

*“....The words that I have spoken to you
are spirit and they are life”*

John 6:63

**A Publication of
The Directorate of Religious Education**

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CATHOLIC

DIOCESE OF OSOGBO

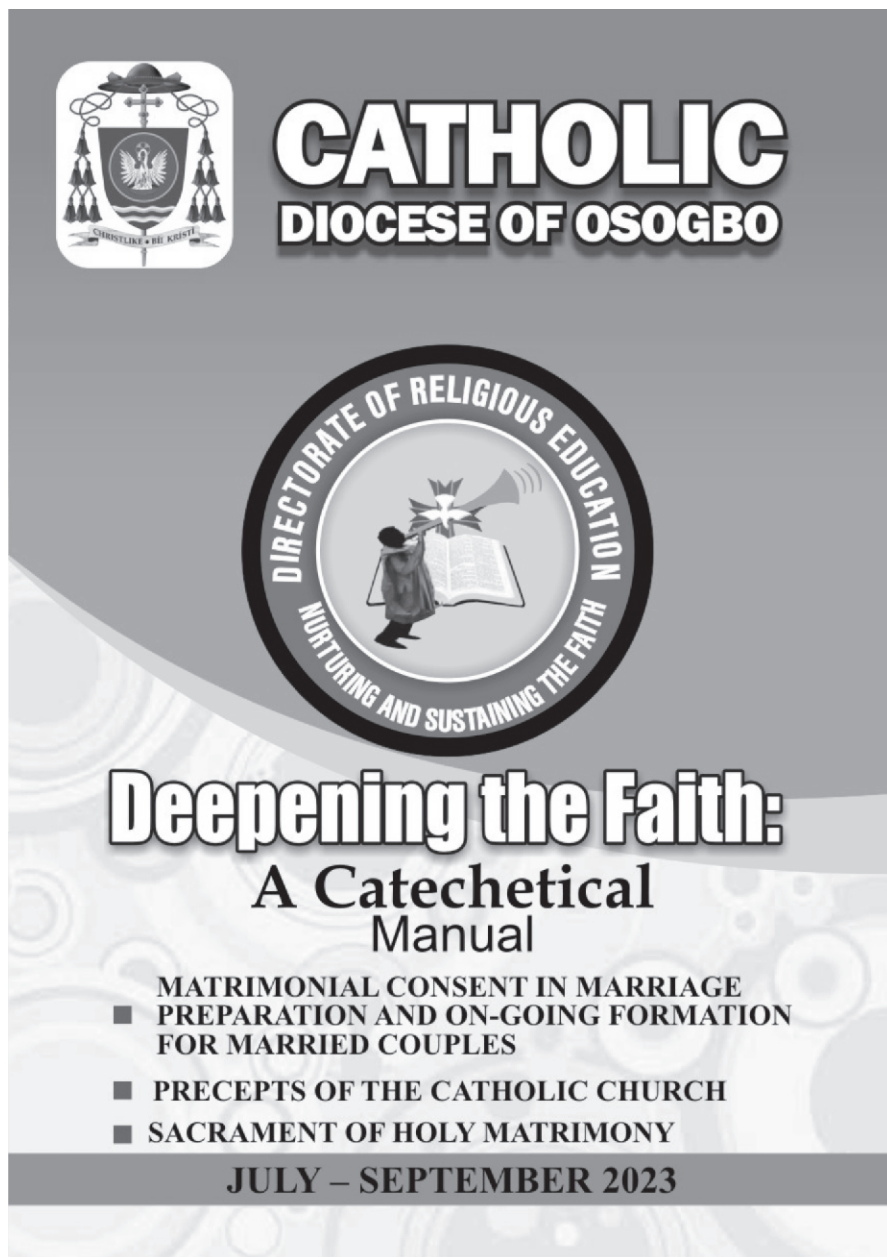


Deepening the Faith:

A Catechetical Manual

- **MATRIMONIAL CONSENT IN MARRIAGE
PREPARATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION
FOR MARRIED COUPLES**
- **PRECEPTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**
- **SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY**

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2023



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Vol: 6. No 3

ISSN: 2705-3083

Published in Nigeria by:
Chalitonia Print 08033787579

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FOREWORD

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Acts 1:8

My beloved people of God, Peace be with you. I hereby present to you the booklet for **Deepening the faith** exercises. Having been immersed in the word of God over the years, I want us to reflect on the effect our new life in Christ should have on us. Before his ascension to heaven, Jesus told his disciples that what is requested of them is to be witnesses. Witnesses, not only in their domain, but everywhere that they go. So also, we have undertaken at our baptism to live in Christ, to be his witnesses everywhere we find ourselves. This time, the call of Jesus is reiterated once again into our ears, for our reflection and action.

Jesus wants us to live in him, He the vine, we the branches. It is when we live in him that this life can be meaningful, bringing illumination into the darkness of the world. Our participation in the deepening the faith exercises should therefore make us better Christians. If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new, (2 Cor 5:17). This newness of life should be felt in the way we revamp the temporal order. There is no gainsaying the fact that our Nigerian nation is passing through some hard times which has naturally resulted in hardship for the citizenry.

Our working for the Lord now is supposed to bring back life and happiness to the people of Nigeria. Even though it is said that a tree does not make a forest, a tree can start a forest. If all of us who are Catholics start to lead good lives and most importantly take right decisions as concerns our polity and perform our civic responsibility in a right manner, Nigeria will become a better place for all of us.

Once again, I call on all and sundry to participate well and fully in the exercise of Deepening the faith. For those who have not been attending, I call on them to join the moving train of progress and let us together with our Christian minds change our Nigerian country into a good place for us all.

Most Rev John Akin Oyejola
Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Osogbo

PREFACE

As this Catechetical program is becoming popular in the Diocese, we thank those who put all their time into it to make it function well. The interest of parishioners and commitment of the instructors have really motivated those of us in the Directorate of Religious Education. Since the inception of this program, we have been having it for one hour every Sunday, either before or after Mass. We encourage all parishioners to continue to make it a one-hour program in small groups for better participation. Many of the topics to be treated this year will be new in consideration for your suggested topics. We hope you will find them useful.

