the Creator and regulated by God’s laws. Thus, the human action in which spouses give themselves to each other and accept each other results in an institution which is stable by divine ordinance and in the eyes of society”⁷¹ .

In his allocution to the Roman Rota he mentions that marriage is a reality and the mysterious sign. God created humankind in his own image and likeness; calling them to existence through love, he called them at the same time for love. God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion⁷² . A rational understanding of the idea of

⁶⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body* , Cit.,203.

⁶⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Allocution to the Roman Rota*, (February 17- 1979) in AAS 71,1979, 422-427.

⁷⁰ GS, no.49.

⁷¹ GS, no.49.

⁷² FC, 11.

humankind being made in the image of God is clearly brought through the text of Gen 1: 27. It is a Trinitarian interpretation. The love that God is, in the mystery of personal loving communion, and human persons are created so that they can share in both. Pope shares, Human fatherhood and motherhood, while remaining biologically similar to that of other living beings in nature, contain in an essential and unique way a ‘likeness to God which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love’⁷³.

As sacrament, marriage is a mysterious sign. An indissoluble bond which unites the spouses, just as in one love Christ and the Church are united. “This is a great mystery and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself and a wife should respect her husband.” (Eph, 5:32-33).

II.1.4. Letter to the Family

In the year of family pope John Paul II wrote a letter to the family emphasizing “man is the way of the church”. That means the church stands with always in the sorrows and anxieties of people’s daily pilgrimage⁷⁴ . Family is the smallest form of the community where one who learn to communicate with one another. Vatican Council II called family as “domestic church”. “The domestic church parents, are by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They must foster the vocation which is proper to each child, and this with special care if it be religion”⁷⁵ . John Paul II in this light, declare that “only persons can live in communion. The family, therefore, originates in a marital communion which the Second Vatican Council called as a covenant, in which man and women give themselves to each other and accept each other”⁷⁶ . He further expresses that marriage, the sacrament of matrimony, is a covenant of persons in love. And love can be deepened and sealed only by love. This love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Cfr. Rom 5:5).

⁷³ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Families* (LF), 1994 no 6.

⁷⁴ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Families* (LF)(February -2-1994), 1994,1.

⁷⁵ LG, no.11. 330.

⁷⁶ LF,7.

II.2. Indissolubility of marriage: a natural substance

Natural law is that objective, eternal and absolute hierarchy of moral values, which are sources of obligation concerning man since they have been so ordained by the Creator of nature⁷⁷. The Pope feels that, “merely empirical conception of nature makes it radically impossible to understand that the human body is not something extrinsic to the person, but constitutes, along with the spiritual and immortal soul, an intrinsic to the person but constitutes, along with the spiritual and immortal soul, an intrinsic principle of the unitary being which is the human person”⁷⁸. Again, for him, marriage is not just a union between human persons that can be formed according to a variety of cultural models. Pope John Paul II emphasized succinctly that,

“The essential properties of marriage, unity and indissolubility, are also inscribed in the very being of marriage, since in no way are, they law extrinsic to it. Only if marriage is seen as a union involving the person in the realization of his natural relational structure, which remains essentially the same throughout his personal life, can it withstand the changes of life, the efforts and even the crises throughout which human freedom often passes in living its commitments. But if the marital union is thought to be based only on personal qualities, interests or attractions, it obviously is no longer seen as a natural reality but a situation dependent on the current perseverance of the will in relation to the continuance of contingent facts and feelings. Certainly, the bond is caused by consent, that is by an act of the man’s and the women’s will, but this consent actualizes a power already existing in man and women. Thus, the indissoluble force of the bond itself is based on the natural reality of the union freely established between man and women”⁷⁹.

Therefore, in the light of marriage as a natural reality we can easily grasp the natural character regarding the capacity to marry: “All who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage”⁸⁰.

II.3 The Concept of Love

“According to the traditional language, love, as a superior power, coordinates the acts of the parents, of the husband and wife, in the area of the ends of the marriage”⁸¹. Love is

⁷⁷ Cfr. B.F. BROWN, “The Natural Law: The marriage bound and divorce in the Jurist”, 15(1955) 24-51,42.

⁷⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Address of John Paul II to the Prelate Auditors, Officials and *Advocates of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota* (February 1- 2001), 2001, no.3.

⁷⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Address of John Paul II to the Prelate Auditors, Officials and *Advocates of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*.....,Cit.,

⁸⁰ Cfr. CIC 1058, CCEO 778.

⁸¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body*, Cit., (General Audience, (October 10-1984) in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*,7.2 1984, no.5 847-47) 642.

that force which John Paul II talks of as the key element of the spirituality of the spouses and parents⁸² . Love is a personal act and in its most sublime expression, it is interpersonal between persons⁸³ . According to Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI,

“Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word “love”: we speak of love of one’s country, love of one’s profession, love between friends, love of work, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbour and love of God. Amid these multiplicities of meanings, however, one stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined, and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison”⁸⁴ .

In Eph 5:28, “The author presents the love of Christ for the Church-the love makes the church the body of the Christ, whose head he is-as the model of the love of the spouses and as the model of the wedding feast of bridegroom and bride”⁸⁵ . “The one who loves his wife loves himself” (Eph 5:28) this sentence confirms that “character of unity even more. The union of husband and wife in love expresses itself also through the body”⁸⁶ .

According to John Paul II, “the love of a man and a woman is a mutual relationship between persons and possesses a character that is personal. Its profound ethical significance is intimately bound up with this and in the ethical sense it constitutes the content of the greatest commandment in the gospel”⁸⁷ . The meaning of love which we have just examined above, will help us at this juncture to explore on conjugal love.

II.3.1. Conjugal Love

“The family, as community of persons, is thus the first human “society”. It arises when ever their comes into being the conjugal covenant of marriage, which opens the spouses to a lasting communion of love and of life, and it is brought to complication in a full and

⁸² JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body*, Cit., (General Audience, (october 10-1984) in Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II,7.2 1984, no.5 847-47) 642.

⁸³ P. J. VILADRICH, *The Agony of Legal Marriage*, Pamplona 1990,75,85.

⁸⁴ POPE BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas Est* of the supreme pontific Benedict XVI to the Bishops priests and Deacons men and women Religious and all the lay faithful no Christian love, (December 25- 2005),Part 1, 2005,no.2.

⁸⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body*, Cit.,484.

⁸⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created them, A theology of the body*, Cit.,484.

⁸⁷ Cfr, JOHN PAUL II, *Love and Responsibility*,Ignatius Press, 1993,73.

specific way with the procreation of the children: the “communion” of the spouses give rise to the “community” of the family”⁸⁸ .

Marriage is a community of persons and its essence is defined by love⁸⁹ . Conjugal love is that love which is due in justice, which unites in communion, men and woman who have united themselves legitimately in marriage and are therefore one for the other spouse⁹⁰ . Conjugal love is an essential element of human and Christian marriage⁹¹ .

John Paul II states that, conjugal love is not only made of defects and emotions, but also and above all reciprocal devotion, free, voluntary, total, irrevocable⁹² .He goes further by asserting that, conjugal love links two human persons distinguished by sex, making them a continuity of life and love, uniting them therefore in marriage⁹³ . Human beings are called into existence ‘through love and for love’⁹⁴ . Bearing the divine image, their vocation is to act as God acts. That is, love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being⁹⁵ . This call to love and be loved is at the heart of the spousal covenant which forms the wider community of the family. Conjugal love and marriage are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in which they find their crowning⁹⁶ .

