

## Unit 3 Part B - Relationships

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### Family Life

- Catholics believe that children should be brought up in a loving and supportive family, founded on marriage and that the Church should be a model of family life.
- The Catholic Church supports the idea of the '**Nuclear Family**'
- Many Catholics believe husbands and wives should respect each other's roles within a marriage and value both equally.
- Family is the **first** place where children will learn about love, companionship and forgiveness. They will learn the importance of **Sacrificial love**. *"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* 1 Timothy 5:8
- Christianity teaches that children should treat their parents with honour and respect. *"Honour thy Father and Mother"* Exodus 20
- Christian parents play a significant role in the process of **spiritual** development of children. This can be done by teaching them how to **pray**, taking them to **Mass** regularly and encouraging them to receive the **Sacraments**.
- Married couples must open to the '**Gift of children**'. Therefore, they must **care** for them, teach them how to live **good lives**, teach them about **God** and have them **Baptised**. *"Children, obey your parents...Parents, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the instruction of the Lord."* Ephesians 6:1-4

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### Divorce

- The Catholic Church does not recognise divorce as it goes against the teachings of Christ - *"Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."* Mark 10:9
- Divorce is the breaking of the **sacrament** and the **vows** made between the couple and God. The nature of marriage states that it must be life-long. Therefore, the only way a marriage can end is if one of the individuals dies *"Til death do us part..."*
- If a couple does get a divorce then they **will not** be allowed to **remarry** in the Catholic Church, as it would be classed as committing **adultery**. *"A man who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against his wife. In the same way, a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man commits adultery."* Mark 10:11-12
- Divorced Catholics are called to live **celibate** lives.
- Marriage Care aims to work with **separated** couples to help them through their problems and difficulties with the hope that they can get back together.

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### Nature and Purpose of Marriage

Remember: **Purpose and Sell**

P - Permanent  
U - Unite and support  
R- Restrict Sex  
P - Procreate  
O - One time only  
S - Sacrament  
E - Everlasting

S - Sacrament  
E - Exclusive  
L - Lifelong  
L - Life Giving

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### Marriage Care

- **Marriage Care** is a charity that helps couples and individuals to build and sustain strong relationships.
- It views marriage as a **vocation** of love that has the power to transform individuals and therefore society.
- They offer a **Marriage Preparation Course** which is vital for those who wish to marry in the Catholic Church.
- **"Preparing Together"** is the one day, skills-oriented, group course for couples planning to marry in the Catholic Church
- Marriage Care has been supporting relationships for over 70 years. They provide **counselling** for any couple who are experiencing difficulties in their relationship.

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### Adultery

Adultery, which involves a sexual relationship with a person who is not the marriage partner and which is **condemned** in the **Ten Commandments**, is viewed by the Church as serious **sin**

Adultery can hurt the betrayed husband or wife and can destroy the **bond** of trust between the couple and thus destroy the marriage.

In the Catholic view it amounts to giving away what no longer belongs to a person, your body, which has been offered to another **when married**.

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### Nuptial Mass

The marriage ceremony is a very simple one. Usually, the wedding ceremony takes place within the Mass and so the Wedding Mass is known as the Nuptial Mass.

**Wedding homily** - This starts after the biblical readings. The priest will talk about the meaning and importance of marriage. He will explain how the couple can grow closer to God through marriage.

**Questions** - This is the start of the marriage ceremony. The priest asks the couple three questions:  
**Have you come to offer yourselves to each other, freely and without reservation?**  
**Will you love and honour each other for life?**  
**Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the Catholic faith?**

**Exchange of vows** - This is the actual moment of the sacrament. It differs from other sacraments, as the couple themselves administer the sacrament rather than the priest – the priest is simply a witness. The couple make their **vows** in the presence of God and with the understanding that God is part of the union.

**Exchange of rings** - The rings are a sign of love and faithfulness. The circular shape of the rings represents eternal love. The couple exchange rings to symbolise the permanent and **exclusive** relationship they have vowed to be part of.

**Nuptial blessing** - This reminds the couple of their love for one another and how it is like Jesus' love for the Church. This also reminds them how they are now examples to others as well as each other.

**Signing of the marriage register** - This is the civil, or legal, requirement. The couple and two witnesses have to sign the register to confirm that the couple are married. An authorised registrar must be present to complete the form and witness the signing – this may sometimes be the priest.

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### Annulment

An annulment, known also as a **Decree of Nullity**, **is not** the same as a divorce. It is declaration by the Church that the marriage was never valid in the first place i.e. the marriage was null and void.

Grounds for an annulment include:

- Psychological incapacity to understand the commitment marriage entails
- One of the partners has hidden information such as a previous marriage, impotence or infertility.