The Bishop and Catechetical commission members are grateful to our instructors for their commitment as they are increasing in number. We also thank all the priests for their relentless support to this Department. May God bless your vocations and accept your sacrifices. Amen

In this sixth year of Deepening the faith programme in Osogbo Diocese, we continue to put all the materials of the Directorate in our website: <www.osogbodiocesandre.org>; and also providing opportunities to contact us by email info@osogbodiocesandre.org or osogbodiocesandre@gmail.com. Kindly make use of this opportunity on a regular basis and benefit from the exchanged interactions, when necessary. Thanks to those that have been doing so. We implore you to inform us of any pressing issues in relation to our faith. We are ready to serve you this year more than ever. Thank you.

Sr Dr Immaculata Olu Omojola, SSMA
Director, Religious Education
Catholic Diocese of Osogbo

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JULY

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

DATE: 02/07/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH:

MATRIMONIAL CONSENT IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION FOR MARRIED COUPLES

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:

WHAT IS MATRIMONIAL CONSENT?

Biblical References: Amos 3;3, Matthew 18;20, Psalm 133;1.

In the Catholic Church, consent makes a marriage. In other words, consent brings marriage into existence. Without it, there is no marriage. Since consent is an act of the will, all defect of consent ultimately invalidate marriage because of their impact on the will. An adequate understanding of consent must also include an appreciation of its personal and interpersonal dimensions and its concreteness. Thus, one can never overlook the influence of culture, society, family and personal experience on individual couples' consent. The Code of Canon Law states the grand importance of matrimonial consenting even before defining it: "The consent of the parties, legitimately manifested between persons qualified by law, makes marriage; no human power is able to supply this consent" (Can. 1057, par.1, emphasis, mine). The 'Catechism of the Catholic Church' is even clearer on the matter: "The Church holds the exchange of consent between the spouses to be the indispensable element that 'makes the marriage'. If consent is lacking, there is no marriage". In any case, matrimonial consent is canonically defined as "an act of the will by which a man and a woman mutually give and accept each other through an irrevocable covenant in order to establish marriage" (Can. 1057, par. 2). For the Church, therefore, consent is the efficient cause of marriage. It is of

utmost importance, then, that the “Consent” be properly in-formed and properly given since much about marriage depends on it. It is the essential importance of matrimonial consent as the efficient cause of marriage that makes the spouses themselves the ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony, not the Priest/officiate who requests for and receives their consent in the name of the Church. In this way, the Church practically gives her authoritative voice to the causal and creative role of consent in bringing marriage into existence.

Consent as the Efficient Cause of Marriage

It is important to be clear about what constitutes marriage. Consent is the only efficient cause of the matrimonial bond. The celebration of marriage has no effect if consent is lacking. Consent is the sole and irreplaceable cause of marriage. To consent to marriage, therefore, a person must possess sufficient use of reason to posit a responsible human act. A person must also be able to evaluate the nature of marriage itself and the concrete marriage to be entered and so to choose it free; and a person must be capable of assuming the carrying out the essential obligations of marriage. Capacity is the ability of individuals to understand the nature of marriage and what their responsibilities are to their partners once they enter into the union, such as financial obligations. All of these capacities can be substantially undermined by disturbances, both temporary and permanent. Again, an adequate understanding of consent must also include an appreciation of its personal and interpersonal dimensions. Thus, one can never overlook the influence of culture, society, family, and personal experience on individual couple's consent. For a person to be declared as lacking of sufficient use of reason to contract marriage, a mental disorder (impairment) must be relatively severe and pervasive (persistent) in its effect on the person's Matrimonial Consent.

Invalidating defects of matrimonial consent

Certain factors can render a matrimonial consent defective and so invalidate the marriage it putatively brings into existence. 'The

Code of Canon Law' outlines about eight of these factors. 1. Consensual incapacity (can. 1095): “The following are incapable of contracting marriage: a) Those who lack the sufficient use of reason (par. 1); b) Those who suffer from a grave defect of discretion of judgment concerning the essential

Questions to ponder:

1. What is your understanding of Marital Consent?
2. Why do you think Marital consent is important in Marriage?
3. If there's no consent, will there be marriage?
4. Can one's culture, family background and personal experience affect Marital Consent?

Task: Each Person to examine himself or herself on how faithful the consent has been practiced.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR DATE: 09/07/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: MATRIMONIAL CONSENT IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION FOR MARRIED COUPLES

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: MARITAL CONSENT AND FREEWILL

Biblical References: Romans 15;5 Ephesians 4;13, Phil 1;27

Consent is an act of the will, all defect of consent ultimately invalidate marriage because of their impact on the will. An adequate understanding of consent must also include an appreciation of its personal and interpersonal dimensions and its concreteness. Thus,

one can never overlook the influence of culture, society, family and personal experience on individual couples' consent. To consent to marriage, therefore, a person must possess sufficient use of reason to posit a responsible human act. A person must also be able to evaluate the nature of marriage itself and the concrete marriage to be entered and so to choose it free; and a person must be capable of assuming the carrying out the essential obligations of marriage. Capacity is the ability of individuals to understand the nature of marriage and what their responsibilities are to their partners once they enter into the union, such as financial obligations. All of these capacities can be substantially undermined by disturbances, both temporary and permanent. Again, an adequate understanding of consent must also include an appreciation of its personal and interpersonal dimensions. Thus, one can never overlook the influence of culture, society, family, and personal experience on individual couple's consent. For a person to be declared as lacking of sufficient use of reason to contract marriage, a mental disorder (impairment) must be relatively severe and pervasive (persistent) in its effect on the person.

Questions to ponder:

1. If someone is forced into marriage, will the marriage be valid?
2. Consent happens between two persons during the celebration of the Marriage, after the marriage should any of the party force the other partner into other decisions?
3. If one of the married couples is always forcing his or her will in decision making, will the marriage be fulfilling?
4. Who is to take the lead in the decision making in a family, the husband, the wife, or either of them?
5. Why is it that people who cannot reason adequately should not give consent?