II.3.1.1. Children as a Gift of Marriage

John Paul II reaffirms the Church’s tradition that “according to plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning”⁹⁷ . Children are the fruits of their conjugal love; Pope John Paul II teaches in *Letter to Families*, “in children they see the crowning of their own love for each other. They want children for the family, as a *priceless gift*”⁹⁸ . In ‘The

⁸⁸ LF,7.

⁸⁹ FC, 17.

⁹⁰ Cfr. FC, 17.

⁹¹ Cfr. L. CHIAPPETTA, *Prontuario di diritto Canonico e Concordatario*, Roma 1994,39.

⁹² JOHN PAUL II, in F. Bersini, *I discorsi del Papa alla Rota*, (February 4-1980)1980, 144,415.

⁹³ JOHN PAUL II, *Allocution to the Rota*, (January 24-1981) in AAS 73, 1981, 228,234.

⁹⁴ FC, 11.1

⁹⁵ FC,11.2

⁹⁶ Cfr. J.M. MILLER, *The post Synodal Exhortation of John Paul II*, OSV,1998,123.

⁹⁷ FC, 14.

⁹⁸ LF,9.

Theology of the Body’ the Pope says that, “procreation is rooted in creation and every time it reproduces in some way its mystery”⁹⁹ . In CCC,2367; “Called to give life spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of the God”¹⁰⁰ . Growing in conjugal love the spouses participating the God given mission to them.

II.3.1.2. The Formation of a Community of Persons

Familiarise Consortio teaches,

“Christian marriage and the Christian family build up the Church: for in the Family the human person is not only brought in to being and progressively introduced by means of education into the human community, but by means of the rebirth of baptism and education and faith the child is also introduced in the god’s family, which is the church”¹⁰¹ .

Family as a love and life firmly grounded in the society. In the family each member develops their role, men and woman have equal dignity. From the family each person learn to share and to help one another thus one become able to serve society in a better way.

II 3.2. Conjugal Love and Marital Consent

Conjugal life of Christian couples enables a better understanding of God’s love for his people and intern, the great covenant illuminates and give a profound a new meaning to marriage and family life in relationship with Christ and Church¹⁰² . The consent by which they say ‘yes’ to God’s choice for their vocation therefore Christian marriage is, by nature, indissoluble and irrevocable.

Gaudium et Spes expresses that

“the intimate partnership of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws: it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, the matrimonial bond is irrevocable personal consent”¹⁰³ .

⁹⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman Created Them: Theology of the Body*.....,Cit., 169

¹⁰⁰ CCC.2367

¹⁰¹ FC,15

¹⁰² Laudato si, “Asian Horizons, Dharmaram Journal of Theology”, Vol.9, No.4, (December 2015), Bangalore, 2015, 779.

¹⁰³ GS,48.

According to Von Hildebrand, there is a real distinction between conjugal love and marriage¹⁰⁴. He is aware that the irrevocable and indissoluble bond of marriage is formed once the spouses manifest their consent. However, this consent of the spouses is then implied in conjugal love which therefore possesses the characteristic of the *intentio unionis*, that is, the desire to participate in the life of the loved being, in order to bind oneself for life¹⁰⁵. The *intentio unionis* of conjugal love finds valid and full expression in the irrevocable union which constitutes consent¹⁰⁶.

II.4. The Relationship between Conjugal Love and Indissolubility

Marriage must be both unifying and unbreakable. “Conjugal love involves the union of the persons, heart and soul beyond one flesh by the sacrament of marriage. It demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual self-giving: and it is open to fertility”¹⁰⁷. It is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason? For this reason, a man will leave his father and his mother and united to his wife and to shall be one flesh. So that they are no longer two, but one single flesh. Therefore what God has joint let a man not separate (Mt.19; 4-6). So, indissolubility of the marriage instituted by the creator. “On the basis of Christ’s spousal love for the church (Eh:5;25) it is the greatest mystery of Christ and the Church realised by Christ, who gave himself for her, uniting with her, with an indissoluble love. Just as spouses, husband and wife, unite in marriage”¹⁰⁸.

II.4.1. Openness to Fruitfulness

One aspect of conjugal love is openness to fruitfulness. The catechism affirms that, 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 glory¹⁰⁹. The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that parent’s hand to their children through the education which they give them.

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. D.H. VON, *Conjugal love and Procreation*, Lexington books, UK; 2011,17.

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. D.H. VON, *Conjugal love and Procreation.....*, Cit., 17.

¹⁰⁶ Cfr. D.H. VON, *Conjugal love and Procreation.....*, Cit., 17.

¹⁰⁷ CCC,1643

¹⁰⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman Created Them: Theology of the Body.....*,Cit.,509.

¹⁰⁹ GE no.3.

Parents are therefore the principal and the first educators of their children¹¹⁰ . The conjugal act by which the couple mutually express their self- gift at the same time, expresses openness to the gift of life. It is an act that is inseparably bodily and spiritual. It is in their bodies and through their bodies that the spouses consummate their marriage and can become father and mother. In order to respect the language of their bodies and their natural generosity, the conjugal union must take place with respect to its openness to procreation; and the procreation of a person must be the fruit and the result of married love¹¹¹ .

II.4.2. Indissolubility is a Necessity of Conjugal Love

The indissolubility of marriage has an important retroactive effect on conjugal love. It is considered by many as something oppressive and dispiriting, something which deprives love of its wings and gives it a coercive character¹¹² . The indissolubility of marriage must likewise be considered as the unique fulfilment of the specific intention of conjugal love. The true lover experiences the objective validity of his self-bestowal, and the accomplishment of such a transcendent, irrevocable decision, as a specific fulfilment of his love¹¹³ .

II.4.3. Characteristics of conjugal love

- Conjugal love is an extremely human love. It does not refer to an act of man nor to passion: rather, it is a habit and thus, must not be equated with mere egoistic and erotic inclination.
- Conjugal love is rooted in the will, being directed from one person to the other: it concludes in the person. As such it is a personal love which entails the good of the whole person and thereby entails a love of friendship which is faithful and indissoluble, as demanded by the institution of marriage.
- Conjugal love covers the totality and the manifestations of the indivisible union of the body and soul of the spouses. As such, conjugal love neither

¹¹⁰ *Dei Verbum* II b 4 b.

¹¹¹ B.RIZK, H.N. SALLAMM, *Clinical Infertility and in vitro Fertilization*, Jaypee brothers medical publishers, Delhi, 2012,392.

¹¹² D.H.VON, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love.....*, Cit., 59.

¹¹³ D.H.VON, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love.....*, Cit., 60

excludes affectivity nor the sexual dimension of the person of the spouses but rather comprehends them.

- Conjugal love is dynamic: it is united with the fulfilment of the obligations of daily life and sacrifices and is cultivated and fostered through them.
- Conjugal love is assumed, healed and perfected by divine love ¹¹⁴ .