An annulment will be considered if there is reasonable proof that the bond between the couple was **invalid from the first day of the marriage**. The annulment process can take between 9-24 months or longer and is a complicated process:

**Petition:** A person (petitioner) approaches a priest saying why they want an annulment. They give all the circumstances as to why they think their marriage was invalid. The previous partner (respondent) has the opportunity to put their view across

**Evidence:** Having collected the statements from each party, evidence for and against the argument must be gathered from family members, close friends and other interested parties.  
**Discussion:** An argument for the invalidity of the marriage is presented on behalf of the petitioner in a Church Tribunal called the Rota (made up of three judges) and an argument on behalf of the marriage bond is presented by a priest known as the 'Defender of the Bond',

**Judgement:** the judges consider all the evidence and come to a decision. If they decide that the marriage was invalid an annulment of the marriage is granted. The couple would then be free to re-marry in the Catholic Church. If the Rota decides against the petitioner, the person may appeal

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## Mixed Marriages

Today in countries throughout the world it is common for Catholics to enter into a 'mixed marriage' (a marriage between a Catholic and a baptised non-Catholic).

Couples entering into a mixed marriage are usually allowed to marry in a Catholic church provided they accept the following **principles**:

- They have chosen to marry of their own accord with no external pressure
- They intend to remain together for life
- They intend to be faithful to each other
- They intend to have children if the bride is of childbearing age
- The Catholic must promise to do everything in their power to bring up any children of the marriage in the Catholic faith.

When one member of the couple is not a Catholic, a dispensation is required for a mixed marriage to take place. This is normally granted by the priest who is conducting the marriage.

If one of the partners is not baptised (i.e. they belong to a non-Christian religion, or to none) a dispensation for '**disparity of the cult**' is required. This must be granted by the bishop. It is usually a straightforward matter as long as the dispensation is applied for in time.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recognises that mixed marriages can pose difficulties but it also points towards the importance of **growing together through dialogue and a common faith in Jesus Christ**.

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## Contraception

The Catholic Church forbids sex outside marriage, so its teachings about artificial birth control should be understood in the context of marriage.

Because the Catholic Church teaches that one of the main purposes of marriage is the procreation of children, the Church believes that sexual intercourse is sinful, even in a married relationship, if the procreation of children is prevented in an artificial way - by using artificial methods of contraception such as the pill and the condom. The Church teaches that using artificial contraception is wrong because:

- It is against the 'natural' law
- It breaks the natural connection between the procreative and unitive purposes of sex
- It turns sex into a non-marital act
- It gives human beings the power to decide when a new life should be - that power belongs to God
- It leads to widespread immorality
- It damages the institution of marriage
- It reduces male respect for women
- It gives human beings the idea that they can have complete power over the body
- It allows the implementation of eugenic programmes.

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## Same sex relationships

Homosexuals are people who are attracted sexually to members of the same sex.

The Roman Catholic Church, and many evangelical Protestants, argue that homosexual acts are wrong, morally disordered and 'intrinsically evil'. They base this belief on the following:

The biblical teaching takes a very negative view. In the Old Testament homosexual sex is to be punishable by death "***The man who lies with a man in the same way as with a woman: they have done a hateful thing together: they must die, their blood shall be on their own heads.***" **Leviticus 20:13**

In the New Testament Paul repeats the traditional Jewish teaching on homosexuality in both the letter to the Roman and 1 Corinthians: "***You know perfectly well that people who do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God: people of immoral lives, idolaters, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, usurers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers will never inherit the kingdom of God.***" **Romans 5:9-10**

Catholics have also argued that homosexuality is wrong because it contradicts the order of God's **creation**. God made humans as man and woman, so that they could be partners together (Genesis 2). Therefore, homosexual acts seem to be unintended.

The Catholic Church has further argued that homosexuality contradicts the intended purpose of sexual activity: **procreation**. The natural order suggests that sex is intended to produce children; homosexual relationships fail to live up to this ideal.

Today the teaching of the Church recognises that homosexuals have little choice with regard to their sexual orientation but continues to teach that homosexuals should not express their sexuality by having sex and that they '**are called to chastity**'. The Catholic Church condemns any **prejudice** against homosexuals, while maintaining that active same-sex partnerships cannot be approved. For all these reasons the Catholic Church cannot approve civil partnerships between homosexuals.

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## Responsible Parenthood

Many people imagine, therefore, that the Church encourages Catholic parents to have very large families. This is not the case. The Church encourages parents to **act responsibly** when planning a family and to take into account the needs of other children in the family as well as the financial circumstances in which the family finds itself. This is known as responsible parenthood. Perhaps the most favoured method of family planning is **Natural Family Planning**

- Natural Family Planning uses the female body's natural **menstrual cycle** to determine which days are the most and least **fertile**. This allows the couple to still partake in the act of sex, whilst reducing the risk of pregnancy.
- The Catholic Church understands that there may be a 'wrong' time to fall pregnant, eg if a couple cannot afford to support a child or if there are medical issues in the family. As a result, the Church supports the use of Natural Family Planning (NFP)
- The Church promotes NFP as it uses what is natural to the body and does not use anything artificial.

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## Co-habitation

- Cohabitation is when a couple live together **before** they are married.
- The Catholic Church **does not agree** with cohabitation, because it believes that it destroys the sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage.
- Many Roman Catholic will not cohabit as they believe it is **sinful**. This means that a couple will only live together when they are married.