Task: Pray and work for mutual agreement with your spouse in decision making.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR DATE: 16/07/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: MATRIMONIAL CONSENT IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION FOR MARRIED COUPLES

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: DEFECTS IN MATRIMONIAL CONSENT **Biblical References:** 1Pet 3;8, 1Cor 13;11, Phil 1;2

Certain factors can render a matrimonial consent defective and so invalidate the marriage it putatively brings into existence. 'The Code of Canon Law' outlines about eight of these factors. 1. Consensual incapacity (can. 1095): "The following are incapable of contracting marriage: a) Those who lack the sufficient use of reason (par. 1); b) Those who suffer from a grave defect of discretion of judgment concerning the essential matrimonial rights and duties to be mutually handed over and accepted. Those who are not capable to assume the essential obligations of marriage for causes of a psychic nature" (par.3). 2. Ignorance or Lack of basic knowledge (can. 1096): "For matrimonial consent to exist, the contracting parties must be at least not ignorant that marriage is a permanent partnership between a man and a woman ordered to the procreation of offspring by means of some sexual cooperation" (par. 1). "This ignorance is not presumed after puberty" (par. 2). 3. Error about person (can. 1097): "Error concerning the person renders a marriage invalid" (par. 1). "Error concerning a quality of the person does not render a marriage invalid even if it is the cause of the contract unless this quality is directly and principally intended" (par. 2). 4. Fraud or Deceit (can. 1098): "A person contracts invalidly who enters into a marriage deceived by malice, perpetuated to obtain consent, concerning some quality of the other partner which by its very

nature can gravely disturb the partnership of conjugal life". 5. Determining error about marriage (can. 1099): "Error concerning the unity or indissolubility or sacramental dignity of marriage does not vitiate matrimonial consent provided that it does not determine the will". 6. Simulation (can. 1101): "The internal consent of the mind is presumed to conform to the words and signs in celebrating the marriage" (par. 1). "If, however, either or both of the parties by a positive act of the will exclude marriage itself, some essential element of marriage, or some essential property of marriage, the party contracts invalidly" (par. 2). 7. Conditional consent (canon 1102): "A marriage subject to a condition about the future cannot be contracted validly" (par. 1). "A marriage entered into subject to a condition about the past or present is valid or not insofar as that which is subject to the condition exists or not" (par. 2). "The condition mentioned in paragraph 2, however, cannot be placed licitly without the written permission of the local ordinary" which is subject to the condition exists or not" (par. 2). "The condition mentioned in paragraph 2, however, cannot be placed licitly without the written permission of the local ordinary"

Questions to ponder:

1. If those who lack the sufficient use of reason and those who cannot make good judgement about the essential matrimonial rights and duties, as give and take, are allowed to marry, will the marriage work out for them?
2. Should those who are ignorant or lack basic knowledge on marriage be allowed to get married in the church?
3. Fraud or deceit renders consent invalid, do you agree? Give reasons.
4. If one of the parties or both of them exchange their consent without meaning what they are saying, will the marriage be valid or will it be fulfilling?

Task: Don't make exchange of consent under coercion, force or fear or with a partner lacking sufficient use of reason and discretion of judgement concerning marriage.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR DATE: 23/07/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: MATRIMONIAL CONSENT IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION FOR MARRIED COUPLES

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: MARITAL CONSENT IS BASED ON FREEDOM AND NOT FORCE OR FEAR

Biblical References: Acts 4;32 1Cor 12;12 Romans 14;19

Force or Fear (Can. 1103): "A marriage is invalid if entered into because of force or grave fear from without, even if unintentionally inflicted, so that a person is compelled to choose marriage in order to be free from it" and the "freedom of religion" are natural and fundamental rights of every human person simply by being human, regardless of his/her social status or cultural affiliation. These rights are there to be recognized and protected by every social and religious institution and not to be denied by them in any form. They are fundamental human rights, coming before and overriding whatever any culture, family tradition or nationality may propose in this regard. , "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his/her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance"

Questions to ponder:

1. A consent given under force or fear is invalid and makes the marriage meaningless. Do you agree?
2. If in Marriage, the wife or the husband is always threatening the other with separation, what is lacking? And suggest a solution.

3. If a husband is always beating the wife thereby creating fear into the wife and children, is that husband faithful to his Matrimonial Consent? How can such husband be helped and corrected?

4. If a wife is always forcing the husband to do things for her, is she helping the husband to show her true love?

5) Is it right to condemn someone for marrying the one he or she loves and marries because of difference in religion, culture and social status?

Task: Be always faithful to your matrimonial consent that is made in love and without force or fear.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEARDATE: 30/07/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: MATRIMONIAL CONSENT IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ON- GOING FORMATION FOR MARRIED COUPLES

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO MATRIMONIAL CONSENT

Biblical References: Col. 3:9; Is. 41:10-11 Jn4:18, 1Jn. 4:18; Hosea 4:6

The individual persons planning to enter into marriage should be helped to overcome the following obstacles:

1) **Those who lack the sufficient use of reason** b) Those who suffer from a grave defect of discretion of judgment concerning the essential matrimonial rights and duties to be mutually handed over and accepted. c) Those who are not capable to assume the essential obligations of marriage for causes of a psychic nature. All these cannot give consent.

Question: How can these people be helped before marriage?

Solutions: They should attend Singles program in the Diocese or Parish. The family members should help them.

2. Ignorance or Lack of basic knowledge.

For matrimonial consent to exist, the contracting parties must be at least not ignorant that marriage is a permanent partnership between a man and a woman ordered to the procreation by means of some sexual cooperation.

Question: How can the youths be helped to overcome the challenge of ignorance or lack of basic knowledge about obligations in Marriage?

Solutions: attending Seminars and lectures on marriage, most especially singles' program. Determination to attend marriage class diligently, before marriage.

3. Fraud or Deceit: A person contracts invalidly who enters into a marriage deceived by malice, perpetuated to obtain consent, concerning some quality of the other partner which by its very nature can gravely disturb the partnership of conjugal life”.

Question: what is the solution to fraud and deceit?

