

Marriage

Marriage is very important in Catholic life as

- Marriage was created by God as the way of establishing and preserving society.
- Marriage is one of the seven sacraments which brings God's grace, strength and salvation.
- Marriage is the only way acceptable way to have a sexual relationship.
- It is a place to have children and raise a family.

Purpose of marriage

- To have a lifelong relationship of love, companionship and faithfulness.
- So that a couple can have the support and comfort of each other in the way God intended.
- For the procreation of children.
- To bring up children in a Christian family.

Catholic teachings about marriage

- Marriage can only be between a man and a woman as God intended **'God made them male and female...the two will become one flesh'** (Mark).
- Marriage is a sacrament between the couple and God **'Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate'** (Mk)
- Marriage = covenant and can't be broken.
- Pope Francis: **'children have a right to grow up in a family with a father and a mother'**.

Atheist and Humanist attitudes to marriage

- Sex and marriage are matters for individuals.
- Up to individuals if they live together (cohabit) or are in a civil partnership.
- Humanists expect sexual relations to be based on respect and trust.
- Marriage is a good thing when raising a family.

Marriage is still important for non-religious

- It provides a stable and financial backing.
- More social acceptance of the relationship.
- A more stable home for a family.
- A public ritual to declare and celebrate the couple's love for one another.

How Catholics have responded to non-religious attitudes to marriage/cohabitation

- Christians should refrain from sex until they are married **'The sexual act must always take place exclusively within marriage'** (Catechism).
- Cohabitation is against God's will: **'living together and having sexual relations before marriage can never be reconciled with what God expects of us'** (Pennsylvania Catholic Conference).

Sexual relationships

The Catholic Church teaches that sex is important because:

- It is a gift from God to be enjoyed between a man and a woman who are married to each other (marital sex).
- Sex was given to humans by God for the joy, pleasure and bond of a married couple. **'It strengthens a marriage through its self-giving and the joy and pleasure it brings'** (Catechism).
- Sex was given by God to have children (procreative sex).
- Fulfills God's plan of bringing up children in the Christian faith.

Catholic teachings on sex outside marriage

- It is always wrong as the Bible says it is sinful and Christians should follow it.
- The Catechism teaches that premarital sex is wrong as this should be done in marriage.
- Adultery breaks the wedding vows to be faithful to each other.
- It is forbidden in the Ten Commandments and condemned by Jesus in the Gospels,

Catholic attitude to homosexuality

- Being a homosexual is not a sin.
- Homosexual sexual relationships are a sin.
- The Church does not accept same-sex or civil-partnerships.
- The Bible condemns homosexual activity.
- Sexual activity should be creative as well as unitive. This is not possible for homosexuals to have procreative sex.
- The Catechism teaches that marriage is for a man and woman to raise a family.
- The Church says people cannot control their sexual orientation and should not be discriminated against.
- The Bible teaches that everyone has human dignity and should be treated with respect.
- Pope Francis: **'...homosexual unions are analogous to God's plan for marriage and family' 'The Joy of Love'**.

Atheist attitudes to sexual relationships

- Sex must be consensual sex; rape in any form is seen as totally unacceptable.
- Sex must be between people 'of age'. Paedophilia is regarded as wrong regardless of religious teachings.
- No payment should be involved in sex: there is still a stigma attached to prostitution.
- Sex ought to be safe so as to prevent pregnancy or disease – contraception should be used.

Atheist attitudes to same-sex relationships

- Changes in laws have made it easier to be openly homosexual.
- Medical research shows it is not a choice.
- Increase in gay celebrities has made it more widely accepted.
- The work of charities like the Stonewell organisation has led to greater equal rights for homosexuals.

Families

The Church teaches that:

- The family was created by God as the basic unit of society and this is where children should be brought up.
- Parents have a duty to ensure that the physical and material needs of the children are met.
- A Catholic family has a duty to instil moral values into their children so they can grow up to become responsible citizens.
- A Catholic family should bring up their children in the Catholic faith.
- In a Catholic family, children have a duty to care for their parents when they are too old or infirm. The Commandment tells Christians to honour their mother and father

Family life is important because:

- One of the main purposes of a Catholic Christian marriage is to bring up children.
- The family was created by God and this is where children should be brought up.
- Catholic parents should stay together because the family is so important.
- The family is the place where children learn the difference between right and wrong.
- The family is the place where children are introduced to the Catholic faith (worship, First Communion etc).

