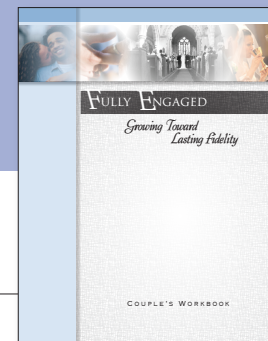


COUPLE'S WORKBOOK

Below is a page from the Fully Engaged Couple's Workbook



SECTION THIRTEEN: THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

OPENING PRAYER

O God of love, time and time again, your love for all people is likened to a marriage covenant. So greatly exalted is this divine institution that the church celebrates it as one of the seven sacraments. Send your Spirit of understanding as I reflect on marriage as a sacrament and what that means for me in my daily life. I ask this through Christ our Lord and in the power of your Spirit. Amen.

"Dearly beloved, you have come together into the house of the Church, so that in the presence of the Church's minister and the community your intention to enter into Marriage may be strengthened by the Lord with a sacred seal. Christ abundantly blesses the love that binds you. Through a special Sacrament, he enriches and strengthens those he has already consecrated by Holy Baptism, that they may be faithful to each other for ever and assume all the responsibilities of married life. And so, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions."

The words above come from the Rite of Marriage. When the two of you stand before the Church's witness (the priest or the deacon), he will address these words to you. Take some time now to read them carefully and notice what they contain.

On your wedding day, your priest or deacon will ask you three questions before you say your vows. These "intentions" are questions about your freedom of choice, fidelity to each other and your willingness to accept and bring up children. This is actually a culmination of the preparation for marriage that you are receiving.

The Church holds marriage in such high regard that they want to ensure that you are not only prepared for marriage with an open heart, but are able to publicly witness so that you will "assume all the responsibilities of married life."

*This is the great vocation
of marriage:
to mirror God's deep love
for all humanity.*



The three questions you will be asked are:

- "N. and N., have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?" Your response, individually, is "I have."
- "Are you prepared, as you follow the path of marriage, to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live?" Your response, individually, is "I am."
- "Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?" Your response, individually, is "I am."

These questions contain the essential elements of marriage: freedom, love as God loves (forever and unconditionally), openness to children (accepting, nurturing and teaching them the faith). Your marriage is only valid when these elements are there from the start.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**Below is a sample of the Reflection Questions
from the Couple's Workbook for the section
"Sacrament of Marriage."**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. HOW DO YOU ANTICIPATE THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE WILL HELP YOU AND YOUR FIANCÉ(E) IN YOUR NEW LIFE TOGETHER AS HUSBAND AND WIFE?

2. AT THIS POINT, CAN YOU HONESTLY SAY THAT YOU ARE ENTERING THIS MARRIAGE "WITHOUT COERCION, FREELY AND WHOLEHEARTEDLY?"

IF NOT, WHAT OBSTACLES RELATED TO COERCION, FREEDOM OR WHOLEHEARTEDNESS ARE YOU EXPERIENCING?

3. ARE YOU ENTERING THIS MARRIAGE WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE TWO OF YOU WILL BE TOGETHER FOR LIFE?

IF NOT, WHY NOT?

4. HOW ARE THE TWO OF YOU CALLED TO BE A SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE TO THE WORLD?