Solutions: Sufficient time for courtship before the marriage; seeking counsel from experienced people; and constant examination of conscience etc.

4. **Simulation** (can. 1101): “The internal consent of the mind is presumed to conform to the words and signs in celebrating the marriage” (par. 1). “If, however, either or both of the parties by a positive act of the will exclude marriage itself, some essential element of marriage, or some essential property of marriage, the party contracts invalidly” (par. 2).

Question: what is the solution?

Solutions: Marriage Seminars for young people, deepening the Faith and Marriage Class.

5. Conditional consent (canon 1102): “A marriage subject to a condition about the future cannot be contracted validly” (par. 1). “A marriage entered into subject to a condition about the past or present is valid or not insofar as that which is subject to the condition exists or not” (par. 2). “The condition mentioned in paragraph 2, however, cannot be placed licitly without the written permission of the local ordinary”

Question: what is the solution?

Solutions: Marriage is for life. Knowing Marriage as a covenant with God until death do them apart; and seeing marriage as a vocation a call to serve God.

6. Force or Fear (Can. 1103): “A marriage is invalid if entered into because of force or grave fear from without, even if unintentionally inflicted, so that a person is compelled to choose marriage in order to be free from it”.

Question: what is the solution?

Solutions: Love is the only reason for marriage. Fear or force is a destroyer of love. Marriage thrives only on true friendship established on the commitment of love based on acceptance of each other with all the weaknesses and strengths of each other.

Task: Youth are to be encouraged to discuss with parents, priests and elders what they are facing in Relationship before talking about marriage.

AUGUST

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

DATE: 06/08/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH:
PRECEPTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:
THE FIRST PRECEPT-

You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.

Biblical References: Exodus 20:8-10

The Precepts of the Catholic Church are a description of the absolute minimum actions required of Catholics regarding the Church. The Church uses these precepts to remind us that Christian life requires a commitment to prayer and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. If we fall below this bare-minimum level, we can't rightly consider ourselves to be in full communion with the Catholic Church. Each of these precepts of the Catholic Church is a requirement. Together with the Ten Commandments, they represent the minimum level of moral living. Intentional violation of the precepts or the Commandments is a grave matter, meaning a mortal sin.

The first simply says “*you shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.*” This simply means, we must “sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord” (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as Catholic holy days of obligation; this is all the solemnities in a year, such as Solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary – March 19, Solemnity of Annunciation – March 25, Solemnity of Ascension, Solemnity of the Birthday of St. John the Baptist – June 24, Solemnity of Ss. Peter and Paul –

June 29, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – August 15, Solemnity of Our Lady, Queen and Patroness of Nigeria – October 1, Solemnity of All Saints – November 1, Solemnity of All Souls – November 2, and Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – December 8. This requires attending Mass, "and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days." Attend Mass at least one more time a week. (Most Church parishes celebrate Mass every day of the year!) If you are sick, tending to a sick child, or camping in the wilderness on Sunday and cannot get to Mass, it is not a grave violation to Miss Mass that day.

Questions to ponder:

1. How many times do you miss Mass and deepening the faith program in a month?
2. What are the reasons you have for coming late to church?
3. How many times did you attend Mass on the solemnities that do not fall on Sunday?

Task: Endeavour to attend Mass daily and every Sunday and on the Solemnities

NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

DATE: 13/08/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH:

PRECEPTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:

THE SECOND AND THIRD PRECEPTS

The Second: **You shall confess your sins at least once a year.** Matthew 9:6, Mark 2:10

The Third: ***You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.*** Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24

Biblical References: Matthew 9:6, Mark 2:10 and Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24

The second simply says, ***you shall confess your sins at least once a year.*** We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament "continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness." Now, the church recommends that all her members should go to confession at least once a week, especially on Saturday in preparation for Sunday. Catholics are encouraged to have a regular confessor so he can give you better guidance. Find a good spiritual director to give you sound guidance for growing in the spiritual life.

The third Precept simply says, ***you shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.*** This "guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy." Now, Catholics are encouraged to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at every Mass, if you meet the guidelines for reception (are free from mortal sin, etc.).

Questions to ponder:

1. How many times in a month do you go for confession?
2. How often do you hear about the sacrament of penance?
3. What are your reasons for avoiding the sacrament of penance?
4. What is your understanding of the Holy Eucharist and how often do you receive the Holy Eucharist in a month?
5. Do you believe that Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic faith?

Task: You are encouraged to go to confession at least once a week and to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at every Mass, including ***during the Easter season***

TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR**DATE: 20/08/2023****THEME FOR THE MONTH:
PRECEPTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH****TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:
THE FOURTH PRECEPT**

You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church. Psalm 63:1

Biblical References: Psalm 63:1

"The fourth precept ensures the times of asceticism (self-discipline) and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart." Make a habit of practicing penitential and charitable acts beyond those required by the precepts of the Catholic Church. Children, the elderly, and pregnant or nursing women do not have to fast on normal fast days (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday). One of the precepts of the Catholic Church requires fasting and abstinence as signs of repentance. Repentance means to turn away from sin and turn back to God. Catholic spirituality traditionally includes in repentance some form of penance. Penance means some practice that lets us express sorrow for our sins and helps repair the damage that sin has caused. Penance gives us important practice in resisting temptation, thereby strengthening us. It greatly strengthens a number of virtues, especially charity, and it greatly enriches life. The Catholic Church has two official forms of penitential practices: fasting and abstinence. These are so important that they're one of the precepts of the Catholic Church. Fasting is reducing the amount of food you eat below normal levels. Specifically, on fast days you may eat one full meal and two smaller meals, but those two smaller together should not exceed the amount of the normal meal. Snacking is also prohibited on fast days. All Catholics age 18 to 59 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. You are

excused from fasting if you have a legitimate need to eat a normal amount of food on fast days. This includes: The sick or infirm, including handicapped or mentally ill people who need the nourishment or cannot make a free choice to fast. Pregnant or nursing women. Some manual laborers. Abstinence means not eating meat (fish is not considered meat in this case). All Catholics 14 and older are required to observe abstinence on these days: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday (the Friday before Easter), and all Fridays in Lent.

