

How can I improve my marriage?

Faithful Questions – January 2020

Deacon Ken Crawford



YES!

(*EVERYONE* can improve their marriage)



Overview

- Caveats and Conditions
- Marriage is Sacramental
- Marriage unites the Husband and Wife as One
- Marriage is Life-Permanent
- Marriage is Life of Service
- Marriage is Life-Giving
- Miscellaneous advice

Intermission!



Caveats and Conditions

- Practical advice is by nature only applicable in particular situations
 - Take my practical suggestions as exactly that: Suggestions
 - Said another way – they are ideas to consider
 - Most definitely **NOT MANDATORY OR REQUIRED!**
- Traditional western gender roles generally fit the above caveat
 - Currently my wife is the “bread winner” in my family
 - Don’t presume that because some of my practical advice is friendly to traditional gender roles I insist on it or find people who do otherwise as acting immorally/inappropriately
- If you didn’t do the ‘before marriage’ advice
 - RELAX! God has a way of working with us where ever we are
- I don’t have a perfect marriage



**Marriage is
Sacramental**



Definition of Sacrament

- Catechism Paragraphs 774 and 1084
 - The seven sacraments are the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the head throughout the Church which is his Body.
 - The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.
- Sacraments take “regular” activities and make them vehicles for special grace from God



Natural vs. Sacramental

- Marriage transcends Christianity
 - Exists in almost all cultures
 - Doesn't require religious convictions
- A marriage of two people who do **NOT** intend a Godly union is a “natural marriage”
- A sacramental marriage is a refinement on natural marriage
 - Gives it a higher purpose
 - Makes it a vehicle for grace



Sacramental Theology

- Catechism paragraphs 1641-1642
 - By reason of their state in life and of their order, Christian spouses have their own special gifts in the People of God."¹⁴⁷ This grace proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couple's love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they "help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children."
 - Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,"¹⁵⁰ and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love.



Sacramental Marriage – cont.

- Marriage is a covenant between 3 persons
 - God
 - Man
 - Woman
- Marriage is a way for God to give us grace
- Marriage is a way for God to give us purpose



Practical advice

- Pray together
 - Pray to understand the graces God has given you in marriage
 - Pray in thanksgiving for those graces
 - Pray to discern what particular purposes God has for your marriage
- If you've discerned a purpose to your marriage
 - Write it down
 - Work together to create concrete plans to accomplish it
- Pray for your spouses needs and desires
- Consider renewing your vows
 - if you were spiritually immature at the time of your wedding
- Display religious aspects of your wedding



Before marriage advice

- Aim to marry a Catholic
 - Catechism paragraph 1634
 - Difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for marriage, But the difficulties of mixed marriages must not be underestimated. ... Disparity of cult can further aggravate these difficulties. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage, but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children.
 - Deacon Ken's thought: Marriage is hard enough without introducing obstacles, even if they are not insurmountable.
- Embrace that marriage is a Godly union
- Make sure potential mate feels the same way
- Good way to figure that out: Pray together



United as One



Unity Theology

- Catechism paragraph 1644-1645
 - The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the **unity** and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life: "so they are no longer two, but one flesh."¹⁵³ They "are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving."
 - "The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection."
- One flesh
 - Quiz Question: What is the most obvious and visible way married couples become "one flesh"?

Children!



Practical advice

- Unite your money
 - Joint bank/credit card accounts
 - Together create monthly/annual budgets
 - Re-train your thinking
 - Every dollar in is “our money” & Every dollar out is “our money”
 - Share more items
 - Not “his and hers” tablets, instead 2 family tablets
 - Is that really “your chair”?
- Switch off your household responsibilities
 - Grocery shopping, cleaning, yardwork, paying the bills, etc.
 - Need not be frequently, but over the course of a marriage
- Don’t have a “man cave”
- Pray together (worth repeating)



Before marriage advice

- Guard against being set in your ways
- Avoid setting any selfish/personal conditions
 - And don't marry someone who insists on them



Life-Permanent



Permanence Theology

- Catechism Paragraph 1646
 - By its very nature conjugal love requires the inviolable fidelity of the spouses. This is the consequence of the gift of themselves which they make to each other. Love seeks to be definitive; it cannot be an arrangement "until further notice." The "intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children, demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable union between them."



Permanence Theology – Cont.

- Only “life” permanent
 - “Teacher, Moses wrote for us, ‘If someone’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers. The first married a woman and died, leaving no descendants. So the second married her and died, leaving no descendants, and the third likewise. And the seven left no descendants. Last of all the woman also died. At the resurrection [when they arise] whose wife will she be? For all seven had been married to her.” Jesus said to them, “Are you not misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God? When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven. (Mark 12:19-25)



Practical advice

- Take the long view to problems
 - Don't need to solve problems right away
 - Yet never stop working on solving them
- Be flexible to each other's desires
 - Hard to go a whole lifetime without being flexible
- Forgive any past failures
 - If you're struggling with this: Confess it!
- Remember that speaking of divorce or separation is **EXTREMELY** corrosive
 - The "best" way to get a couple to stop working on improving their marriage is for one or both of them to think separation is possible



Before marriage advice

- Embrace that marriage is a life-long union
- Make sure the person you marry feels the same way



Intermission!



