
Presentation Seven

Estimated Reading Time: approx. 25-45 minutes

Covenantal Life: The Procreative End of Marriage

PRESENTATION GOALS

- ✧ This presentation will show the sublime link between the unitive and procreative ends of marriage in that “procreation is seen as the primary purpose of marriage and marital intercourse, but loving, intimate communion as their primary meaning.”
- ✧ Moreover, “in the light of the New Testament it is possible to discern how *the primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself*, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. The divine ‘We’ is the eternal pattern of the human ‘we’, especially of that ‘we’ formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness.” (St. John Paul II)

We are all familiar with the popular song by Sammie Cahn,¹⁷⁵ “Love and marriage go together like¹⁷⁶ a horse and carriage. This I tell you brother, you can’t have one without the other.” This holds true in relation to the unitive and procreative dimensions of marriage. You “can’t have one without the other.” St. Paul VI explained in *Humanae Vitae*: “That teaching, often set forth by the Magisterium, is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.”¹⁷⁷

“Unitive” and “procreative” are Latin derivatives, and words derived from Latin sometimes do not register as well as more common expressions. More bluntly, they can go right over our heads. In everyday speech, the Pope is teaching that husband and wife cannot deliberately take apart what we commonly call “making love” and “making babies.”

The Pope ends this short section of the encyclical by saying, “We believe that men of our day are particularly capable of seizing the deeply reasonable and human character of this

fundamental principle.” Consequently, men and women of our day are so influenced by the contraceptive culture that it is difficult for them to realize, without some help, what couples actually do when they engage in contraceptive behaviors that separate the unitive and procreative ends of marriage.¹⁷⁸

Jennifer Fulwiler, who converted to Catholicism from atheism in 2007, writes about her conversion story, which can be found in the Appendix: *A Sexual Revolution: One Woman’s Journey from Pro-choice Atheism to Pro-life Catholic*. Here is an excerpt from her article on sex and creating life:

Growing up in secular middle-class America, I understood sex as something disconnected from the idea of creating life. During my entire childhood I did not know anyone who had a baby sibling; and to the extent that neighborhood parents ever talked about pregnancy, it was to say they were glad they were “done.” In high school sex education class, we learned not that sex creates babies, but that unprotected sex creates babies. Even recently, before our marriage was blessed in the Catholic Church, my husband and I took a course about building good marriages. It was a video series by a nondenominational Christian group, and the segment called “Good Sex” did not mention children once. In all the talk about bonding and back rubs and intimacy and staying in shape, the closest the videos came to connecting sex to the creation of life was a brief note that couples should discuss the topic of contraception.

All my life, the message I had heard loud and clear was that sex was for pleasure and bonding, that its potential for creating life was purely tangential, almost to the point of being forgotten. This mind-set became the foundation of my views on abortion. Because I saw sex as being by default closed to the possibility of life, I thought of unplanned pregnancies as akin to being struck by lightning while walking down the street — something totally unpredictable and undeserved that happened to people living normal lives.

Before you exchange your vows, the priest will ask you to state your intentions:

1. Have you come here to enter into Marriage / without coercion, / freely and wholeheartedly? (Faithful: total and free consent).
2. Are you prepared, as you follow the path of Marriage, / to love and honor each other / for as long as you both shall live (forever: fidelity and indissolubility)?
3. **Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God / and to bring them up / according to the law of Christ and his Church** (fruitful: openness to children is a must if you want to get married in the Catholic Church)?

There is an immediate connection between the two ends or purposes of marriage. Your union of love is a way of being united to God in love. That is true even of the one flesh union; it too must be open to God’s love. In a similar way, the one flesh union also has to be open to God’s gift of new life. Love and life go together, just as God’s love brought life to the world.

“Fecundity¹⁷⁹ is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which is “on the side of life,” teaches that “it is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered *per se* to the procreation of human life.” “This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage

act.”¹⁸⁰ In this way, married couples are *co-creators* or *collaborators* with God in creating life. At the very beginning of creation, the first commandment ever given to humanity was “be fruitful and multiply.” The reason is that there is a deep parallel between marriage and family life here on earth and the life of Heaven. As God loves, he asks you to share in that love.

As God creates, he asks you to share in the act of creation. As Heaven is where God is with his family through the marriage of Christ and his Church, he asks you to share in it by raising a family.

One of the statements on the FOCCUS¹⁸¹ inventory is this:

“Do we consider our sexual life together as one way of experiencing God’s love for us?”

In a world that thinks almost exclusively on a horizontal plane, it is hard to imagine that God’s love can be experienced in anything, let alone the conjugal love act. From the mutual exchange of love, husband and wife are called to leave the channel open; the “vertical” channel of God’s grace and the opportunity for new life, which ultimately comes from the loving hand of God.