Questions to ponder:

1. Is fasting compulsory for all Catholics? Yes or No! Explain!
2. What are the days of obligation for fasting?
3. How many times do you fast during Lent Season?

Task: Observe fasting and abstinence and charitable acts especially during lent and at least on normal fast days (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday)

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR**DATE: 27/08/2023****THEME FOR THE MONTH:
PRECEPTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH****TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:
THE FIFTH AND SIXTH PRECEPTS**

Fifth Precept: You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church. Acts 4:36-37

Sixth Precept: You shall obey all the laws and teachings of the church in regards to the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Ephesians 5: 21-33

Biblical References: Acts 4:36-37 and Ephesians 5: 21-33

The Fifth precept says, ***you shall help to provide for the needs of the Church***: The precept means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability. "Contribute as much as possible to the material needs of the Church and the needy. Christ's faithful have the obligation to provide for the needs of the church, so that the Church has available to it those things which are necessary for divine worship, for works of the apostolate and of charity and for the worthy support of its ministers. They are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the Lord's precept, to help the poor from their own resources. (See Can.222). It is duty of the laity to strengthen and support the church that is one's own parish community and parish priests, the worldwide Church and the Pope.

The Sixth precept says ***you shall obey all the laws and teachings of the church in regards to the sacrament of Holy Matrimony***. There are three basic requirements for a valid catholic wedding. First, the couple must be capable of being married that is there must be a woman and a man who are free of any impediment that would prevent marriage. Secondly, the couple must give their consent to be married that is, by an act of their will they irrevocably give and accept one another in order to establish marriage. Thirdly, they must follow the canonical form for marriage that is they must be married according to the laws of the church so that the church and wider community will be certain about the validity of their marriage.

Questions to ponder:

1. Do you know, it is the responsibility of the lay faithful to provide for the good of the church materially?
2. How often do you take proper care of the temporary good of the church?
3. When last did you give your priest(s) in your parish a material gift such as raw food, drinks, fruits, water etc

4. Do you believe that sacrament of Holy Matrimony is a vocation like that of Sacrament of Holy Orders? If Yes or No! Explain.
5. What are the requirements for Celebration of valid Marriage in the Catholic Church?

Go beyond the minimum!

Always remember: the precepts of the Catholic Church are minimum levels of participation in the life of the Church. Out of love for Christ and a desire to advance in the spiritual life, you will normally try to do far more than they require.

Task: Cultivate the habit of giving freely, material gift for God's work and priests and time resource (as volunteers for marriage counselling)

SEPTEMBER

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

DATE: 03/09/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: THE SACRAMENT OF LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Biblical References: Genesis 2:21-24; 9:16; 17:5-15; Deut. 9:4-7; 2Chro 20:6-7; 1Sam 20:15-30; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:32; 1 Cor. 11:24-25).

INTRODUCTION:

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Marital covenant is “the intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws ... God himself is the author of the marriage. Thus marriage transcends the individuals. It is an institution through which couples live out their call to holiness, that is, their call to life in communion with God and with one another.

Marriage is a reality that has been instituted by God. It is a covenant relationship that is both private and public: Private in the sense that it is a personal bond or covenant of love and public insofar as it establishes legal rights and obligations for the parties, and because it affects the whole community of believers.

In the past, marriage was defined primarily as a contract with private and public implications. However, this definition is deficient, as it suggests marriage is arbitrarily placed by the will of the individuals who embrace it, and therefore its disposal can be left to them. Furthermore, the word contract is deficient in regard to the divine aspects of marriage.

It is interesting to note that the fathers of the Second Vatican

Council never used the word contract when discussing marriage in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Instead, Fathers of the Vatican II adhered to the biblical word 'covenant'. It states: “Marriage is an intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and qualified by His own laws, rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent.

Marriage in the past has been understood to be contract whose object was the transfer of rights for procreative acts. The primary end of marriage was then purely procreation. However, what is being said now is that marriage is a covenant. Although the word covenant does not deny the contractual dimension of marriage, as there is not an either / or approach to marriage. Marriage is both contract and covenant. However, by highlighting marriage as covenant, the limitations of marriage as contract are balanced. Within the covenant the spouses express their conjugal love under God's grace, and they order their love to God's gift of children.

Marriage is a social institution in which a man and a woman live their lives as husband and wife. It begins at creation when God made the first human beings as part of the universe (Genesis 1:27-28). For Christians God is the author of marriage and it is more than a sociological reality; it is an authentically religious. **The Old Testament** describes the marital beliefs and practices of the Hebrews as they lived out their faith. The scriptures speak to the fidelity and perpetuity of marriage and likens Yahweh's covenant with Israel to that between husband and wife. God created man and woman out of love and commanded them to imitate His love in their relations with each other. In other words, man and woman were created for each other: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him. ... The two of them become one body.” Hence the Church places upon marriage certain conditions that bring marriage into existence.

According to Catholic theology and the Code of Canon Law, “Marriage in Catholic Church, is a covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of

life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, and which has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.” This canon repeats, words for words the conciliar teaching on the subject of marriage which states that “the intimate partnership of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws; it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent.” Thus marriage is a **lifetime, exclusive partnership between one man one woman**, who give and receive mutual help and love and, from their union, bring forth and rear children.

However, the above Catholic definition of marriage identifies certain elements that must be present in a valid Catholic marriage. These are:

1. MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT

A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible reality. Up to the time of Christ, marriage, although is a sacred union, was still only a civil contract between a man and a woman. Jesus, however, took this contract, this exchange of marital consent between man and woman, a conveyor of grace. He made marriage a sacrament, the sacrament of matrimony among Christians.

Marriage as a sacrament is therefore defined as 'the sacrament by which a baptized man and a baptized woman bind themselves for life in a lawful union and receive the grace to discharge their duties.' The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana as indicative of the goodness of marriage and its sacramental nature. A baptized man and a baptized woman administer this sacrament to one another; they are the ministers of Christian marriage. This sacrament signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the same love and in the same way Christ loved His Church.

