



‘Legio Sanctae Familiae’ The Legion of the Holy Family

Under the Patronage of
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
The Immaculate Heart of Mary
The Most Chaste Heart of St Joseph



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Pope Pius XI continues expounding Catholic Church teaching on the goods of marriage. He is still speaking about the good of indissolubility.

“And if this stability seems to be open to exception, however rare the exception may be, as in the case of certain natural marriages between unbelievers, or amongst Christians in the case of those marriages which though valid have not been consummated, that exception does not depend on the will of men nor on that of any merely human power, but on divine law, of which the only guardian and interpreter is the Church of Christ. However, not even this power can ever affect for any cause whatsoever a Christian marriage which is valid and has been consummated, for as it is plain that here the marriage contract has its full completion, so, by the will of God, there is also the greatest firmness and indissolubility which may not be destroyed by any human authority.” (**Casti Connubii 35**)

The Pope is here referring to exceptional and very rare cases. Where a marriage has not been consummated, the Pope has the authority to dissolve such a marriage for a just reason.

There is also what is known as the ‘Pauline privilege’ which concerns those who contracted marriage while being unbaptised. If one of them converts and becomes a Catholic, there are certain conditions under which the non-sacramental marriage can be dissolved in favour of the faith. Another scenario exists in the case for example of an unbaptised man with several unbaptised wives. He cannot keep all of his wives if he converts to the Catholic faith. The same is true of an unbaptised woman with many husbands. Pope Pius XI tells us that these rare exceptions are just that, exceptions which do not change Catholic Church teaching on marriage. These exceptions are ruled upon in accordance with divine law which has as its purpose the salvation of souls.

“If we wish with all reverence to inquire into the intimate reason of this divine decree, Venerable Brethren, we shall easily see it in the mystical



signification of Christian marriage which is fully and perfectly verified in consummated marriage between Christians. For, as the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Ephesians, the marriage of Christians recalls that most perfect union which exists between Christ and the Church: “This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church.” (Ephesians 5:32) which union, as long as Christ shall live and the Church through Him, can never be dissolved by any separation. And this St. Augustine clearly declares in these words: “This is safeguarded in Christ and the Church, which, living with Christ who lives for ever may never be divorced from Him. The observance of this sacrament is such in the City of God . . . that is, in the Church of Christ, that when for the sake of begetting children, women marry or are taken to wife, it is wrong to leave a wife that is sterile in order to take another by whom children may be had. Anyone doing this is guilty of adultery, just as if he married another, guilty not by the law of the day, according to which when one’s partner is put away another may be taken, which the Lord allowed in the law of Moses because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of Israel; but by the law of the Gospel.” (St Augustine - On Marriage and Concupiscence) (**Casti Connubii 36**)

This again confirms that Jesus Christ abrogated the law of Moses and restored indissolubility as God’s original design for marriage.

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“Indeed, how many and how important are the benefits which flow from the indissolubility of matrimony cannot escape anyone who gives even a brief consideration either to the good of the married parties and the offspring or to the welfare of human society.

First of all, both husband and wife possess a positive guarantee of the endurance of this stability which that generous yielding of their persons and the intimate fellowship of their hearts by their nature strongly require, since true love never falls away. (1 Corinthians 13:8) Besides, a strong bulwark is set up in defence of a loyal chastity against incitements to infidelity, should any be encountered either from within or from without; any anxious fear lest in adversity or old age the other spouse would prove unfaithful is precluded and in its place there reigns a calm sense of security.

Moreover, the dignity of both man and wife is maintained and mutual aid is most satisfactorily assured, while through the indissoluble bond, always enduring, the spouses are warned continuously that not for the sake of perishable things nor that they may serve their passions, but that they may procure one for the other high and lasting good have they entered into the nuptial partnership, to be dissolved only by death. In the training and education of children, which must extend over a period of many years, it plays a great part, since the grave and long enduring burdens of this office are best borne by the united efforts of the parents.

Nor do lesser benefits accrue to human society as a whole. For experience has taught that unassailable stability in matrimony is a fruitful source of virtuous life and of habits of integrity. Where this order of things obtains, the happiness and well being of the nation is safely guarded; what the families and individuals are, so also is the State, for a body is determined by its parts. Wherefore, both for the private good of husband, wife and children, as likewise for the public good of human society, they indeed deserve well who strenuously defend the inviolable stability of matrimony.” (**Casti Connubii 37**)

Fr Matteo-Crawley Boevey also affirmed this in his talks on the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the family home. (Emphasis added)

“Let us not deceive ourselves; in order to bring about the day, be it far or distant, of the social reign of Jesus Christ, proclaimed and revered as King, ruling by Sovereign right throughout the whole of human society, it will be necessary for us to re-fashion the society of today from its very basis, that is to say rebuild it on the model of Nazareth.

Every nation is worth what the family life is worth, for a nation has ever been, either in holiness or corruption, that which the home is. There has never been any exception whatever to this rule.” (Fr Matteo Crawley-Boevey - (Jesus, King of Love - Page 9)



Marriage Needs a Good Foundation - Indissolubility

Western societies, pandering to the whims of the wealthy, legalised civil divorce contrary to the Law of God. Divorce does not bring benefits to individuals nor to society. Once divorce becomes widespread in any society it is only a matter of time before that society collapses.

