

473 Through marriage the Lord accomplishes the history of salvation:

You blessed your servant Abraham when you opened Sarah's womb and made him the father of many nations [see Gn 12:1-13; 17:1-22; 18:1-16; 21:1-8; Rom 4:18]. You gave Rebecca to Isaac and blessed her childbearing [see Gn 24-25; 27]. You joined Jacob and Rachel and brought forth the twelve patriarchs from him [see Gn 29-31; 35]. You united Joseph and Asenath and gave them Ephrem and Manasseh, the fruit of their procreation [see Gn 41:44-52; 46:20]. You joined Zachariah and Elizabeth and gave them the Precursor of your own most pure Birth as their offspring [see Lk 1:5-25, 39-80]. From the root of Jesse, according to the flesh, you made the Ever-Virgin spring forth, and from her you became incarnate and were born for the salvation of the human race.<sup>352</sup>

474 In Cana of Galilee, Christ "saw fit in [his] saving providence to show by [his] presence how precious marriage is."<sup>353</sup> He "blessed the wedding there to show that lawful marriage and its procreation are [his] will."<sup>354</sup>

475 Christian marriage is founded on Christ's commandment of love: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). The apostle Paul enjoins the husband to love his wife "as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). He then enjoins the wife to regard her husband as she regards the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church (see Eph 5:22-25). This is possible because the husband and wife are united in love not only with each other, but also with Christ. Granting their love to each other, they grant it to Christ, and granting it to Christ, they grant it to each other. In this mutual gift of love, they grow together into one Body of Christ (see Eph 5:31-32).

476 Marriage as a union of love between a man and a woman derives from the very nature of the human person: "Indeed from the beginning, God appears to have made special provision for this union; and referring to the two as one, he said: "Male and female he created them."<sup>355</sup> The mutual marital love of a husband and wife is the power and foundation for the growth of strong families and the creation of healthy societies.<sup>356</sup>

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352 Trebnyk, Rite of Crowning, First Prayer.

3s3 Trebnyk, Rite of Crowning, Third Prayer.

354 Trebnyk, Rite of Crowning, First Prayer.

355 JOHN CHRYSOSTOM Homilies on Ephesians, 20, 1: PG 62, 135.

256 See VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* [On the Apostolate of the Laity], 11.

## 2) *The Rite of Crowning*

477 The Rite of Crowning is preceded by the Betrothal. In the narthex of the church, those intending to marry declare their decision before the priest. As a sign of their betrothal, he places a ring on the hand of each and pronounces the words of prayer: "O Lord our God ... Bless now the betrothal of your servants. Affirm the words spoken by them and strengthen them with the sacred unity that comes from you ... Confirm their betrothal in faith and harmony, in truth and love." The rings symbolize the power of the Lord's love, which fortifies the love of the betrothed. The Church prays that "the angel [of the Lord] go before them all the days of their lives."<sup>357</sup>

478 The priest leads the betrothed into the church as the following words are sung: "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways" (Ps 127[128]:1). Then, just as at the Divine Liturgy, he begins the Rite of Crowning. He solemnly exclaims: "Blessed be the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This exclamation indicates the intimate connection between the Holy Mystery of Marriage and the Holy Eucharist, by the grace of which the bride and groom become one body.

The Eucharist is the perfecting of each divine service and the seal of every divine Mystery. The Church does well in preparing the Holy Gifts for the union and blessing of the married couple. This is because Christ himself, who gave us these gifts, and himself is these gifts, came to the wedding [at Cana of Galilee] to bring them [the betrothed] union in peace and harmony. Thus, those who unite in marriage should be worthy of Holy Communion. They should be joined before God in the church—the house of God—because they are children of God.<sup>358</sup>

479 Then, the betrothed, placing their hands upon the Gospel Book, make their wedding vows before God. These are promises of "love, fidelity, and honour in marriage." They commit not to leave each other "until death." However, the steadfast foundation of the marriage union is not only the consent of the betrothed, but first of all the power of God: "Stretch forth Your hand now, O Master, from your holy dwelling place and join this your servant (name) with your handmaid (name), for it is you who join a man and a woman." It is from the Lord that come all the gifts that create and strengthen this union: "Bind them together in oneness of mind, crown them for love, unite them into one flesh, and

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<sup>357</sup> Trebnyk, Rite of Crowning, Third Prayer over the Betrothed.

<sup>358</sup> SYMEON or THESSALONICA, On Marriage, 282: PG 155, 512.