II.5. Marriage as Indissoluble

The indissolubility of the marriage bond viewed from a messianic perspective is then not an abstract legal statement that places a burden or demand on the spouses. It is rather an offer of God's grace to save God's people and to embed the human bond of faithfulness in God's faithfulness¹¹⁵ . The human bond of faithfulness, mutually faithful love in sacramental marriage, makes it an indissoluble community of love. Marital love, as mutual giving way, as mutual service, as mutual fidelity, as mainspring of indissoluble communion, is not a giving in a Christian Marriage; it is a task to be undertaken¹¹⁶ . It is always a challenge to which the spouses are called to respond as disciples of the Christ they confess as the prophetic symbol of God¹¹⁷ . However, Jesus teaching on the indissolubility of marriage did not exclude those who have been unfaithful to the ideal of love in. The gospels (Lk. 7:37; Jn. 4:18; 8:3ff; Mt. 21:31) declare that Jesus encountered and welcomed adulterers not to approve their conduct but to lead them to conversion and pardon¹¹⁸ . In the Gospel Jesus teaching on divorce and remarriage are reported four times (Mt. 5:32, 19:9; Lk. 16:18; Mk. 10:11-12). And St. Paul also writes about prohibition of divorce and remarriage (1Cor.7: 10-11). The law of the catholic Church about the indissolubility of sacramental marriage flows from these texts in the New Testament. However, it is not entirely correct to say that the church forbids dissolution under every circumstance of a valid marriage.

Canons 1141 and 1142 clearly state when marriages can and cannot be dissolved: "A marriage that is ratum et consummatum can be dissolved by no human power and by no

¹¹⁴ GS, 49

¹¹⁵ GS,48.

¹¹⁶ Cfr. LAWLER, G. MICHAEL. *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993.

¹¹⁷ Cfr.GS, 49.

¹¹⁸ Cfr. C. WIENER, "Marriage" In *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (ed.) Xavier Leon-Dufour Ijamsville, MD: The Word Among US Press, 2000,336.

cause, except death”¹¹⁹ . “For a just cause, the Roman pontiff can dissolve a non-consummated marriage between baptized persons or between a baptized party and a non-baptized party at the request of both parties or of one of them, even if the other party is unwilling”¹²⁰ . According to the Petrine Privilege, the Roman Pontiff has the power of dissolving all non-sacramental marriages in favour of the Christian faith and life of one or the other of the parties or of a third party¹²¹ . Though the Catholic Church dissolves marriages in three ways, the Church does not recognize divorce, a cessation of a sacramental marriage between two Catholics so that both parties are free to marry again. The Church grants annulments. Annulment is a judgment that a valid marriage did not exist at all between the two people¹²² .

II.5.1. Marriage is Irrevocable and Permanent

The marriage between baptized persons is a sacrament and they are permanent and faithful union of love between husband and wife. Sacramental value forms the indissoluble bond between Christ and His Church; it is irrevocable and permanent. But marital breakdowns are a common experience in our culture. Many people get remarried and live in an irregular state of life. The Church finds appropriate direction in *Familiaris Consortio* for her pastoral efforts in ministering to irregular marital situations. The consequences of divorce will affect women and children as well as grandchildren, and extended family and community as well. They raise questions about the teaching on indissolubility in order to help our Church more effectively to the sacredness of marriage and to develop its pastoral care of families. They argue that present pastoral strategies of the Church must renew. It must be clear, consistent and realistic¹²³ .

II.5.2. Importance of Pastoral Care

After the Synod of Bishops on the Christian family in the modern world, Pope Saint John Paul II issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* to demonstrate significant

¹¹⁹ CIC, 1141.

¹²⁰ CIC, 1142.

¹²¹ Cfr. M.G. LAWLER, *Marriage and the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2002. 75.

¹²² Cfr. W.O. COLE, *Moral Issues in Six Religions*, Johannesburg Blantyre Gaborone Ibadan Portsmouth, USA Chicago, 1991, 49.

¹²³ K.R. HIMES- J.A. CORIDEN, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reason to Rediscover”....., Cit., 457.

and compassionate pastoral concern for those Christian faithful who find themselves bound to an ecclesial valid marriage while concurrently living as civilly remarried. FC 84 states on divorced persons who have remarried articulates the following noteworthy statements: The pastors and the whole community of the faithful to help divorced people by soliciting with charity that they do not consider themselves separated from the Church, being able and indeed having to participate in his life as baptized. Be urged to listen to the Word of God, to attend the sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to increase the works of charity and the initiatives of the community in favour of justice, to educate children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and the works of penance to implore the grace of God from day to day. The Church prays for them, encourages them, shows itself to be a merciful mother and so supports them in faith and hope. The Church, however, reaffirms its practice, based on Sacred Scripture, of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the Eucharistic communion. They are not able to be admitted, since their condition of life objectively contradict that union of union of love between Christ and the Church¹²⁴ .

Amoris Laetitia proposes a way to follow in order to incorporate fully into the Church those who have fallen away from a life in keeping with Gospel and are living-in ‘irregular situations. They can remember that there is a problem in the way that they are establishing and living out their visible relationships. It will encourage them to do charity to others and they can give good education to their children¹²⁵ . Any merciful and pastoral consideration to help such couple must keep this truth firmly in mind, for compromising the truth is never merciful nor pastoral. Sexual abstinence in such circumstance is central to any penitential way towards admission to the sacraments for the divorced and civilly remarried. In this way priests and religious can carry out their duty to accompany these people in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and helping them to a possible way to for responding to God and growing in the midst of limits.

¹²⁴ FC, 84.

¹²⁵ Cfr. J. GRANADOS, - S. KAMPOWSKI, - J. J. PEREZ-SOBHA, *Accompanying Discerning, Integrating*, Emmaus Road Publishing, Steubenville, Ohio 2017, 60.

Conclusion

As divine love dwells within human love, indissolubility is a gift of God's supreme mercy enabling human love to be transformed and grow beyond itself to participate in divine love. We believe that the example of a lifelong marriage is a striking sacramental expression of Christ's love for the Church. Indissolubility is demanded by the same nature of conjugal donation which is total and defines persons who become one flesh with another. Marriage is the basic institution of the human society. Marriage points towards that understanding of the conjugal bond and irrevocable fidelity of the spouses, that is, unity and indissolubility which in the subsequent development of this teaching by the Church contributes to the elaboration of the doctrine about the sacramental character of marriage.

In the modern society, there are people who see indissolubility as a limitation of the liberty of those involved and as a weight that is unbearable. In this study we wish to affirm the very fact that unity and indissolubility are essential properties of marriage. Indissolubility is a good for the spouses, for the offspring, for the Church and for the entire humanity. By means of the sacrament, Christian matrimony, though it is of the order of grace, relies on the foundation of the natural law and such a natural law is based on two essential properties which are unity and indissolubility. These two basic and essential components of marriage are further fortified and perfected by the grace of Christian matrimony.