Intermission!

Time is Up!





Life of Service



Service Theology

- Catechism paragraph 1642
 - Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,"¹⁵⁰ and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love.
- Serve Christ
 - By extension: serve society
- Serve one another
- Serve children



Practical advice

- Avoid thinking of marriage as a contract
 - I get X, you get Y is a horrible way to think of marriage
- Don't "keep points"
 - Just because you've done something good doesn't mean you've saved up some points for use at a later date
 - Servants get no points
- Turn outwards
 - Instead of thinking of what each of you does for the other, think about what you're doing together for others.
 - Children are first/easiest way to do this... but don't stop there



Before marriage advice

- Embrace that marriage is a life of service
- Make sure the person you marry feels the same way
- Be a service oriented person in your single life
- Pick someone who is also service minded in their personal life



Life-Giving



Life-Giving Theology

- Catechism paragraph 1652
 - By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory."
 - Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves. God himself said: "It is not good that man should be alone," and "from the beginning [he] made them male and female"; wishing to associate them in a special way in his own creative work, God blessed man and woman with the words: "Be fruitful and multiply." Hence, true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it, ... are directed to disposing the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will increase and enrich his family from day to day.



Practical advice

Warning...
Deacon Ken rant
is eminent!

- Eradicate Lust from your marriage
 - Sex within marriage is not automatically free of Lust
 - Lust: Desiring to use the other person as an object for your own sexual gratification
 - Love: Selfless giving of oneself to the other
 - Make sure sex is at its core a procreative act in your mind
- Be open to numerous children
 - Children are God's greatest blessing to us!
 - Be wary of "we couldn't handle any more children" thoughts
 - I've never met someone who thought "I wish I didn't have my last child" but I have met people who regret not having more children



Practical advice – cont.

- Weakness of children can help you be sympatric to weaknesses of spouse
- See service of children as part of the Life-Giving nature of marriage
- For those struggling with infertility issues:
There are many ways to embrace the service of children who are not biologically your own
 - Adoption
 - Coach a kid's team
 - Volunteer to work with kids at Church
 - Are you an aunt or uncle?



Before marriage advice

- Live chastely
 - Don't live together ahead of time
- Don't get married until you're ready to have children
- Be open to the possibility that either your or your future spouse are infertile
 - And handling that gracefully



Misc. Advice



Practical advice

- Even though we elevate marriage to a higher purpose, it still has most of the trappings of natural marriage
 - Thus, often that sort of marriage advice is still valuable
- Societal causes of divorce (things to avoid) beyond what was already mentioned
 - Economic strife
 - Low educational status
 - Substance abuse
 - Large differences in age, culture, education, family wealth



Practical Economic advice

- Get out of debt ASAP!
 - It's a form of slavery
 - A good way to define debt: If the amount you owe on your assets is more than you could sell them for quickly (plus any liquid cash to make up the difference)
 - Examples:
 - Don't get a loan for more than 80% of the value of a house
 - If you get a car loan, make sure you have enough cash so that if you had to sell it, between what you got for it plus the cash you have, you could pay off the loan. (~\$10k on a \$30k vehicle at time of purchase)
 - Don't get a loan on anything without any meaningful resale value
- If you both work, live so that you could survive on one income if one of you was out of work.
 - Biggest item: Don't buy too big of a house



Before marriage advice

- While not necessary, understand that marrying someone who is very different has its practical challenges
- Avoid anyone with indicators of substance abuse
- Be very realistic about economic needs
 - Be honest (and insist on honesty) about any debt between the two of you before you get married
 - And if you chose to move forward, embrace it as your own debt



Conclusion



Conclusion

- Marriage is a great blessing
- But it also takes a lot of work
- “But it’s good work... if you can get it.”
 - Singer David Wilcox



Next Time

- 2nd Tuesday – February 11
- 7:00 PM in the Morris Hall
 - Standard Time
- Topic
 - What does the Church teach about homosexuality?
- Future Plans
 - More permanent Child Care plans
 - Always looking for suggestions for topics
 - Serious about posting videos starting this month



Additional Information

- Webpage:
 - <http://deaconken.org>
- E-mail:
 - ken@deaconken.org
- Slides
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog/category/faithful-questions-seminar/>
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog/>
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date.
 - Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>



2 Minute Break
Think of your questions!

02:00



2 Minute Break

Time is Up!





Questions?