



# Marriage is a gift

One of the goals of the Year of the Family is to proclaim that the sacrament of marriage is a gift that contains in itself a transforming power of human love. Pope Francis writes:

Marriage is a precious sign, for “when a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is, as it were, ‘mirrored’ in them; he impresses in them his own features and the indelible character of his love. Marriage is the icon of God’s love for us. Indeed, God is also communion: the three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live eternally in perfect unity. And this is precisely the mystery of marriage: God makes of the two spouses one single existence.” (*Amoris Laetitia* 121)

Married life is a gift. It is a lifelong journey of love, friendship and faith. It is a beautiful mystery wherein two individuals walk together side by side, each fully unique but joined as one.

Our worldly culture tends to paint the picture of love through the lens of romance. Yet we know that romance is just one small part of married life. Romance may be the kindling that sparks the flame of love, but the true beauty of a lifelong commitment lies much deeper and is the greater gift.

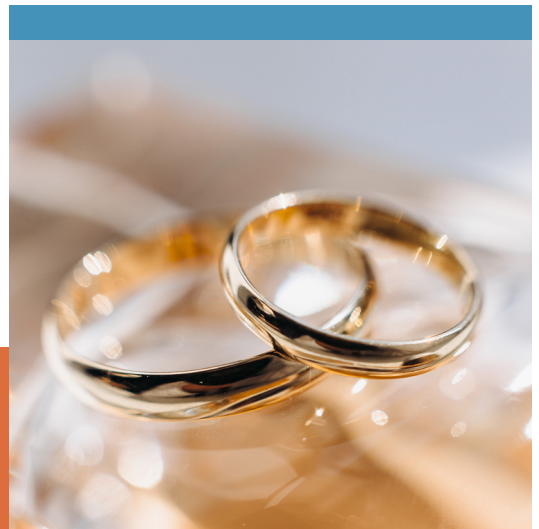
## The Greatest Form of Friendship

Pope Francis writes:

After the love that unites us to God, conjugal love is the “greatest form of friendship.” It is a union possessing all the traits of a good friendship: concern for the good of the other, reciprocity, intimacy, warmth, stability and the resemblance born of a shared life. (*Amoris Laetitia* 123)

When two individuals enter into the sacrament of marriage, they commit to be true and steadfast companions: to care for and support one another and to be faithful for the rest of their lives. In a world that is constantly changing, this kind of stability can be a source of great comfort and strength. Especially in this time that is so full of uncertainty, married life can offer a sense of peace that can be hard to find in the world.

What sets the great friendship of marriage apart is how the sacrament sanctifies the passion between husband and wife. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis describes this passion as “always directed to an ever more stable and intense union.” The fire of marital passion is a life-giving force. It galvanizes the friendship between husband and wife, until it “acquires an all-encompassing character” that is unique to the marital union.



## An Expansion of the Heart

As two individuals live out their marital vows, they come to know one another in fullness. Years of married life have a way of removing our filters and pretenses. This process is an inevitable part of marriage and intimacy. Pope Francis writes:

Saint Thomas Aquinas said that the word “joy” refers to an expansion of the heart. Marital joy can be experienced even amid sorrow; it involves accepting that marriage is an inevitable mixture of enjoyment and struggles, tensions and repose, pain and relief, satisfactions and longings, annoyances and pleasures, but always on the path of friendship, which inspires married couples to care for one another: “they help and serve each other.”

(*Amoris Laetitia* 126)

Married couples have the benefit of sharing life’s journey with another person. This is not always easy, but it can be uniquely rewarding and empowering. Fortitude grows as two people grow closer to God and one another through adversity. Virtues are magnified and shared as one person’s strength complements the other’s weakness. In short, married life is an expansion of the heart as the couple come to share in a love that reflects the divine life of the Trinity and blossoms into new life.

# Honor the Gift of Your Marriage

- 1. Make a commitment to be in each other's company outside the daily routine.** Spend time together in ways that allow you to experience each other, whether in conversation, in recreation, in prayer, or even in silence.
- 2. Take time to "see" one another, both with your eyes and with your heart.** Be conscious of observing and appreciating your spouse. Make eye contact during conversation. Allow each other to speak without interruption or judgment. Reignite your curiosity about one another.
- 3. Cultivate the joy in your married life.** Find ways to make your spouse smile, or better yet, laugh! Gifts, humor, acts of kindness, even a little silliness from time to time, can go a long way.
- 4. Pray together.** Make a commitment to pray regularly as a couple. Attend Mass and encourage one another in your individual faith journeys. Use At Home with Faith to reflect on the weekly Mass readings. Enrich your marriage through retreat experiences.



## For more information and resources on the Year of the Family:

Go to [archseattle.org/YOF](http://archseattle.org/YOF)

## For weekly issues of At Home with Faith:

Go to [AtHomewithFaith.org](http://AtHomewithFaith.org)

## For more information and resources on the Year of St. Joseph:

Go to [archseattle.org/StJoseph](http://archseattle.org/StJoseph)