Catholic Church supports the dignity and permanence of marriage through its teachings, preaching and pastoral practical attempts. Sacrament of Holy Matrimony receives its sacramental value from the indissoluble bond between Christ and His Church and is irrevocable and permanent. But marital failures are a common knowledge in our culture. Many people remarry and live in irregular state of life. The Church finds suitable path in *Familiaris consortio* for her pastoral efforts in ministering to irregular marital situations. Divorced and remarried people are increased in the Church. The consequences of divorce will affect women, children, their grandchildren and extended family and community as well. They raised question about the teaching on indissolubility in order to help our Church more effectively to the sacredness of marriage and to develop its pastoral care of

families. They contend that present pastoral strategies of the Church must renew. It must be clear, consistent and realistic¹²⁶

¹²⁶K.R. HIMES- J.A. CORIDEN, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Rediscover”, In *Theological studies* 65 (2004) 453-499,453.

CHAPTER III

Marital Covenant as the Source of Indissoluble Marital Life

Introduction

The covenant of conjugal love is publicly affirmed as unique and select, in order to live in entire fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom¹²⁷. Vatican II places marriage in a modern context and regards it as "an intimate partnership of life and love entered into by means of a covenant [not contract] in which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other"¹²⁸. Marriage differs from other human relationships; the marriage vow "points towards lifelong commitment"¹²⁹.

In this final chapter we will discuss Christian marriage established between husband and wife as a covenant and which is indissoluble. I try to point out the responsibility of the spouses who have entered the covenant to give life. New life is really a gift within the mutual gift of husband and wife to each other. So, through this chapter we see how the spouses can perform their covenantal duty and how they can be the healthy promoters of life for which they have a special responsibility. Finally, we discuss how the indissolubility is related to fidelity.

III.1. Marriage as Covenant Established Between Husband and Wife

The love relationship between God and His people, that is a covenantal relationship. Going back to the Old Testament, the covenant discusses the bond that God created with his people, a fully faithful and unbreakable bond called in term a of a marriage relationship in which even if the people of Israel are unfaithful, God is always faithful.

¹²⁷ FC, 11

¹²⁸ GS, 48

¹²⁹ J. LIPPIT, *The Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard's fear and Trembling*, Routledge, New York, 2015, 66.

This Old Testament explanation is a preparation for the new and everlasting covenant in Jesus Christ in which God unites himself to us by becoming incarnate as a human being and living, dying and rising for us so that we can enjoy perfect union with God in and through him. This is the covenant between Christ and all those that are thus unified to him in the Church. It is the conclusion of the very being and form of creation.

As the marriage union between a man and a woman is a sharing in this union between Christ and the Church, so like the love between Christ and the Church, married love is also a covenant. It is not simply a contract. It is presented on and grounded in the covenantal love that God has for us, which means it is a God kind of love. Like God's love, it is unbreakable, totally faithful, without conditions, basically fruitful, life-giving. In Christian marriage we have this wonderful reality that our human love is taken up into God's commitment so that it can be kept¹³⁰ . We might not be able to love perfectly, totally, unconditionally but God can, and when we make our commitment to this kind of loving on our wedding day it is taken up into God's commitment so that it can be kept. The Catechism call it a covenant definite by God's faithfulness¹³¹ . As a likeness and continuation of Christ's relationship with the Church, marriage is thus also a witness to God's love. It is a visible sign, showing forth the union between Christ and the Church in which it is a participation. As such it is the high point of that which just existence a man and being a woman is the important sign.

III.1.1. Lifelong and Faithful

Marriage is unbreakable, a life-long bond till death do us share and it cannot be dissolved because it cannot be imperfect while both parties are living. Marriage is both a normal founding and a sacred blending because it is rooted in the divine plan of creation. The Catholic Church teaches that the valid marriage between two baptized Christians is also a sacrament, a saving reality and a symbol of Christ's love for his Church (Ephesians 5:25-33)¹³² . In every marriage the spouses make a bond with each other. In a sacramental marriage the couple also arrives a covenant in which their love is closed and supported by God's love because it is an irrevocable and whole commitment of self, made before

¹³⁰ Cfr. CCC, 1639.

¹³¹ CCC, 1640

¹³² R. W. WOLFE, *Ethics And World Religions: Cross- Cultural Case Studies*, Orbis books, 1999, 419.

God and sealed by him. Marriage's contribution in the Christ-Church covenant makes it totally faithful, year in year out, whatever happens. It is an unconditional love; it is not based on understood situations. There are no doubts and no buts. In marriage we do not say "I commit to you because I believe that what I like about you will not change"¹³³ .

According to Christina Read, "Like Christ, with Christ, we expect the Cross. Unlike other forms of Christian love, the unconditional faithfulness of married love is exclusive. This love is just between me and my husband; the way I love my husband is just for him, I do not love anyone else in that unique way that belongs to marriage, in which the sexes are re-owned. It does not mean that I do not love other people, but the love that belongs to the marriage relationship is for him alone, and his for me alone"¹³⁴ . Ultimately this is the fidelity of Christ. As married people our efforts are drawn into the perfect fidelity Christ has to the Church¹³⁵ . Christina Read continues, "He is our rock, and this is very important because human beings are not perfect and do let us down. But Christ is always faithful. It is as though his fidelity embraces and holds secure our fidelity"¹³⁶ .

III.1.2. Fruitful

Married love is fruitful, and it is creative. So, in the marriage we have the extraordinary desire of sharing in the love that prompts God to make us to share his love with us through becoming one with us. In a way that flows from the fulfilment of Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, together as husband and wife we cooperate with God in making people. This is so that God can share his divine life with them, and the incarnation be fulfilled. We are involved in making new human beings who are going to live for all infinity¹³⁷ . In this way we contribute to the understanding of God's plan to share his love with the people he has made, to fill heaven with people eternally fulfilled in his love, because it is through the love of husband and wife that these people, husband and wives

¹³³ <https://www.faith.org.uk/article/march-april-2009-husband-and-wife-in-the-light-of-the-incarnation-01-03-2009>.

¹³⁴ <https://www.faith.org.uk/article/march-april-2009-husband-and-wife-in-the-light-of-the-incarnation-01-03-2009>.

¹³⁵ Cfr. CCC, 2365.

¹³⁶ <https://www.faith.org.uk/article/march-april-2009-husband-and-wife-in-the-light-of-the-incarnation-01-03-2009>

¹³⁷ C. READ, "Husband and Wife in the Light of the Incarnation" cit..4.

also have a share in God's work of bringing them to salvation, bringing them into union with Christ in the Church by getting them baptised, bringing them to be fed by Christ in the Eucharist and to be cared for by him in the other sacraments; bringing them to know and love God through teaching, prayer, bible reading, etc¹³⁸ .

Here we see again why marriage is a covenant, for if marriage shares in Christ's works of creating and saving, it must be like Christ's own work. It must be an alliance, a covenant, a mutual office in which each needs the other¹³⁹ . So the covenant between Christ and Church is by meaning a lifegiving union-Jesus unites the Church to himself in order to connect his new risen life through her, giving birth to sons and daughters of God in baptism and development them to maturity [spiritually and sacramentally].

III.2. The Responsibility to Give Life

The duty to give life to new human beings, which implies care, love and education for one's children, must not be a separate aspect of marital covenant. In fact, it is the normal meaning of the mutual love of the partners, which tends to develop and communicate itself to other human beings. Husbands and wives, surely because they have given themselves irrevocably to one another in marriage, have capacitated themselves to do what married persons are supposed to do, namely, to give one another a special kind of love, spousal love or conjugal love, to express that love in marital act, and to welcome the gift of new human life and give it the home where it can take root and grow. Husband and wife must reduce themselves fit to welcome human life lovingly, feed it kindly, and educate it in the love and service of God and neighbour¹⁴⁰ . The love between husband and wife, just like God's love, creates new reality outside itself¹⁴¹ . The marital act, in other words, by its own internal nature is love-giving or unitive and open to transmission of human life or procreative.