“‘What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.’ This becomes still clearer when we consider that the mystery of the birth of a man not only should be essentially linked to wedded love (through the conjugal act, which is destined to be the expression and fulfillment of this love), but is always linked to a creative intervention of God . . . Man always comes forth directly from the hand of God and therefore there is a unique and intimate relation between God and the spouses in the act of procreation.”¹⁸²

While maintaining the Church’s teaching in that “procreation and the raising of offspring is the primary end of marriage,”¹⁸³ many theologians such as Catholic philosopher, Dietrich Von Hildebrand as well as St. John Paul II, developed a more “personalist”¹⁸⁴ approach to Christian marriage, love, and procreation, emphasizing both the unitive and procreative ends as having equal meaning and value.¹⁸⁵ Even if the couple is unable to have children, the conjugal love act in no way loses its meaning, because the couple’s loving communion and desire for life is what makes it ultimately life-giving and fruitful.

“Von Hildebrand spoke of procreation as the *primary purpose* of marriage and marital intercourse, but of loving communion as their *primary meaning*.”¹⁸⁶

The intrinsic meaning and value of marriage consists in its being the deepest and closest love union. In its mutual self-donation and in its constitution of a matchless union, the conjugal act has the meaning of a unique fulfillment of spousal love. *But to that high good, which has a meaning and value in itself, has been entrusted procreation.* But let it be stated again emphatically: to stress the meaning and value of marriage as the most intimate, indissoluble union of love does not contradict the doctrine that procreation is the primary end of marriage.

The conjugal act does not in any way lose its full meaning and value when one knows that a conception is out of the question, as when age, or an operation for the sake of health, or pregnancy excludes it. The knowledge that a conception is not possible does not in the least way taint the conjugal act with irreverence. In such cases, if the act is an expression of a deep love, anchored in Christ, it will rank even higher in its quality and purity than one that leads to a conception in a marriage in which the love is less deep and not formed by Christ. And even when for good and valid reasons conception should be avoided, the marital act in no way loses its *raison d’être*,¹⁸⁷ because its meaning and value is the actualization of the mutual self-donation of the spouses. The intention of avoiding conception does not imply irreverence as long as one does not actively interfere in order to cut the link between the conjugal act and a possible conception.¹⁸⁸ St. John Paul II emphasized the concept of the communion of persons, a communion of love between husband and wife and children and parents, as a reflection of the

Blessed Trinity. Christianity teaches that God is love, a communion of persons, where God the Father gives himself away totally to the Son in the union of the Holy Spirit. This self-giving is unconditional. St. John Paul II has developed a theology of marital love that emphasizes the total gift of spouses that mirrors the light of this Trinitarian love. We know that from God's love comes life, both in the physical and spiritual sense, and when spouses mirror God's true, mutual, authentic, and unconditional love in the conjugal love act, they not only fulfill their vocation to love and serve each other out of reverence for Christ, but they also achieve the end for which the conjugal love act is directed.

God speaks to man and woman and he blesses them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gn 1: 28). The Book of Genesis employs the same expressions used earlier for the creation of other living beings: "multiply." But it is clear that these expressions are being used in an analogous sense. Is there not present here the analogy of begetting and of fatherhood and motherhood, which should be understood in the light of the overall context? No living being on earth except man was created "in the image and likeness of God." 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 (*communio personarum*) . . . In the light of the New Testament it is possible to discern how *the primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself*, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. The divine "We" is the eternal pattern of the human "we," especially of that "we" formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness.¹⁸⁹

"In his encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, Pope Pius XI not only reiterated the Church's condemnation of abortion, contraception, and sterilization but also reminded the faithful that marriage is naturally ordered to children, even if it is not simply instrumental to them."¹⁹⁰

"At the same time, this mutual molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as a communion, companionship, and association of life as a whole."¹⁹¹

"In this beautiful passage, as moral theologian Germain Grisez notes, Pope Benedict XVI not only represents Trent's teaching, but implies that marriage is intrinsically a vocation and path to holiness, [love and life] . . ."¹⁹²

From this important teaching you can see that when you give yourselves to each other the way God had ordained, being totally united in mutual and self-giving love, you not only strengthen your mutual expression of love for each other in the conjugal love act, *but you also may make manifest God's gift of new life from your love* if you faithfully keep the "vertical" channel of God's grace open in your mutual exchange of love.

