

## Understand God's plan for marriage and the value of the Sacrament

One of the best ways to prepare for marriage is to understand God's plan for the sacrament, as He intends it to be. Married love is called to be drawn up into God's own love; for more than anything else in the created world, marriage is a sign of God's Divine Love.<sup>12</sup> Jesus came as man, not simply to save us **from** something – sin - but to save us **for** something – love that lasts forever; that is, for the intimacy of a marital relationship with the Heart of God.<sup>13</sup>

Grace, which is Divine Life, transforms us to love like Christ Himself! This is the beauty of the grace given to us through the Sacrament of Matrimony – God's Divine Life freely given by God to the spouses so that they may love like Him, with His love, especially in the moments when we fall short in our human frailty.

### CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

The greatest mystery is Jesus' love for us on the Cross; and our human marriages are reflections of Christ's love for the Church. The marriage relationship between spouses is part of a bigger plan – it is part of a bigger story – thus it is not just about you, it is about Christ's love for all of humanity!

## Being faithful in the small things

*"He who is faithful in very little, is also faithful in very much."*

– LUKE 16:10

If life is a gift given to each and every person, then how can we make the most of it, even the seemingly mundane? To live in the present is to live one-hundred percent – in the things given to us, right before us, whether they be big or small.

## Discover how to love well

*"Love is a constant challenge thrown to us by God."*

– ST. JOHN PAUL II

Learn to love others as they need to be loved. The more we know another, the better we can love them, intentionally.

### THE GIFT OF SELF-GIVING LOVE

*"Freedom is best measured by our capacity to love."*

– ST JOHN PAUL II

We can only love to the extent by which we are free to do so. Is it our pride, fear, lust, greed that is preventing us from being free to love? These things impact our freedom to love wholeheartedly.

### THE PURSUIT OF GREATNESS<sup>14</sup>

We willingly endure hardship, pain and suffering when we truly believe the outcome is worthy. E.g. training for a marathon, triathlon, dance competition, any sport. Just as damaged muscle repairs itself to be stronger, without adversity we ourselves do not get stronger. As humans, in the face of adversity we are strengthened, if we persevere and push through the temporary pain. It is built into us to pursue greatness! This is how we should view our marriages – worthy of the constant effort to persevere in difficulty, seek help when necessary and to consciously work each and every day to love my spouse.

### PURSUE AND CULTIVATE VIRTUE<sup>15</sup>

Strive to grow in virtue continually. Marriage is learning, together, how to pursue our goal in life – Heaven. How can we climb the mountain to Heaven together? It does not mean that one of us runs and the other is dragged behind, but rather helping one another every step of the way to arrive before the Lord together.

To love another is to seek what is best for them. However, this requires virtue – generosity, patience, humility, courage. These virtues are also the life-skills we need to live our lives well, and to live our marriages well. Virtue is necessary to love well and to love our spouse well, too. So, love must be rooted in virtue, for virtue brings authentic joy. Virtue and the freedom to truly love go hand-in-hand: the extent by which I lack virtue, to that extent I am not free to love my spouse. I.e. loss of patience, easily angered, self-centred, laziness, etc... Thus, the more I grow in virtue, the more I grow in my ability to love!