Pope Pius XII is of the opinion that, as an institution and in virtue of the will of the Creator, marital covenant has for its first and intimate purpose not the intimate perfection

¹³⁸ C. READ, "Husband and Wife in the Light of the Incarnation" cit..5

¹³⁹ E. HOLLOWAY, "The Covenant of Christian Marriage", Faith Editorial, (01-11-2018), P.1

¹⁴⁰ Cfr. W.E. MAY, *Marriage the rock on which the family is built*, cit., 92.

¹⁴¹ Cfr.D.M. THOMAS, *Christian Marriage a Journey Together*, cit., 38.

of the husband and wife but the procreation and formation of the new life. The other ends of marriage are certainly willed by nature, but they have not the same excellence as

Transmission of life is the God-given responsibility of husband and wife for the future of mankind. According to the order of creation, conjugal love of the spouses and the transmission of life are ordered to each other. Through the transmission of life husband and wife participates in God's work of creation in which they are made the instruments of His love¹⁴². The new-born does not appear at the end of a process but is present from the beginning of love as an essential feature.

The first end of the marriage, therefore, has been made clear by nature in the complementary differences between the two sexes and confirmed the mandate of the author of nature to increase and multiply. We speak of a recent or impending birth as a happy event, as through to emphasize that the nature itself is pleased at obeying the law of God. When Christ spoke of the women who forgets all her pain once her child is born, he was saying that birth is joyful precisely because it means the attainment of a goal. Since every goal achieved is a natural source of joy. When a child is born, something sacred has been reached. Even if a child should die on the day of his birth, faith tells the parents he is born in eternity. A birth is always an accomplishment. The joy it brings comes from God; not even death can rob it from those who completed a divine and imperishable work by bringing an immortal personality out of nothing into the world. Procreation, however, is more than producing a child. It seals the marriage union and brings it to fruition; it seals the marriage because the child is made to the image of his father and mother, as well as of God. The child is not just a child but, to each of parents, he is the gift the other has given, the fruit of their love. He is the living expression of their mutual generosity.

As M. Theodore explains it with an analogy, through the child, the two-ness of marriage changes and develops into a three-ness as in God. Sexuality, it has been said, its duality. Love is always trinity¹⁴³. The fecundity of marriage is directly linked to the authentic

¹⁴² Cfr. AL, 81

¹⁴³ Cfr. M. THEODORE, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: Marital Sacrament*, Paulist Press, New York, 1989, 28.

experience of human love¹⁴⁴ . If this is denied the love itself will be disfigured. But love is open to fruitfulness and it cannot close in on itself. So that Church always teaches that every conjugal act must be open to life.

III.2.1. Openness to New Life

Openness to procreation flows from the fact that marriage makes a couple to participate in God's creative love, which is life-giving. Therefore, a couple who refuses to have any children would be closing themselves to the contribution in this procreative aspect of God's love. Marriage is the creation of a union between a man and a woman based on love. It is a communion of persons proposed to tolerate witness on earth and to image the intimate communion of persons within the Trinity. It is a sacrament of the love-giving, life-giving, bridal union between Christ and his Church, ordered to the procreation and education of children who are to be lovingly received, developed kindly, and educated in the love and service of God. This beautiful partnership, this wonderful covenant of love, unites human person who differ in their sexuality and complement each other. "Marital love, exclusive of others in the intimacy of their partnership of life and their on flesh union, is the kind of love that is inclusive as it reaches out to others and bears fruits in the world in which they live, as they joyously accept the gift of children and serve the needs of the society in which they live"¹⁴⁵ .

The marital act that expresses and symbolizes the complementary sexuality of man and woman is an act that is open not only to the communication of the unique and exclusive love proper to husbands and wives but also to the communication of life. "For it is in and through the marital act that new human life comes to be in the way God wills that it comes to be. New human life can, of course, come to be in this way, the new human life is indeed a new human person, a being to be loved and cherished and respected by all"¹⁴⁶ . The complementarity of masculinity and femininity finds its fulfilment through the conjugal act that by its nature is open to life. It is through the transmission of life both man and woman reach their rightness. For masculinity finds its excellence in fatherhood and

¹⁴⁴ Cfr. J.T: O'CORNER, "The plan of God for Marriage and Family, in M. J. Wrenn (ed.) John Paul II and Family, Franciscan's Press Chicago, 1983, 65-72, 68.

¹⁴⁵ W.E. MAY, *Marriage the rock on which the family is built*, cit., 65.

¹⁴⁶ W.E. MAY, *Marriage the rock on which the family is built*, cit., 54.

femininity finds its perfection in motherhood. God wills that new human life come to be in and through the loving marital act of husband and wife. Neither man and nor women can alone give birth to a child. When they together, in marriage, acts in accordance with the nature of conjugal act which is considered by God, they can convey the human life with its dignity.

It is the authentic teaching of the Church that each conjugal act must be open to life¹⁴⁷ . Even in the infertile period when the husband and wife engage in conjugal act, knowing that no conception may occur, remains open to life. Here they are engaging in the marital act in accordance with the design of the Creator without manipulating its nature. There are cases where procreation is not possible due to certain inborn defects. But at the same time the couples are not supposed to challenge the openness to life by any means.

Pope Paul VI clearly teaches, “Spouses ought not, either in anticipation of their marital union, while engaging in it, or during the development of its natural consequences, propose, either as end or means, to impede procreation¹⁴⁸ . If they choose to do this, they are setting their hearts, their wills, against the good of the human life in its transmission. Their sexual union, in this case, is no longer truly a conjugal act, for it is not only anti-life but anti-love for they do not truly give themselves mutually without any reservation¹⁴⁹ . When the couple influences the age at which procreation does not occur due to menopause in woman, their proper conjugal act is open to life for, they do not contradict the essential nature of the act designed by God. All the couples of present ages should be aware of it and must evaluate their conjugal relation seriously. What is expected of the couple is to act always in unity with the law inscribed in them by the Creator. And by nature, conjugal act is always open to new life.

III.2.2. To be the Promoters of Life

Marriage produces a responsibility for the common good, first of the spouses and then of the family. Procreation is an essential property of marriage. As it is a sin to exclude children for selfish reasons, it is also a sin to give birth to more children than one can love

¹⁴⁷ Cfr. POPE PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Humane Vitae*(HV), 11.

¹⁴⁸ HV, 14

¹⁴⁹ W.E. MAY, *Marriage the rock on which the family is built*, cit.,29.

and care for. Family planning is not only a right, but also a strict duty of each couple¹⁵⁰ . It is the right and responsibility of each couple to choose how many children they want to have. No one can tell them what the ideal size of their family should be. They too cannot fix it in advance the number of their children. Every time they are challenged with the accidental of having a new child, they must reflect seriously whether they will be able to love and care the new-born. For a child needs time, appropriate environment, medical and educational facilities.

