

## The Church's Liturgy

*'Holy matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church' (Book of Common Prayer 1662)*

*'Marriage is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong, for better or worse, till death do us part, of one man with one woman ... for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for ... help and comfort ... both in prosperity and adversity.'*

*(Canon B30.1 of the Church of England)*

## Biblical quote

*'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.'* Genesis 2.24

*'Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself up for her,'* Ephesians 5.25

## Outward grace

The outward sign of the sacrament of marriage is the mutual consent of the persons, expressed in words and signs, in accordance with the law of the Church. In marriage the couple consent to surrendering their bodies to one another, in order that they might become one flesh, and live for life as husband and wife. The couple promise vows of faithfulness, love, support and through the giving of rings they witness to their desire to share and surrender their wealth, possessions, talents and gifts to the other.

# What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What Jesus did on earth he still does through his seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Each of these sacraments enable us to have a personal encounter with Jesus our risen Lord. The sacraments are God's gifts to equip us to lead a full and holy life.



### The Church Union

16 Commercial Street, Birmingham B1 1RS

Tel: 0121 382 5533

[www.churchunion.co.uk](http://www.churchunion.co.uk)

Email: [communications@churchunion.co.uk](mailto:communications@churchunion.co.uk)

## THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE



**The Church Union**

## Inward grace

Jesus invites husband and wife to participate in His love for the Church. Through the sacrament of marriage couples imitate the loving communion of the Trinity. By participating in this sacrament, the couple enable Jesus to be continually present in their marriage. Through His presence they are assured that despite the troubles and difficulties which can at times present themselves they are not alone. Christians can rely on Jesus to help them continue in love, even if it can seem impossible. It is the love of Jesus present in marriage, which enables forgiveness, healing and happiness to occur. Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, love becomes a process of constant growth.

## A Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, you blessed the union of husband and wife, so that they might reflect the union of Christ and His Church. Look with kindness on those you have called to be married, renew them in their covenant with one another, strengthen them in the bond of peace, increase their love for you and for each other, that they may always rejoice in the gift of your blessing. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Short introduction to Marriage

The Bible begins with man and woman being created in the likeness of God. The union between man and woman has therefore been an integral part in God's plan of creation from the beginning. Marriage creates a lifelong and exclusive bond, and that bond forms the foundation of family life, in which children are born and nurtured. Marriage is a gift from God in which husband and wife grow together in love and trust and in the delight and tenderness of sexual union. Marriage is a vocation in which a couple express God's truth and love in and to the world.

## Development of sacrament and history

The sacraments make Christ present in our midst and therefore the sacrament of marriage is not just for the good of an individual or a couple but for the

good of the whole world. The prophets of the Old Testament saw the marriage of a man and a woman as a symbol of the promise between God and his people and in the New Testament, Jesus Christ reaffirmed the central place of marriage in God's plan for creation by his presence at the Wedding in Cana of Galilee and St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians states that marriage symbolizes the love that Christ has for His Church.

## What can I do next? How does this apply to me?

Love is the fundamental vocation of every human being but this does not necessarily mean that every human being has a vocation to Marriage. Marriage involves a call from God and the response of two people to build a lifelong and intimate partnership of life and love. The decision to marry should therefore be the fruit of a process of discernment and prayer. Some of the signs which indicate that you may be called to be married include: a desire to be married which may show itself in your wish to love and to be loved, a desire to have children, an admiration for married couples, the encouragement of others and perhaps most importantly meeting someone you wish to marry. Whether as an individual you are called to Marriage or not, it is important that all Christians to pray for those who are married, that they might participate in God's blessings of faithfulness, trust, hospitality, love and family life. These gifts enrich the life of the Church and of society.