From the beginning, marriage was a sacred union. It was God's instrument for procreation, the begetting, the rearing, the

education, and the moral training of successive generations of human beings. Marriage is a natural phenomenon, besides the priesthood, there is no state in life that pleads for grace as demandingly does marriage.

Questions to Ponder:

1. Why is Christian marriage called the Sacrament of love and unity?
2. How does the Christian marriage signify the union of Christ and the Church?

Task: Husband and wife are encouraged to live out their faith, loving one another as Christ loved his Church.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR DATE: 10/09/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:

PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Biblical References: Genesis 1: 26- 28, Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossian 3:18, 4:1; Timothy 2:5; Col. 1:18; Rom 3:24-26; Eph 1:22-23, Exodus 20:14; 17; Deut 5:18,21, Mat 19:4-8, Mk 10:6,

Marriage in the Catholic Church is defined as a “covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of thee spouses and procreation and education of offspring”, and which has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.

The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.

This week we shall be discussing the purpose of marriage in human

life. Marriages sometimes break up because people have an unclear idea of what marriage is, the purpose of its existence, and why it requires a particular commitment to live it. These days, many marry based on feelings, with little thought to the nature of the institution. For instance, the procreative purpose of marriage, which by natural law is one of the fundamental ends, is especially neglected. Some married couples plan from the outset never to have children, denying an essential property of marriage (openness to fertility) that is required for it to be validly contracted.

St. Augustine distinguishes three values (goods) of marriage: Fidelity of chastity, which is more than sexual; offspring, which entails the acceptance of children in love, their nurturance in affection, and their upbringing in the Christian religion; and holiness of the sacrament, in that its indissolubility is or becomes a sign of the eternal unity of the couple (that is, that the woman is not permitted to marry another man while her husband yet lives, not even for the sake of bearing children, even when she leaves with a repudiation – the marriage bond is only terminated by death of a spouse).

St. Thomas Aquinas on the other hand stated that: “it is clear that offspring is the most essential thing in marriage, secondly fidelity, and thirdly the sacrament.” However, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of offspring, and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory” (CCC1652). It goes further to reaffirm that “married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children” (CCC 2367): “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28). Thus this corroborates the view of St. John Chrysostom who opined that “there are two great reasons why marriage was instituted, namely that we may live chastely and that we may become parents.” His view was to support the view of St. Paul on fornication and sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:9-10,

12-20, 7:1-5).

The code of canon law does not define what the essential elements (purpose) of marriage are. It may, however, be deduced from c. 1055 §1, which states that “the marital partnership is, “by its nature, ordered to the procreation and education of children,” that one of the essential elements of marriage is the right to the conjugal act, that is to non-contraceptive intercourse. (cf. c.1061 §1).

It is pertinent to note here that the right to children is not really exchanged in marriage. For example, when a sterile man marries, he cannot really give the right to children. This however, does not invalidate the marriage because the right that is exchanged in marriage is the right to the conjugal act, and the sterile man is perfectly capable of that. The right to conjugal act binds at all reasonable times. It is obvious that the right to have intercourse in public is exchanged in marriage. Besides the right to intercourse at all reasonable times, the term the right to conjugal act also includes the obligation of not impeding procreation and life. Many couples entering marriage these days do so with an agreement to postpone children for a while. Such an agreement, however, does not usually involve an exclusion of the right to the conjugal act. This is because, the essential terms of the marriage covenant are not determined by the parties. They are predetermined by God, nature and society. The marriage covenant therefore enjoys certain constitutional integrity, whole and entire and remains untouched throughout the marital life.

Furthermore, the code of canon law in c. 1056 highlights another purpose of marriage as “unity.” Catholic Church has always seen marriage as a natural covenantal partnership between the baptized, and as a sacrament, which means that the natural reality of matrimonial covenant has been elevated to the supernatural order as an effective sign of grace. Unity like indissolubility is an essential property of marriage that is proper to natural marriage, and obtains special firmness even in Christian marriage. Unity is a crucial for both Christian and non-Christian marriages. The Christian tradition and the doctrine of St. Paul teach that this

property reflects the unique and indissoluble bond of Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossian 3:18, 4:1; Timothy 2:5; Col. 1:18; Rom 3:24-26; Eph 1:22-23,

According to canon 1056 Unity in its strict sense, is a very basic right in marriage. It simply means that a person has the right to be the one and only spouse of the partner. The Partner does not have the right to polygamy. ("I Take you To be my lawful wedded wife/ husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish, until death do us part, and therefore, I promise you, my faithfulness."

Fidelity is something different from unity. In the broad sense, marital fidelity refers to the trust, loyalty and support that spouses show each other. In the strict, juridic sense, it refers to sexual fidelity that is, having one's spouse as one's only sex partner. It means, therefore, that the partner lacks not only the right to have another spouse but the right to have another lover. The Partner lacks the right not only to be a polygamist but to be an adulterer. (Exodus 20:14; 17; Deut 5:18,21).

Historically, unity and fidelity has always been seen (jurisprudence) as virtually identical. Fidelity was sometime reduced to mean unity and unity was extended to mean fidelity. Consequently, when canon 1134 speaks of marriage creating a "bond which is by its nature, exclusive," it implies a twofold obligation: unity and fidelity.

Furthermore, the right to fidelity excludes the partner's right to engage in sexual act with any other person, whether of the opposite or of the same sex. A marriage involving one homosexual partner could therefore be heard on the ground of an intention contra bonum fidei. However, for a marriage to result in invalidity, fidelity, unity, right to conjugal act, and right to have children (procreation) must be excluded as part of the marriage covenant through a positive act of the will. Therefore, at the time of making the covenant, none of the spouses must:

- a. Not exclude any of the rights (unity, conjugal act, children and fidelity) through a positive act of the will.
- b. Attach to the consent a condition contrary to the obligation of fidelity.
- c. Must not grant to a third person the right to conjugal act.
- d. By a rooted persuasion that, given our weak human nature, the observance of fidelity is impossible.
- e. by restricting the right or obligation to a determined or indeterminate period of time.
- f. By an intention of committing adultery that prevails over the giving and receiving of the obligation of fidelity.