“Responsible fatherhood and motherhood directly concern the moment in which a man and a woman, uniting them in one flesh, can become parents. This is a moment of special value both for their interpersonal relationship and for their service to life: they can become parents- father and mother by communicating life to a new human being. The two dimensions of conjugal union, the unitive and the procreative, cannot be artificially separated without damaging the deepest truth of the conjugal act itself”¹⁵¹ .

A responsible decision about the creation of new life demands serious personal reflection joined with truthful and rational discussion between the wife and husband. It should be a shared decision¹⁵² . Numerous practical aspects should be taken into consideration in determining the number of children. The Vatican Council GS very clearly points out the responsibility of the spouses about the procreation of children;

“Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperative with the love of God the creator and are, in ascertain sense, its interpreters. This involves the fulfilment of their role with a sense of human and Christian responsibility it also involves a consideration of their own good and the good of their children already born or yet to come, an ability to read the signs of the time and of their own situation on the material and spiritual level and finally an estimation of the good of the family, of society, and of the Church”¹⁵³ .

The profits of the parents should be enough for providing the children with food, cloth and education as they grow up. The size of the house must be acceptable for the proper and healthy working of the family. The health of the mother should be taken care of very seriously for she must be physically and mentally fit to give proper care to the children and to do all her duties well. Special consideration should be given to the personal need

¹⁵⁰ Cfr. A. GRUGNI, *Preparing for Marriage, A Theology of the Body and Sacrament*, Hillenbrand books, Chicago, 1995, 232

¹⁵¹ LF, 12

¹⁵² D.M. THOMAS, *Christian Marriage a Journey Together*, cit., 141

¹⁵³ GS, 50

of the children. For the development in physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual spheres they need individual care and concern. According to *Humanae Vitae* responsible parenthood is to be considered under different aspects which are authentic and associated with one another:

“In relation to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their functions; human intellect discovers in the power of giving life biological laws which are part of the human person. In relation to the tendencies of instinct or passion, responsible parenthood means that necessary dominion which reason and will, must exercise over them. In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised; either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respects for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth”¹⁵⁴ .

Regarding the transmission of life and its background in a responsible way, the couples must overcome lot of difficulties. In understanding and putting into practice the teachings of the Church on responsible parenthood, the couples are to be assisted by pastors, experts, physicians, educators etc¹⁵⁵ .

Responsible parenthood should be always the achievement role to play. But no one, except the couple, has the right to agree how many children they should beget. Birth control, in order to be respectful of human dignity, should not be the result of compulsion but of education and cooperation¹⁵⁶ . Responsible parenthood needs that the couples are aware of the different methods that help to control the number of children. The partners should learn them and discuss them seriously. They together should select among the several methods the one which outfits them better, attractive into thought not only their physical and psychological make-up, but also their moral and religious convictions¹⁵⁷ . Thus, the Church teaches her children the moral truth about responsible fatherhood and motherhood and protects it from the erroneous views and tendencies which are extensive today.

¹⁵⁴ HV, 10

¹⁵⁵ Cfr. FC, 33,34. LF, 12.

¹⁵⁶ Cfr. A. GRUGNI, preparing for Marriage, cit., 232

¹⁵⁷ DV, II B 4a

III.2.3. Education to the Children: Towards the Fullness of Life

By very act of marriage two individual persons become one body and enter communion. They don't stop communion within themselves rather they extend the community by procreation. Before and after procreating act they have certain duties to perform. By fulfilling these duties, they become exemplary couples, parents in the society and in the presence of God. There is no doubt that when they perform parental duties, they may face certain difficulties and challenges. Despite that they are called to resemble the Christ-Church relationship. Husbands and wives are called not only to receive life lovingly but to nourish it humanly and to educate it in the love and service of God, and their marriage capacitates them for these tasks too. Parents have the duty and right to educate their children. This duty and right corresponding to it flow from the very nature of fatherly and motherly love. To educate means to give to a child or to an adolescent the means for his freedom and his future autonomy¹⁵⁸ .

Today the society is facing lot of challenges; we see divisions, conflicts, violence, individualism, selfishness, exploitation, communalism, etc. In this context children must be trained in the sense of true justice, selfless love, committed service, and respect for the dignity of individual. Since the family is the first and fundamental school of social living, the love of husband and wife for each other must become the model for others in the family in the act of self-giving. This attitude will help the children to serve the society. The duty of parents to educate their children encompasses many elements. They need to help their children acquire a sense of values, a correct attitude towards life.

The family safeguards the fundamental sense of community, because within it the child grows up in a web of intimately connected rights and responsibilities to other people. It also protects one's unique, individual identity, because it shields the child with a mantle of privacy and personal devotion¹⁵⁹ . In the upbringing of the offspring two fundamental truths should be kept in mind: first, that man is called to live in truth and love; and second, that everyone finds fulfilment through the sincere gift of self. This is truth both for the educator and for the one being educated. Education is thus a unique process for which the

¹⁵⁸ Cfr. J. LAFFITTE, *The Choice of the Family*....., Cit., 168.

¹⁵⁹ J. LAFFITTE, *The Choice of the Family*, Image books, New York, 2015, 10.

mutual communion of persons has immense importance¹⁶⁰ . It is through the education that they give to their children, the awareness that they are really promoting the growth and welfare of the life which they imparted to them with the grace of God. By doing that they are really fulfilling the commitment that is taken at the time of their marital covenant.

III.2.3.1. The Specific Role of the Parents

Pope Francis reiterates the fact that “the overall education of children is a “most serious duty” and at the same time a “primary right” of parents and schools cannot replace parents but only compliment them”¹⁶¹ . It is very important that the parents should share their common responsibility of upbringing the children. In fact, a good husband-wife relationship is the best guarantee of a healthy parent-child relationship. Only parents who deeply love each other can reach out to their children with a love that is consistent, patient and creative¹⁶² . “One of the greatest gifts a husband and wife can give to their children is to show affection to each other in the presence of their children. It communicates important truths to the children: our parents love each other, we are safe and secure in our parent’s love, it is possible to disagree and still be friends, this our home is a domestic Church”¹⁶³ . If the children find in their parents a real unity of purpose, they become sociable, steady and responsible otherwise they become insecure and emotionally unbalanced. The continuous search for an agreement in their attitude towards the children is likely to improve the dialogue between the parents and to enable them to explain the reasons for their orders and denials.

Both parents are necessary for a full, holistic development of the child. The role of the mother is undoubtedly proven, and it is very much highlighted and understood by all about the birth and upbringing of a child. But the role of the father is also very important. He is above all a companion and inspiration for the mother and it help her to feel secure. He is an awakener of the emotional potentialities of his children; his role of active element in procreation carries on into education by evoking latent powers latent powers and stimulating mental and moral energies that might otherwise never come to light. Being a

¹⁶⁰ Cfr. FC, 16.

¹⁶¹ Cfr. AL,84

¹⁶² Cfr. A. GRUGNI, *Preparing for Marriage*, cit.,62,63.

¹⁶³ V. TROCINSKI, *Sharing God’s Love in Marriage*, Liturgical press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1987, 31,32.

faithful friend and teacher, he is meant to become the ego-ideal for masculine love, ethics and morality¹⁶⁴ . The first education that parents give is not so much verbal but the example of their own life of love. Their lives give the children the care, tenderness, mutual service that brings peace with oneself and responsibility towards others¹⁶⁵ . So, the couples should be aware of each one's responsibility and perform it well and help each other to achieve their own tasks.