Therefore, I think it would be correct to say that your sexual life together is one very important way of experiencing God's love for you. By cooperating faithfully in God's divine plan for love and life, you are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. Consequently, "you will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility."¹⁹³

A FEW WONDERFUL REASONS TO HAVE CHILDREN

- ☞ A child is a new, wonderful, unique, unrepeatable human soul, and the parents become co-creators with God to bring this soul into existence. There is great dignity in the titles: father and mother.
- ☞ A child helps the parents grow in Christian virtues. A child requires that parents give up time, resources, sleep, pleasure, and comfort. True love, like Christ's love, is sacrificial. Children increase the parent's love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, and self-control through their needs and very existence.
- ☞ A child renews the human race and makes possible, by its very presence on earth, what was impossible. A child has infinite potential for doing good. Even if the child may not become a doctor that cures cancer or a Nobel Peace Prize winner, each human has the ability to perform countless acts of kindness throughout his/her life that would not have happened otherwise.
- ☞ A child is wonderfully entertaining. New parents can gaze for hours as their child puts his feet in his mouth, slobbers, or just sleeps. As their children get older and develop a sense of humor, they are even more entertaining. They learn to make people laugh and give them joy. Few people appreciate your jokes as much as your children do.
- ☞ Children are lifelong companions for their parents. Children come to visit you when all others may forget. When you grow old, your children will take care of you with respect others may not give. The more children you have, the more grandchildren you will have to hold. ☞ A child is God's opinion that life should go on.¹⁹⁴

Many couples are told that children are a burden, they cost too much, or that they are just too much work. Engaged and newly married couples find it refreshing to hear that children are a blessing and a gift and that it is okay to have a child or two or three or more. All you have to do is talk to a couple who has children and they will tell you that the blessings outweigh the burdens, no matter how many children they have been given by God.¹⁹⁵

God will always give us what we need, nothing more, nothing less. We have to trust in his divine providence and know that he will never give us more than we can handle. Always be open to God's will and accept whatever he may give you. Never close yourself off to God's gift of new life. There is nothing greater than to be surprised by God's providence. Marital love is rooted in self-sacrificial love; a love that desires to bring forth new life and form a new communion of love that mirrors God's inner life.

St. John Chrysostom writes on the unitive and procreative ends of marriage:

*"I say that husband and wife are one body in the same way as Christ and the Father are one."*¹⁹⁶ Because of this, the nature of a flourishing marriage will flow from the Divine Nature, where communion and fecundity reign . . . that communion and fecundity constitute precisely the theocentric meaning of marriage. Indeed, while the sacramentality of marriage is linked in St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians to the relationship between Christ and the Church, St. John also links it to the more profoundly theocentric context of the immanent Trinitarian life. *"The two have become one. This is not an empty symbol. They have not become the image of anything on earth, but of God Himself."*¹⁹⁷

The glory and beauty of this theocentricity is unfolded in its original meaning in the life of Christian marriage aided by grace. In this sacramental context, the unitive and procreative meanings of marriage take on an even richer theocentric hue. *"From one man, Adam, he made Eve; then He reunited these two into one, so that their children would be produced from a single source."*¹⁹⁸ This fecundity-from-unity, which so characterizes the eternal (the *circumcession* eternal procession of

the Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity), is further explicated by Chrysostom. “*As if she were gold receiving the purest of gold, the woman receives the man’s seed with rich pleasure, and within her it is nourished, cherished and refined. It is mingled with her own substance and she then returns it as a child! The child is a bridge connecting mother and father, so the three become one flesh.*”¹⁹⁹ What theocentric dignity is accorded to marriage that the very concrete details of the conjugal love act can be construed in such a way that they afford us insight into the eternal procession of the Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity!²⁰⁰

QUOTES ON “CHILDREN’S EFFECT ON MARRIAGE”²⁰¹

- ☞ Children change a marriage completely and permanently. They change who we are as individuals and as a couple. They change the way we think and act and relate to each other. They are both an incredible joy and a total distraction as they cause us to redefine ourselves and our relationship. Children throw a marriage out of whack.

Think of a marriage and family as a whimsical mobile. The mobile is first made up of a husband and wife who are tied to each other by their heartstrings at their wedding. For a time they bounce around together as they adjust to each other’s personalities and habits, values and expectations. Soon they settle down as they gain a sense of balance in their relationship. In time, a child is added to the mobile. New strings are added, the original ones are stretched, and the whole mobile wobbles crazily out of whack.

This bouncing around increases as a second and maybe a third child is added. Husband and wife have become mom and dad, and they face a critical transition in their marriage. Their challenge is to regain a sense of balance in their relationship within the new configuration of the family mobile. (Dr. David Stoop and Dr. Jan Stoop, *The Complete Marriage Book*, p. 230, pub. in 2002, by Fleming H. Revell, a division of Baker Book House Company)

- ☞ Hope comes in realizing that the chaos you’re experiencing in your marriage is perfectly normal. The birth of a child does bring an imbalance to your relationship, but here is the important message: You can regain your sense of balance in your marriage by recognizing this as a normal transitional change and learning how to love your way through this transitional change and learning how to love your way through this transition.