Different types of family:

Nuclear families: a mother, father and children living together as a unit.

Single-parent families

Same-sex parent families

Extended families: one where three generations (parents, children and grandparents) are living in the same house or in live in close proximity.

Blended families: when two separate families are joined together when parents decide to marry or cohabit.

Catholic response to different types of family
Most teaching on this can be found in Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation entitled 'On the Role of the Christian family in the modern world'.

- The Church gives it blessing to both nuclear and extended families as this is within Catholic teaching.
- Single parent families should deserve the help of the local Church.
- Same-sex families are considered inferior to marriage between a man and a woman.
- **Pope John Paul II said Catholics in civil marriages cannot receive the sacraments until the marriage is validated and same-sex parents can only have a civil marriage.**
- The Church disapproves of blended families as divorced or separated spouses who marry or enter new relationships have chosen a life contrary to the Gospel (John Paul II)

Non-religious ideas about the family

For non-religious people they see the purpose of family life as bringing up children safely, pass on good morals to their children and provide emotional and financial support throughout life.

Support for the family in the local parish

How the parishes help families

- Most parishes have a primary and secondary school and this provides Christian teaching and education. It teaches them about the Christian faith and helps parents fulfil their marriage and baptism promises to bring their children up as Christians.
- Children have their own Liturgy and this will be matched to their needs before joining with the whole church family for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Parishes also help with the rites of passage, for example in the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion and Reconciliation.
- Clergy can provide support for families who find themselves in difficulty, such as the Family Group Movement.

Why Parishes try to help families

- Parishes try to help families as they have a duty to help baptised people in the Church.
- The Church teaches that one of the main purposes of Christian marriage is to have children and to bring them up in a loving and secure Christian environment.
- The family was created by God as the basic unit of society and as the only place in which children should be brought up.
- The parish also has a duty to make sure that the Church continues to grow. If the parish does not help the family, the Church will have failed the task God has given it.

Why support from the Church is important for Christian families

- Raising children as Christians means taking them to Church regularly and that requires the Church to be helpful to children.
- Teaching children about Christianity requires knowledge and expertise in the faith that parents are not likely to have, so Church schools are vital.
- For Catholic families, taking part in the sacraments is essential and that requires the help of the Church.
- Knowing that they are part of the larger family of the Church which will give help if needed is a great source of comfort and strength for a family.
- Christians believe in the power of prayer, and knowing that the local parish is praying for families brings them God's strength.

Contraception

The Catholic Church teaches that sexual intercourse is a gift from God as a source of joy and pleasure to married couples. The Church teaches that using artificial contraception is going against God's intention. They believe this because:

- In 1968, Pope Paul VI's encyclical on Human Life affirmed the teaching of Paul Pius XI when he condemned all forms of artificial contraception.
- The document on Human Life declared the only allowable forms of family planning for Catholics are natural methods because they do not separate the unitive and procreative purposes of sexual intercourse. This teaching has been confirmed in the Catechism.
- Some contraceptives bring about an early abortion.
- Contraception can lead to promiscuity, broken families and STI's.

Natural forms of contraception

- Natural Family Planning (NFP) or fertility awareness.
- It requires a couple to be in a loving, stable relationship. As they are natural, they do not involve any drugs or any risk of promoting an early abortion.

People have tried to control the number of children that they have had, for a number of reasons;

- For the health of the mother.
- To provide more food for the family unit.
- To provide a better standard of living for the family unit.

Non-Catholic Christians and artificial methods of contraception

Almost all non-Catholic Christians believe all forms of contraception are permissible as:

- Christianity is about love and justice, and contraception improves women's health and raises the standard of living of children as families are similar.
- God created sex for enjoyment and to cement the bonds of marriage.
- There is nothing in the Bible that forbids the use of contraception.
- They believe it is better to combat HIV/AIDS by using condoms than by expecting everyone to follow Christian rules about sex and marriage.

Atheist and Humanist attitudes to artificial methods of contraception

- Non-religious people are in favour of artificial methods of contraception because they assess the rights and wrongs of birth control by looking at its consequences.
- It prevents unwanted pregnancies.
- It prevents the spread of STI's.
- Humanists argue that if contraception **'results in every child being a wanted child, and in better, healthier lives for women, it must be a good thing'**. (British Humanist Association).
- Most non-religious people think contraception should be used by people indulging in casual sex because it is important to avoid unwanted pregnancies and STIs.