III.2.3.2. Role of the Church

In the sphere of education, the Church has a specific role to play. Church can help in the process of transmitting the faith to the children. Besides the parent's role in transmission of faith, the Church can do it by means of strengthening the faith of the family itself. In the first place Church can strengthen the faith formation of family by means of catechetical instructions. The second area, in which the Church can focus on to help the family in transmitting the faith, is by way of providing modern-day rituals. In our families particularly in the bygone days, family rituals like family prayer and family meal played an important role. But today, we live in a rushed pace of life and thus we find it difficult to have many of these rituals. Thus, the Church and the pastors can revive them by replacing them with the practice of blessing children as they begin the school year or leave to attend their exams. There can be also an act of charity and lighting up the family candle on important occasions like a birthday, a wedding anniversary, etc¹⁶⁶ . A large amount of moral and religious formation can come from Catholic schools, by the example of those who teach and by the apostolic action of fellow students. The promotion of culture and human formation of young people must be the topmost priority for the Catholic schools.

III.3. Indissoluble is the Bond of Marriage

“A man and women are called to “mutual self-giving that is not distorted either by the desire of the man to become the master of his wife or by the women remaining closed

¹⁶⁴ Cfr. N: CHARLES, “The Trinitarian foundation of the Church's Teaching on Marriage and Sexual Ethics”, In African Christian studies(02-11-1985), 320-328,324,325.

¹⁶⁵Cfr. AL, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Cfr. M. ADUKANIL, “As Schools re-open What should parents keep in mind”, in New Leader 1(2007), 10-13, 11.

within her on instincts”(Muileris Dingitatem MD)18)¹⁶⁷. The marriage sexuality came to be an expression of interactive and mutual love and considered as the very heart of marriage¹⁶⁸. The bond of marriage produces obligations. On possessions of word spoken, consent exchanged between a man and woman is that to ratify the pledge that they will be for one another a loving partner in life throughout the coming years, because marriage bond is not a simply interpersonal pledge, there are also legal obligations¹⁶⁹. In the case of sacramental marriage, spouses have religious obligations before God and the Church. No human authority can release the couple from this sacramental bond¹⁷⁰. Today, sacramental symbolism is more important, when we teach indissolubility of marriage as symbolising the unbreakable covenant between Christ and the church¹⁷¹. Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches this “the deepest reason for indissolubility, that through sacrament spouses are enabled to represent this fidelity and witness to it¹⁷²”.

III.4. Indissolubility in Relation to Fidelity

Gaudium et Spes in numbers 48 and 50, enrich our comprehension of the foundation of the essential properties of marital fidelity and indissolubility by referring to them as requirements which are not only of the bonum proles but also of the intimate love union and mutual self-donation of the spouses¹⁷³. So much of the traditional argumentation advanced for the bonum fidei et bonum sacramenti was grounded in the societal rather than in the personalist goals of marriage. Now these arguments need to be broadened¹⁷⁴. The nature of the intimate love union itself, calls for and at the same time even demands conjugal fidelity and indissolubility, prescinding from the developing obligations and responsibilities of parenthood¹⁷⁵.

¹⁶⁷ M. COUTINHO, Jeevadhara, Gender justices and sexuality, (ed) M. Illathuparampil, Vol XLIV, 2014, (264), 47.

¹⁶⁸ Cfr. HIMES, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Rediscover”. Cit., 480.

¹⁶⁹ Cfr. HIMES, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Rediscover”....., Cit., 487.

¹⁷⁰ Cfr. MULLER, “Testimony to the Power of Grace: On the indissolubility of marriage and the debate concerning the civilly remarried and the sacraments”, in R. DODARO (ed.), Remaining in the truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the catholic Church, Ignatius, San Francisco, 2014, 1487

¹⁷¹ Cfr. HIMES, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Rediscover”....., Cit., 493.

¹⁷² CCC, 1647.

¹⁷³ Cfr. W.J. LADUE, “Conjugal love and the Juridical structure of Christian Marriage”, in the Jurist 34 (1974) 36-67.

¹⁷⁴ Cfr. W.J. LADUE, “Conjugal love and the Juridical structure of Christian Marriage”, Cit., 34..

¹⁷⁵ Cfr. W.J. LADUE, “Conjugal love and the Juridical structure of Christian Marriage”, in the Jurist 34 (1974) 36-67.

“The one who loves his wife loves himself” Eph 5:28; the union of husband and wife in love expresses itself also through the body the love among the bond between couples is a reciprocal relationship. According to St. Paul “marriage is love not only units them but allows them to interpenetrated each other, belonging spiritually to one another”¹⁷⁶ .

“Unfaithfulness is against the marital bond. Indissolubility of the marriage helps the couples to overcome the sin and to build the unity the man and women according to the god’s plan”¹⁷⁷ .

God’s fidelity to the Old Covenant and Christ’s fidelity to his Church. This indissolubility receives a deeper meaning from the sacrament. The spouses must hear the Good News of God’s irrevocable love for them. They share in this love and witness to God’s love by their own fidelity.

III.4.1 Fidelity as Love of Love

Love is a meeting of the persons whose purpose at reaching a whole relationship. In marriage this love is then understood in the form of mutual giving and mutual acceptance of two persons in their totality, in their manner of being, of acting, for an interpersonal reciprocal complement which is expressed at all levels, that is, body and spirit, the heart, the will and the senses. Conjugal love at this point becomes a reciprocal relationship between the two¹⁷⁸ .

Conjugal love presents motivations which demand the necessity of fidelity. A true conjugal love has a complete fusion of spirits, of souls and of bodies. Such a fusion occurs progressively, it requires time, space, effort, tolerance and it represents the mature fruits of the fullness of personal life. In this context, the aspiration of stability, rather to duration without limits in time, is present in every encounter of love. Therefore, the ultimate foundation of fidelity in conjugal love is found in God. God is the end of every human fidelity and its point of support. This fidelity of human love will find its ultimate foundation in the fidelity of the love of God.

¹⁷⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created Them A Theology of the Body*.....,Cit.,485.

¹⁷⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Man and Woman He Created Them A Theology of the Body*.....,Cit.,518.

¹⁷⁸ O.J. FLORENCIO, *The anthropological and sacramental foundations of the indissolubility of marriage in the 20th century catholic theology*, cit., 87.

III.4.2 Fidelity is Required for All Marriages

Gaudium et Spes expresses the idea that the intimate union between a man and woman demands total fidelity from the spouses¹⁷⁹. This statement of the Council shows that, the essential conjugal fidelity is for the good of the spouses, and this can be achieved only through a deep commitment from each of the spouses. The solidity of the union and fidelity of the spouses at this occasion are considered as important elements. “The women are not only betraying a personal bond with a human but a legal bond prescribed by God himself. The marriage covenant morally bound the husband as well as the wife to sexual fidelity”¹⁸⁰.

