



**LIFE, MARRIAGE
AND FAMILY**
SYDNEY CENTRE FOR FRANCISCANISATION

THE EUCHARIST AND MARRIAGE



When an engaged practicing Catholic couple make the decision to get married in the Church, their discernment looks beyond the appealing aesthetics of a sunny beach or the pressure to honour family traditions. As they exchange vows before the altar, they are drawn to the beauty and sacredness of this lifelong commitment of love and self- gift, following Christ's footsteps at the last supper when He breaks the bread before His disciples and says, **“this is my body, given for you.”** In the sacrament of marriage, Christ calls husbands and wives to embody the same sacrificial love, a love that is like no other and a love that is beyond human understanding. The love of Christ in the Catechism is described as **“strong as death, that many waters cannot quench.”-CCC 1611.**

The marriage vows that are exchanged before the altar **“for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part”** is seen in scripture through the covenantal love revealed throughout scripture between God and Israel. God remains faithful to his people through his merciful and enduring love. Unlike a transactional contract, a covenant is steadfast, faithful and hope filled. God's covenantal love offers married couples a beautiful model for their own vocation, reminding them that marriage is not simply about remaining together when life is easy, but about choosing to love faithfully through every season. The Catechism reminds us that **“Marriage helps to overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one's own pleasure and to open oneself to the other, to mutual aid and self-giving.”-CCC 1609.** While the love married couples share in daily life may seem small in comparison to Christ's ultimate sacrifice on the Cross, their everyday acts of generosity, perseverance and tenderness make Christ's sacrificial love visible to one another.



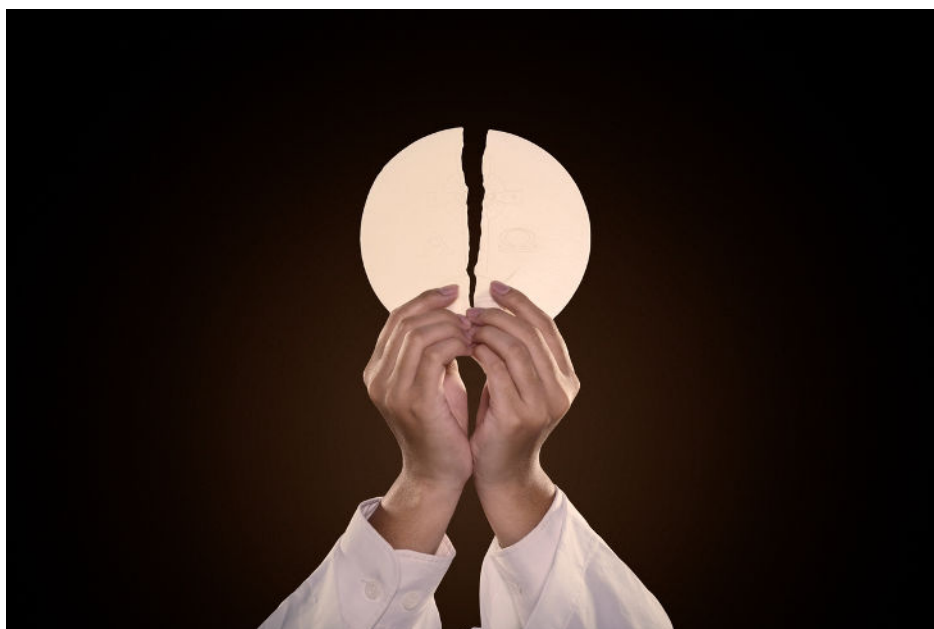
The Eucharist teaches married couples about sacrificial love liturgically and sacramentally. John Paul II describes the Sacrament of Matrimony as the **“foundation of the whole Sacramental Order”** because the Sacraments come from **“Christ’s spousal love for the Church.”** Amid competing family demands - committing to social gatherings, children’s sport, work and school responsibilities Christ calls married couples to express sacrificial love by making the Eucharist a priority, to grow in holiness in their marriage.

“It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to receive the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ”- CCC 1615. Couples with young children, whether navigating the crying room or bravely sitting in the pews understand sacrificial love. Their desire for their children to encounter Christ -often requires them to set aside their own spiritual nourishment. In this simple sacrifice, they give their children a powerful witness of Christ’s faith and love.



Couples who have the desire to receive the Eucharist teaches them the importance of reconciliation within marriage. Just as the faithful are called to repentance and to seek forgiveness before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, husbands and wives are called to reconciliation and restore communion with one another. The Eucharist reminds them that authentic love requires humility, repentance and God's grace to authentically live out their sacramental vocations.

When married couples encounter Christ through Eucharistic Adoration, they experience the gifts of presence and surrender. Especially in times of challenges and adversities, they are reminded to remain present to one another in steadfast love and entrust to Christ what they cannot resolve on their own. In this way, their presence becomes an act of love, trust and surrender. The Eucharist brings all Catholics together as one body of Christ, which reminds couples that **“they are no longer two, but one flesh.” CCC 1644.**



It may not be obvious but when we honour and revere the Eucharist, we are in turn preparing ourselves for marriage. If a married couple love the way they practice receiving the Eucharist, they become a sign of Christ through their witness of sacrificial love, a love like no other.