Questions:

1. What are some of the ways that the unity between spouses is being threatened today?
2. Does the principle that husband and wife should live together admit exception?
3. What is the basis of this conjugal communion?

Task: Help your partner to keep the marriage covenant alive.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

DATE: 17/09/2023

**THEME FOR THE MONTH:
SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY**

**TOPIC FOR THE WEEK:
MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

Biblical References: Tobit 3:8-17, 4:4-10; Ephesians 5:22-32 (Genesis 2:18-25.

Marriage preparation is a part of the pastoral office of the Church. Marriage preparation opens to each partner the awareness of the

sanctity of Christian marriage and introduces method for living out a future life together for their mutual benefit and happiness as well as that of children born to that marriage. The Church concern for sound marriage preparation flows from her care for those who have been called by God to live out the sacrament of Matrimony. The horizons of marriage preparation have broadened over the past century. This has been occasioned by developments in theology concerning marriage, as well as cultural factors that have led to an escalation of divorce rates around the world. In addition to satisfying the canonical issues regarding an individual's freedom to marry, this preparation is meant to instill in the engaged couple a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church. It is an opportunity to educate the couple in the responsibilities of Christian marriage and to prepare them for a proper celebration of the marriage ritual. Marriage preparation programs have as their principal objective the future marital happiness of engaged couples.

An essential objective of marriage preparation is a clear instruction on Church doctrine on marriage. Instructors emphasize the theology of marriage, the spousal and parental responsibilities flowing from the sacrament, and moral norms regarding Christian parenthood. Marriage preparation's ultimate goal is to prepare the couple in an informed manner regarding the nature of marriage, as well as to instill in them a desire to enter actively into the community of Catholic faith as married persons.

The Church is concerned with promoting the matrimonial state within the total life of the Church. She achieves this promotion through the proper education of children, youth and adults, those about to be married and those already married. Marriage preparation is an integral dimension of evangelization, catechesis and pastoral action that is both a gradual and continuous process. It is customary to distinguish three stages: remote, proximate and

immediate preparation. In this write-up, we shall follow the guideline or the three principal levels laid down by St. Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical *Familiaris Consortio*. They are: (1) Remote preparation, (2) Proximate preparation and (3) Immediate preparation.

1. *Remote Preparation:* First, remote marriage preparation begins even in early childhood. Unfortunately, the many negative influences present in our culture, propagated especially through the communication media, make proper education in Catholic morality a difficult challenge. Since parents are especially influential at this stage, it falls to fathers and mothers to take an active role in forming the moral conscience of their children. They educate their children in the development of self-awareness and facilitate the skills necessary for future interpersonal relationships. Parents are to be especially concerned for a child's spiritual and catechetical formation, as it is the basis from which a child will choose a vocation in life. It is above all through the Catholic witness of their parents that children learn and experience the value of genuine marital love.

2. *Proximate Preparation:* Proximate marriage preparation involves a specific preparation for the sacrament. This type of preparation concerns all young people, and so commences even before there is a serious intention of marriage. It involves parents as well as those in the parish responsible for catechetical instruction. For this preparation to succeed, it is crucial that the Church provide both parents and their teenage children with adequate catechesis which includes proper instruction about marriage.

The Church views the proximate preparation for marriage as a continuation of a child's initial catechetical instruction. During this period, young people should gain an awareness that an interpersonal relationship between a man and a woman

continually develops throughout marriage. This preparation also includes education in essential biological knowledge, conjugal sexuality and responsible parent-hood. Preparation of this sort should introduce individuals to the basic requisites for a well-ordered family life, specifically, "stable work, sufficient financial resources, sensible administration, notions of housekeeping." Clearly, then, the basics of marriage preparation cannot be left to the time when a firm commitment to marriage already has been made and wedding arrangements occupy the attention of the couple.

Parents, Teachers and other parishioners are encouraged to shoulder responsibility for this proximate preparation. Whether at home, school, or in parish religious education programs, the dedicated efforts of teachers nurture a young person's Catholic appreciation of marriage. Over time, their educational commitment will foster the future growth of strong families.

3. *Immediate Preparation:* There is also the immediate preparation for the sacrament. This is to take place in the months prior to the celebration of the wedding. In Osogbo Diocese, priests and deacons are instructed to begin this form of preparation at least six months prior to the wedding. The canonical investigation regarding each individual's freedom to marry must be completed. Immediate preparation affords an opportunity to educate the couple in the responsibilities of Christian marriage and to prepare them for a proper celebration of the marriage ritual. It is meant to instill in the engaged couple a deeper knowledge of how marriage reflects the mystery of Christ and the Church.

The essential objective of this preparation is to ensure the engaged couple's understanding and acceptance of the Church's teaching on marriage. Specifically, this includes the theology of marriage, the meaning of the wedding ceremony, and the spousal and parental responsibilities inherent in the sacrament. Instruction about natural family planning should form an indispensable part of this stage.

The ultimate goal of immediate preparation is to instruct the couple, as the ministers of the sacrament, regarding the nature of marriage. This preparation is also meant to instill in them a desire to enter into the apostolic works of the diocese. They are reminded to live out actively their vocation in the parish. Engaged couples should be helped to understand that Diocesan requirements for marriage preparation have been carefully instituted to help ensure happy and lasting marriages.

It is incumbent upon the engaged couple to avail themselves of marriage preparation. The seriousness of the marital commitment requires the fulfillment of this moral obligation. Again, we should remember that the bride and the groom are considered the ministers of the sacrament. As such, they should do all in their power to prepare for a sacramental life of marital love. To enter into marriage without availing themselves of all that the community offers to them would be careless and imprudent. To act in such a way constitutes a kind of injustice to themselves, their future children, and the integrity of the sacrament.

What responsibility does the diocese/Parishes has to ensure that couples are adequately prepared to live the sacrament to its fullest. We fulfill this responsibility both on the diocesan and parochial levels through the dedicated work of married and committed persons, parish priests, deacons and others who contribute time and experience to parochial marriage preparation efforts. Their generous labors help strengthen the bonds of ecclesial life all over the diocese.

