

# The Sacrament of Marriage (Holy Matrimony) in the Catholic Church

is a lifelong, indissoluble covenant between one baptized man and one baptized woman, established by God and consented to by the couple. It is a sacrament of service that symbolizes the union of Christ and the Church, granting grace for fidelity, unity, and raising children.

## Key Aspects of Catholic Marriage

- **Ministers of the Sacrament:** In the Latin Rite, the couple themselves are the ministers, exchanging vows, while a priest or deacon acts as the official witness.
- **Four Pillars:** The marriage must be **free** (no coercion), **total** (giving of self), **faithful** (exclusive), and **fruitful** (open to procreation).
- **Indissolubility:**  
The union is meant to be permanent, enduring until death.
- **Requirements:** At least one party must be Catholic (usually both for it to be a sacrament), and it generally takes place within a church (canon law).
- **Preparation:** Couples are required to undergo marriage preparation (Pre-Cana) to understand the church's teaching.

## Who Can Marry and Nuances

- **Valid Marriage:** A marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament.
- **Mixed Marriages:** A Catholic can marry a non-baptized person, but this requires special permission from the bishop and is not considered a sacrament, although it is a valid marriage if performed according to church law.
- **Divorce & Annulment:** While the Church does not recognize divorce for a sacramental union, an **annulment** (declaration of nullity) can be granted if it is found that a valid sacramental marriage never existed from the start.

## Celebration

The ceremony is typically held within a Mass (Eucharistic Liturgy), signifying the new covenant with Christ. The couple's vows to each other are the heart of the ceremony.