

Chapter 12

Answer Key for Double-Check Questions

1. *What is God's plan for marriage?*

God intended marriage as a loving way to bring happiness to us and to assure us that we need not be alone on our life's journey. Marriage, in God's plan, has two goods: the good of the man and woman, and the procreation and education of children.

2. *What is the definition of the Sacrament of Matrimony? Choose two key elements from this definition and explain why each is important in Christian marriage.*

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a lifelong covenant, modeled on that between Christ and the Church, in which a baptized man and a baptized woman make an exclusive and permanent commitment to faithfully love each other and to cooperate in the procreation and education of children. Examples will vary but may include: (1) Marriage is a covenantal relationship between God and his people and therefore cannot be dissolved. (2) Children are the supreme gift of marriage and, as gifts, bring great good to their parents. (3) Saint Paul states that he knows no greater union than that of Christ and the Church. The Sacrament of Matrimony is a sign of that union. A man and woman are given the grace to love each other with the same love with which Christ loves the Church.

3. *How did the idea of the unity and indissolubility of marriage gradually develop in the Law of Moses, the teachings of the prophets, and, finally, in the New Covenant established by Christ?*

The concept of the unity and indissolubility of marriage first developed in the Law of Moses. It did not explicitly reject the polygamy practiced by kings and patriarchs at the time, but the Law of Moses did protect a wife from being at her husband's mercy—although it still allowed a husband to divorce his wife. The prophets went further by teaching that exclusive married love is a metaphor for God's covenantal love for his people (God is the Bridegroom and Israel is the Bride). These teachings led to the New Covenant, in which Jesus is the Bridegroom to all humanity.

4. *How do Saint Paul's words in Ephesians 5:25–30 relate to the union of husband and wife in the Sacrament of Matrimony?*

In Ephesians 5:25–30, Saint Paul explains that married couples are signs of Christ's love for the Church, the greatest union of all.

5. *Why is it important that consent in the Sacrament of Matrimony be free? What are some circumstances that may create constraint or pressure to marry, leading to a marriage contracted without free consent?*

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, consent must be freely given because the man and woman must willingly give themselves to each other in order to live a lifelong covenant of faithful love and openness to sharing that love with children. Without free consent, there is no marriage bond. A variety of circumstances may pose obstacles to free consent, including pregnancy (and the pressure to marry), mental illness, a secret addiction, the existence of prior religious or marriage vows, or factors prohibited by natural law (such as marriage between family members).



6. *Who are the ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony? What is the role of the priest or deacon in the Sacrament in the Latin Rite? in the Eastern Churches?*

In the Latin Rite, the ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony are the bride and groom themselves, with the priest or deacon acting as a witness. In the Eastern Churches, in contrast, the priest is the minister of the sacrament because both his blessing and his witness are required for the sacrament to be valid in the Eastern Churches.

7. *What three requirements are essential to marriage?*

Three elements are essential to marriage: unity, indissolubility, and openness to children.

8. *What are some ways those who are single can contribute to family life? How can married couples provide those who are single, especially those who may be isolated because of old age or illness, an opportunity to share in family life?*

Single people can contribute significantly to family life as aunts and uncles, godparents, or family friends. Married couples can invite those who are single to share in family life by including them in celebrations, especially around important seasons in the liturgical calendar. Families should especially find ways to include those who are ill or elderly, as well as those who are living in poverty, perhaps with no home. (You may wish to invite students to add concrete suggestions of their own, as appropriate.)

9. *When might the Church issue a declaration of nullity, called an annulment, and what does this declaration mean?*

The Church might issue an annulment when a marriage has been entered into under constraint or in some other circumstance that prevented either or both spouses from giving free consent. An annulment is the Church's declaration that a true marriage bond, as a sacrament, never existed in the eyes of the Church.