In fact, the way you and your spouse regain your balance as you face this challenge will establish the pattern you will use to face other developmental changes in your marriage in the future. Learning to love your way through these normal periods of imbalance will deepen and enrich your marriage relationship. (Elisa Morgan and Carol Kuykendall, *When Husband and Wife Become Mom and Dad*, p. 27)

- ☞ Having children helps us recognize who we are; they reveal our inability to be always loving and patient and kind in our marriage and in our parenting. We find ourselves out of balance with no ability to make things right on our own. We reach the end of ourselves and turn to God for help because He is our only lasting source of hope. (*The Complete Marriage Book*)
- ☞ When you learn to “hang in there” with each other, you’re giving a priceless gift of loving security to your children. A familiar bit of advice on parenting is directed to both mom and dad: “The best thing you can do for your children is to love each other.” Children are watching us all the time, and when we model a relationship that hangs in there through life’s normal conflict and challenges, we’re demonstrating to them that they too, will have a place to hang securely in life, despite everyday

difficulties. Marriage teaches us how to love, and children learn that lesson from watching. (*When Husband and Wife Become Mom and Dad*, p. 32)

- ☞ I'm convinced that a marriage of priority and integrity will be one of the best offerings you can provide for your children. You may still need to give extra time and attention to the needs of your kids, especially at certain seasons of their development. However, your kids must also see their mom and dad taking time for each other through regular date nights, daily connection times, appropriate expressions of romance, and even a commitment to time away for replenishing your relationship. I'm sure you've heard the true statement: "Do your kids a favor and love your spouse." (Jim Burns, *Creating an Intimate Marriage*)
- ☞ If you are always pushing your spouse aside for time with the children, you may want to consider just what you're teaching your children. By the way you treat your spouse, are you modeling for your children how you hope they will treat their future spouses? Probably not. Spending time with your spouse not only draws the two of you closer together, but it also teaches your children that the marital relationship has to be our number one human relationship. (Dr. Debbie L. Cherry, *Child-Proofing Your Marriage*, p. 82)
- ☞ One evening, [my husband] Jack came home late as usual, and as usual I started my normal whining and haranguing: "Why are you late again? Why can't you ever be on time for dinner? You must waste time earlier in the day and then we have to suffer." You name it, I said it. Then one of the children looked at me and said, "Why are you always mad at Daddy?" It was like a slap in the face. I was stunned! After all, it was *his* fault. Why blame me for being angry? I don't recall what my reply was, but I'm sure it was self-serving.

Almost immediately the Holy Spirit spoke to me: "When you stand before your heavenly Father, He will not ask you about Jack's shortcomings, but He will ask you about your attitudes and responses." *Wow! Even though he interrupts our schedule and upsets our lives, I'm supposed to be loving and kind and supportive?* The Holy Spirit answered me sweetly, "Yes."

I didn't hear an audible voice, but in my heart I knew I had received a rebuke from the Lord and it was my responsibility to make things right. I didn't change overnight, but with the Lord's help it was a beginning point. That encounter has never left me, and when I begin to step over the line, I ask Him to take control and bring me back. I learned that the blame game has no place in a marriage." (Jean Bishop, *The Best Thing I Ever Did for My Marriage*)

- ☞ Good communication isn't only helpful to couples; it also sets the stage for how their children will communicate as they grow up. If children witness their parents engaged in bickering or name-calling, or if evenings are spent in stony silence, that's what they'll learn. I'm reminded of a very negative man I once knew who came to dinner every evening with a complaint. His day was lousy, his job was rotten, his boss was a jerk, and so on. Yet this same parent seemed surprised when his own son began remarking that he hated school, his teachers were all idiots, and his friends were fools.

I encourage parents to work on good communication skills both for themselves and their own emotional health and sense of inner peace, and also for their children. It's much more beneficial for kids to see their parents discussing issues, exchanging ideas, and occasionally, when there has been a bad disagreement, hugging and making up. It's okay for children to know that their parents sometimes disagree; but it's also important for kids to see their parents coming together again.

So often, misunderstandings between couples are resolved privately, after the children are asleep or when they're out playing. It's healthy for them to see that their parents can have differences and still love and care for each other. (Dr. Robert Frank, *Parenting Partners*, p. 96)

It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start.
— St. Teresa of Calcutta

Right Click Here to open in new tab or QR to answer questions about Presentations 6 and 7



Note: This takes you to an outside Microsoft Form; answer these individually (not as a couple)

Awesome! Once you are done answering the questions for 6 and 7, move on to reading the next PDF Article on HEALING within Module TWO.