Questions to Ponder:

1. What should be the attitude of Catholics in choosing their life spouses?
2. Why is a relationship that would not lead to marriage inappropriate?

TASK: Work to get married in Catholic Church.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

DATE: 24/09/2023

THEME FOR THE MONTH: SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: PASTORAL CARE IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Biblical References: Mk 12:30-31, Ps.73:21-28; Mat. 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet1:18-19

The fundamental and innate vocation of every person is to love God above all things, and our neighbor as our self. (Mk 12:30-31, Ps.73:21-28) The mutual love of husband and wife is to mirror, in human terms, the unfailing love that God bestows on us. At the same time, because it belongs to the order of creation, marriage is also affected by sin. In fact, the first sin resulted in the rupture of the original communion between the first man and woman. To this day the marital union may be "...threatened by discord, a spirit of domination, infidelity, jealousy and conflicts that can escalate into hatred and separation." These sins, which flourish in a culture of self-indulgence, lead to marital difficulties, separation, divorce and civil remarriage. Against every disordered preference in favor of the individual, the Church holds up the example of Christ who came to offer his life in sacrifice so that all God's children might be gathered into one family. (Mat. 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet1:18-19). However, the following are some of the ways the Church has been assisting to keep and nurture the marital love.

a. Supporting Families: After a wedding has taken place each member of the Church is called to assist a married couple in living out their vocation. Support must focus on the holiness of family life as a sign of God's grace given to the couple by virtue of the sacrament. Marital love embodies a witness of divine love to the Church. The obligations of the community to assist the couple do

not cease on the wedding day. Since the family, the Church in miniature, forms the foundation of the Church at large, every member of the Church is to lend support to married persons. Some Dioceses, or Parishes do this by setting up the Marriage and Family Life Commission or Committee as the case may be by organizing Seminars, workshop, retreats that has to do with Marriage Encounter Program.

b. Supporting Parents in Their Responsibilities: The Church always pays special attention to the needs of parents and children. Above all, the Church reminds the world that children are a gift from God. Because the dignity of each human person is bestowed by God alone, no one enjoys the authority to manipulate human procreation. Concern for what one might call "human ecology" is the foundation for and so takes precedence over all other forms of ecological interests. Procreation and education are linked by reason of the specific nature of the human child, who requires not only physical care but also moral instruction. All parents are ultimately responsible to provide for the education of their children. This includes a child's physical, moral, intellectual and religious upbringing. Catholic parents participate in the teaching office of the Church. They have the primary right and responsibility to ensure the Christian education of their children. This education begins in the home through the word and example of parents.

As children move out of the home and into school, teachers come to the assistance of parents, helping to ensure their proper Catholic education. In Osogbo Diocese and in so many other dioceses in Nigeria, the bishops have made Catholic education a priority. We know that only an intellectual formation grounded in the truth about God helps a child to fulfill his or her vocation in the Church and role as a citizen. For many parents, the cost of providing Catholic education constitutes a burden and so requires sacrifices that otherwise would not be required of them. The right of parents to educate their children in accord with their moral and religious principles is commanded by the natural law and has been recognized as part of the history of our institutions. Even when

proper instruction is provided for their children in schools, parents should be made to know that it is their primary right and responsibility to ensure the catechetical instruction and sacramental preparation of their children. Since they have taken responsibility to have their children baptized, they are also responsible for introducing them to the liturgical prayer life of the Church. The parents' role in the sacramental lives of their children is pivotal, particularly in regard to a child's preparation for Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation. To cite only the most obvious examples, parents must accompany children to Sunday Mass, instruct them in the proper manner of participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and remind them, both by word and example, of the importance of the sacrament of Penance for their spiritual growth. As the sacrament of Christian maturity, Confirmation marks a special moment for both parents and their children, a moment when the young adult joins his or her parents as fully public members of the Catholic communion. When the responsibility for instructing children in the faith is borne by only one parent, the parish community should particularly be alert to the needs of this father or mother by ***supporting the Marital Bond during Difficulties***: All families at times may be troubled with difficulties. In some cases, these may be severe, such as when drug or alcohol abuse or physical violence occurs within families. Some families may be left homeless due to economic circumstances. Marital discord may emerge between spouses, or conflicts between parents and children. In these circumstances and others, the Church reaches out in prayer and charity. In some instances resources are available at the parish level, such as parish support groups or individual pastoral care, whereas in other cases Archdiocesan agencies, such as Catholic Charities, Caritas Christi, and the Family Life Office, offer assistance with further professional services.

In all circumstances the Church stands ready to respond to the needs of families in crisis. Because the Church reveres families as "domestic churches," all in the Archdiocese who assist couples

when marital difficulties arise should regard their work as true participation in the love that Christ has for the Church. Above all, those in such situations should not, as sometimes happens, suffer intolerably in secret with a sense of guilt or shame. Seek the counsel and support of others, and know the love that God has for you, that love whose name is Divine Mercy.

Questions to Ponder:

1. What are the things that threaten marital union in the world today?
2. In what ways has the Church been assisting in the intellectual formation of children?
3. What are the parents' responsibilities in their children's sacramental lives and in ensuring the children's catechetical instruction and sacramental preparation

Task: Be active participant in the Church and Parish support groups to give assistance/care to couples in difficulty.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Lord for how far he has led us. I am very grateful to the members of the Catechetical Commission: Fr. Peter Adeyemi, Fr. Michael Akinsode, Fr. Patrick Oladapo, Fr Pius Olubiyi, Fr Patrick Soladoye, Catechist Oke Francis, Prof. Anthony Elujoba, Prof Patrick Oladipo Aina and Mrs. Olagunju Cecilia for being passionate about the Religious Education Department of the Diocese.

We appreciate Rev Fr. Benjamin Adebiyi, Rev Fr Patrick Ajayi and Fr Michael Ige for their contributions to this edition. I am most grateful to all the other Priests in Osogbo Diocese for their encouragements and support for this Department. May the Lord bless and increase our faith. Amen.

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