III.4.3 Happiness and Difficulties

Happiness should come out of from the unity of the persons. Happiness in the married life is not depend on the material things but the commitment that made before God in the sacrament of matrimony. They should encourage and accept the limitations, as Christ loved the Church and offered Himself to her. Usually the selfishness and ambitions break the happiness of the couples but from the moment bounded by the marital formula they are entering into a new life that they will share in all the difficulties, sickness, and sorrows. The marriage union is to foster tender love cherishing each other, sharing all the goodness of God by giving high esteem and reverence to one another.

Conclusion

Sacramental indissolubility is a gift of God’s supreme mercy as divine love which dwells within human love, enabling human love to be transformed and grow beyond itself to participate in divine love. In the Bible it is clear that, God instituted marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman to become one flesh and one body. We believe that, the example of a lifelong marriage is a striking sacramental expression of Christ’s love for the church. Marriage is a covenant, and a man and a woman enter the marriage covenant through sexual union. “Though the modern marriage ceremony is an acceptable cultural form of public recognition and celebration of marriage; it is not the ceremony or

¹⁷⁹ GS, 50.

¹⁸⁰ V.F. MICHAEL, “Proverb 1-9, the anchor yale Bible”, Yale university press, Londen, (1974).

vows that make a couple married. Rather, a couple marries by becoming one flesh in sexual union, in which God is witness to their covenant. Sex and Marriage therefore cannot be separated. Sex is a meaningful act, as it either makes, breaks, or renews a covenant¹⁸¹ .

Pope Francis says, “The family is the sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is rejected and destroyed”¹⁸² . Life is a gift from God and every human life is sacred from conception to natural death. The life and dignity of every person must be respected and promoted at every stage and in every condition. Humans crave for fidelity and permanence in their experience of love. Trinitarian union is the source and model of unity in the family. The spirit is the effusion of the common and mutual love between in the Father and the Son. So the intimacy of the couple emerging from the gift of the Holy Spirit, the tiding force of the indissolubility of the marriage.

¹⁸¹ Z.GARRIS, “Covenantal Sex: How sexual union makes, Breaks, or renews the marriage covenant”, knowing scripture, Top books,(April 2 2019), 2019.

¹⁸² AL, 83.

CONCLUSION

As we have already seen through this thesis, the marital covenant provides the kind of reassurance to both spouses that enable them to surrender themselves fully to each other. The concept of covenant necessarily brings out the personal dimension of marriage yet describes the integration of the human with the divine. The Bible defines covenant as a promise between parties sealed by God. Christianity conceives of marriage as a covenantal relationship because, as an institution of the Christ, it is a bond between two people chosen by God. Yahweh's resolution with a covenant breaking Israel is also established in Malachi 2:14. The prophet Malachi admonished his people against any rupture of marriage bond. Here prophet emphasises indissolubility of marriage and degrade the faithless act of the couples. The fact that it is God-sealed and build up God's gracious power to celebrate and protect their oneness.

Prophet Malachi was making clear to his audience that their existence as the people of God was the clearest evidence of the love of God on any nation. Conjugal love is a gift of God, each spouse has the right to accept conjugal love, a love that is faithful, eternal, and open to have and raise children together. Each of the spouse has also promised to fulfil the obligation of offering faithful, permanent and fruitful conjugal love, supporting his or her body and soul, in the communion of persons that they have formed. So, divorce is not permitted except in certain biblically prescribed circumstances. Through the Scripture, traditional evidence and Church documents (GS, FC, LF, AL) also shows the nature and character of the principle of marriage in the Church. Marriage is not merely a human agreement between two consenting individuals as in a civil union; it is a relationship before and under God (cfr. Gen 2:22).

God created man as the crown of His creation through this creation God reviled his image and Likeness. Pope Francis presents the beauty of marital covenant,

“The image of God is the married couple: the man and the woman; not only the man, not only the woman, but both together. This is the image of God who is love. God’s covenant with us is represented in that covenant between man and woman. And this is very beautiful! We are created in order to love, as a reflection of God and His love. And in the marital union man and woman fulfil this vocation through their mutual reciprocity and their full and definitive communion of life”¹⁸³.

In the modern world we see that the sanctity of marriage is threatened, and the spouses face so many challenges. If they can look at their lifelong union as a covenant, then they can overcome all these threats.

In the modern society, there are people who see indissolubility as a limitation of the liberty of those involved and as a weight that is unbearable. In this study we wish to affirm the very fact that unity and indissolubility are essential properties of marriage. Indissolubility is a good for the spouses, for the offspring, for the Church and for the entire humanity. By means of the sacrament, Christian matrimony though it is of the order of grace, relies on the foundation of the natural law and such a natural law is based on two essential properties which are unity and indissolubility. These two basic and essential components of marriage are further fortified and perfected by the grace of Christian matrimony.

The indissolubility of marriage pertains to both natural and divine law and every human law therefore must reflect and protect these two laws which contain the liberating truth. Therefore, every civil legislation on marriage must do everything it can in order to protect and promote the indissolubility of marriage, instead of considering this as an imposition by the Church which is against human liberty and freedom. Thus, a positive presentation of the indissoluble union is important, in order to rediscover its goodness and beauty.

Marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships, uniting a man and a woman in a “one flesh” bond (cfr. Gen 2:23-25). Through the covenant He raises them to Himself and helps them to overcome their shortcomings and failures. This partnership between God and man is the main achievement of Christ’s life and death. The spouses through their selfless love should experience this intimacy throughout their life. And it is the free

¹⁸³ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience Address on April 2, 2014, cited in R. DODARO (Ed.), *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2014, 298-299.

self-giving of one human being to another (cfr. Ephe 5:25-30). The marriage through which the spouses resemble this steadfast love of God also must be a faithful relationship. The fidelity of the couple towards each other and towards God should last till the end of their lives. In the modern world we see that the sanctity of marriage is threatened, and the spouses face so many challenges. If they can look at their lifelong union as a covenant, they can overcome all these threats. Throughout the thesis we try to confirm that the marriage is a covenantal relationship, in the basis of Bible and the teachings of the Church. The essential properties of the marriage are the unity and indissolubility. Therefore, it is an important duty of the pastors to prepare the persons for the marriage. We have also gone through the invalid marriages which do not help to keep the bond of marriage till the end. It is very necessary that the persons who contract the marriage to be aware of the ends of the marriage and their duties and obligations regarding it. The pastoral guidance before, during and after the marriage is very important. As aforementioned, the pastors and their assistants must be prepared to guide the couples to live their married life till the end of their lives, carrying out mutual obligations.

The marital covenant means that self-giving is not any one act, or the blessing of fertility, but a dynamic force for the whole community of life. Spouses are called not only to give physical life to their children, but also to be a source of life for the whole family and the community. The self-giving and steadfast love in its fullness we see in Holy Trinity. Holy Spirit effects the love and communion in Holy Trinity. The same spirit helps the spouses in the sacrament of marriage to affect the fundamental nature of covenant such as self-giving and steadfast love.

When marriage is lived as mutual self-giving and intimate sharing between a man and a woman in faithful love, marriage exemplifies the ideals of the biblical concept of covenant. Moreover, since the union of the two partners goes beyond any notion of a human contract and raised to the divine realm, marriage is, in fact a paradigm of human relationship and love and thus is covenantal in its core. Marriage is, in fact, indissoluble. This partnership is a way of holiness, that is, a saving reality and the source of love and life.

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