Catholic response

- It disagrees with the use of artificial contraception and reaffirms the teachings of Pope Paul VI and the Catechism.
- Pope Francis talked about responsible parenthood and by this he means that Catholics should use Natural Family Planning.
- The Church has also opposed the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and STIs, although Pope Benedict did say in 2010 that for some homosexual prostitutes the use of a condom may indicate an awakening of a moral sense.

Divorce and Remarriage Catholic teachings on divorce - The Catholic Church cannot allow divorce or remarriage. - It is a sacrament and the exchange of vows means that the only way a marriage between Catholics can be dissolved (religiously) is by the death of one of the partners or if the marriage is annulled. - The Church does allow for the legal separation of spouses if they find it impossible to live together, and even civil divorce if they ensure the proper care of the children and safety/security of the married partner. - The Church states the couple are still married in the eyes of God and the Church so cannot remarry. Catholics believe this because. - Jesus taught that divorce is wrong and marriage is for life: 'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate' (Mark). - The couple have made a covenant with God 'a ratified and consummated marriage (complete a marriage through sexual intercourse) cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death' (Catechism). - The Catechism teaches that a marriage cannot be dissolved and so religious divorce is impossible. Catholic teachings on annulment An annulment is a legal declaration that the marriage was never a true marriage and so the partners are free to marry someone else. It can happen if: - The marriage was never consummated. - The marriage was never a true marriage because one of the partners was not baptised. - One of the couple was not fully aware of what marriage meant (e.g. too young). - If one of the couple is unwilling to have children or has been forced into marriage. - One of the couple concealed important things (e.g. they were infertile). Catholic teachings on remarriage Catholics who remarry are in a state of sin unless they end their new relationship. They cannot be absolved of a sin unless they promise to stop sinning. As those with unabsolved sins should not take communion at Mass, it follows that remarried Catholics may be refused communion unless they end their new relationship. 'The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan of God as taught by Christ' (Catechism).	Divorce and Remarriage The attitude of non-Catholic Christians. Most non-Catholic Churches think that divorce is wrong, but allow if the marriage is broken down. They believe this because: - Jesus allowed divorce in Matthew 19:9 for a partner's adultery. - It can be the lesser of two evils. - Christians are allowed forgiveness and a new chance if they confess their sins and are truly repentant. - It is the teaching of these Churches that it is better to divorce than live in hatred and quarrel all the time. Atheist and Humanist attitudes to divorce and remarriage. - Atheists would regard marriage as a purely human and legal institution. Some atheists do not marry and would cohabit instead. The Humanist attitude is that: - All married couples should have the right to divorce if they feel the marriage has failed. - Divorce should make sure that the spouses are treated equally in the financial arrangements. - Divorce should make sure any children are treated equally. - Any divorced person should have the right to remarry. Situation Ethics and divorce People who use situation ethics base their decisions on looking at the situation, deciding on the good and bad points of the possible choices and then determining what is the best thing to do. When they look at the advantages of divorce using situation ethics it would: - Bring domestic peace and emotional security as it removes conflict. - They are not being forced to stay in a relationship they hate. - It is unhealthy for children to be around parents who fight and criticise each other. - It is an opportunity for a fresh start They would also look at the disadvantages of divorce using situation ethics as: - It is expensive; apart from the legal costs, divorce usually means selling the family home. - It can force the children to choose between parents and who to live with. - It hurts family relations as they may lose contact with children and they are not awarded custody (where one parent is made responsible for the care of the children). - It causes stress as it forces new relationships and new living situations.	Equality of men and women in the family Catholic attitude to equality and role of men and women in the family - Men and women have equal status in the sight of God as in Genesis it says 'male and female he created them in his image'. - The Catholic Church teaches that equality does not mean sameness. Men and women have equal status, but have different qualities since women have the biological capacity to bring new life to the world. - Pope Francis said that women should play a greater role in society and the Church, but without sacrificing their essential attention and contribution to their families. - Nevertheless, in most Catholic families husband and wife have equal roles. Other Christian attitudes to equality and role of men and women in the family - Many Evangelical Protestants teach that men and women have separate and different roles. - It is the role of women to bring up children and run a Christian