Matrimony bestows an even greater benefit on both the couple and on society which Pope Pius XI now begins to consider.

“But considering the benefits of the Sacrament, besides the firmness and indissolubility, there are also much higher emoluments as the word “sacrament” itself very aptly indicates; for to Christians this is not a meaningless and empty name. Christ the Lord, the Institutor and “Perfecter” of the holy sacraments, (Council of Trent - Session 24) by raising the matrimony of His faithful to the dignity of a true sacrament of the New Law, made it a sign and source of that peculiar internal grace by which “it perfects natural love, it confirms an indissoluble union, and sanctifies both man and wife.” (Council of Trent - Session 24) (**Casti Connubii 38**)

“And since the valid matrimonial consent among the faithful was constituted by Christ as a sign of grace, the sacramental nature is so intimately bound up with Christian wedlock that there can be no true marriage between baptized persons “without it being by that very fact a sacrament.””(Codex Iuris Canonici - 1917) (**Casti Connubii 39**)

“By the very fact, therefore, that the faithful with sincere mind give such consent, they open up for themselves a treasure of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly even unto death. Hence this sacrament not only increases sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life, in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle in its way, but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers.

By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding, but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice, those things which pertain to the

marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them in fine right to the actual assistance of grace, whenever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.” (**Casti Connubii 40**)

The Catholic Church’s primary concern is the salvation of souls. Whilst the Church recognises natural marriages between pagans she also teaches that the natural goods of these marriages do not confer sanctifying grace on the couple. Sanctifying grace is necessary for salvation. Man’s greatest good comes after death and a man must die in a state of grace in order to benefit from the graces received through the Catholic Church. But the grace of the sacraments needs our co-operation in order to be fully effective in our lives.

“Nevertheless, since it is a law of divine Providence in the supernatural order that men do not reap the full fruit of the Sacraments which they receive after acquiring the use of reason unless they cooperate with grace, the grace of matrimony will remain for the most part an unused talent hidden in the field unless the parties exercise these supernatural powers and cultivate and develop the seeds of grace they have received. If, however, doing all that lies within their power, they cooperate diligently, they will be able with ease to bear the burdens of their state and to fulfil their duties.

By such a sacrament they will be strengthened, sanctified and in a manner consecrated. For, as St. Augustine teaches, just as by Baptism and Holy Orders a man is set aside and assisted either for the duties of Christian life or for the priestly office and is never deprived of their sacramental aid, almost in the same way (although not by a sacramental character), the faithful once joined by marriage ties can never be deprived of the help and the binding force of the sacrament. Indeed, as the Holy Doctor adds, even those who commit adultery carry with them that sacred yoke, although in this case not as a title to the glory of grace but for the ignominy of their guilty action, “as the soul by apostasy, withdrawing as it were from marriage with Christ, even though it may have lost its faith, does not lose the sacrament of Faith which it received at the laver of regeneration.”(St. Augustine - On Marriage and Concupiscence) (**Casti Connubii 41**)

In John chapter fifteen Our Lord speaks of Himself as the vine.

“I am the true vine; and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me, that does not bear fruit, he will take away: and every one that bears fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean by reason of the word, which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine: you the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:1-5)



Without Jesus we can do nothing and everything that we try to do without Him will end in failure. Marriage comes from God and we need the Grace of the Sacrament in order to be able to have fruitful marriages. Our modern cultures have abandoned God in favour of serving Mammon. Catholic Church teaching on marriage is declared to be restrictive. The opposite is the case as Pope Pius XI now teaches us.

“These parties, let it be noted, not fettered but adorned by the golden bond of the sacrament, not hampered but assisted, should strive with all their might to the end that their wedlock, not only through the power and symbolism of the sacrament, but also through their spirit and manner of life, may be and remain always the living image of that most fruitful union of Christ with the Church, which is to be venerated as the sacred token of most perfect love.” (**Casti Connubii 42**)

The sacramental nature of Catholic marriage gives a great freedom to the married couple. They are no longer depending solely on each other in order to fulfil their vows. Their marriage has opened a new channel of sanctifying grace which brings great light into a dark world. It is no wonder that satan strives with all his might to destroy the holy bonds of matrimony and to pervert even the minds of very young children as regards the nature of human sexuality which is designed for use only within matrimony. Pope Pius XI goes to great lengths to emphasise these great benefits of marriage and encourages the Catholic Bishops to reflect deeply on these matters.

“All of these things, Venerable Brethren, you must consider carefully and ponder over with a lively faith if you would see in their true light the extraordinary benefits on matrimony - offspring, conjugal faith, and the sacrament. No one can fail to admire the divine Wisdom, Holiness and Goodness which, while respecting the dignity and happiness of husband and wife, has provided so bountifully for the conservation and propagation of the human race by a single chaste and sacred fellowship of nuptial union. (**Casti Connubii 43**)

The Pope is only too aware of the attacks against Catholic marriage and he will now turn his attention to these problems.