home. - Women should not speak or teach in Church and must submit to their husbands. - It is the role of men to provide for the family and to lead the family in religion. - Only men can be church leaders and teachers. Most Protestant Churches now accept that men and women are equal and should have totally equal roles in the family. This attitude is based on: - The teachings of Genesis 1 that male and female were created at the same time. - The Teaching of St Paul that in Christ there is neither male nor female. - The evidence from the Gospels that Jesus treated women as his equals. Atheist and Humanist attitudes to equal roles of men and women in the family. The common attitude is that men and women are equal and should have equal roles in the family. However, some non-religious people believe it is 'a man's job to earn money, a woman's job is to look after the home and family' (YouGov survey). It shows that: - Married women of working age do three-quarters of the housework. - When women earn more than 65 per cent of family income, their housework hours increase rather than decrease. - Men who earn more than their wives do little housework. Humanists base their beliefs on science and reason so most would say they are equals, both in equal rights and in equal roles in the family.	Gender prejudice and discrimination Gender prejudice is believing that one sex is superior to another based on feeling rather than an assessment of evidence. Gender discrimination is putting the prejudice into practice and treating people differently because of their sex. Sexism is discrimination, prejudice or stereotyping on the basis of gender. Sexism is most often expressed towards girls and women. Catholic attitude - The Catholic Church is against gender prejudice and discrimination. - It teaches that men and women should have equal roles in life and equal roles in society. - Genesis 1:27 states that God created men and women at the same time and in the image of God. - The Catechism teaches that men and women are equal and should have equal rights in life and society. It also opposes all forms of gender prejudice. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians). Examples of Catholic opposition to gender prejudice and discrimination The reforms of the SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL led to pressure from Catholic women for greater equality in the Church. The Church changes the rules in so far as: - They can now study and teach in theological colleges. - Be ministers of Holy Communion (give out the Bread and Wine at Mass). - Visit the sick - Read the Bible readings at Mass - Take funerals in certain circumstances Mary Robinson—President of Ireland 1990-1997 Mary Robinson was at the forefront of campaigns in Ireland for equality, particularly for equality for women. As a result of her work life for women changed dramatically in Ireland. Changes included: - Divorce legalised which meant that women did not have to stay in abusive relationships. - Contraception legalised. - Homosexuality legalised. - Irish women being allowed to serve on juries. Other Christians and gender prejudice Evangelical Protestants - Men and women have separate and different roles and so cannot have equal rights in religion. - It is the role of the women to bring up the children and run a Christian home. - Women should not speak or teach in Church - They must submit to their husbands. - Adam was created first in Genesis and it was woman who was led astray by Satan and then led man astray.	Gender prejudice and discrimination Liberal Protestant Churches - Totally opposed to any form of gender discrimination - Men and women should have totally equal rights in life and in the Church. - They have women ministers, priests and Bishops. - The Creation story in Genesis 1 says that God created male and female at the same time and are of equal status. - St Paul taught that there is neither male nor female. - There is evidence in the Gospels that Jesus treated women as his equals. Atheist and Humanist attitudes to gender prejudice and discrimination - Men and women are equal and should have equal rights. - Keen supporters of legislation to promote women's rights. - Believe it is wrong for any religion to be able to discriminate against women and gender discrimination should be banned. - The Catholic Church's refusal to ordain women or have women leaders should be made illegal because it denies equal rights. Young people and gender prejudice In 2014, an MTV survey of young people's opinions found the following: - An overwhelming 92 per cent of males and 94 per cent of females believe that nobody should be treated differently due to gender. - More than three in four males and eight in ten females say favouring one gender is unfair. - Both genders believe that gender inequality can lead to big problems for society. - Only two per cent of young people say that men and women are totally equal today and only 23 per cent say men and women are at least mostly equal. Catholic response - Only men permitted to be priests is not discriminatory because the priest represents Jesus at Mass and women cannot stand in the place of a man. - Men and women are equal, but their sexuality is not interchangeable – people's gender is not an accident. A woman cannot represent Jesus in the Mass. - Jesus chose 12 men to be his apostles. - People should not be surprised that the Church expects a man to stand 'in the person of Christ' as a priest, to represent Jesus in his humanity, because humanity is not sexually neutral.
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