

Holy Father Pope Francis **“Catholic Marriage is a brave promise to Love like Jesus”**

*From his May 6, 2015 General Audience in St. Peter’s Square*

Marriage is an act of faith between a man and woman who are both fragile and limited, but courageous enough to follow Christ and seek to love each other as he loves them, the pope said May 6 during his general audience in St. Peter’s Square.

“Men and women, courageous enough to carry this treasure in the ‘earthen vessels’ of our humanity, are an essential resource for the church and for the whole world,” he said. “May God bless them a thousand times for this!”

The pope continued a series of talks about the family by focusing on the beauty of Christian marriage as a sacrament that builds up the church and the world.

A Christian marriage “is not simply a ceremony that you have in church with flowers, the dress, photos. Christian marriage is a sacrament that takes place in the church and is also something the church does, ushering in a new domestic community,” he said.

All Christians “are called to love each other like Christ loves them,” and to be at the service of each other, he said. But the love between husband and wife is given greater, even “unthinkable,” dignity when St. Paul says the love between a husband and wife reflects the love between Christ and his church, the pope said.

Just as Christ loves his church, every husband, too, must love his wife and give himself completely for her, he said.

Looking up from his text, the pope asked all of the married men in the crowd if they fully grasped what was being asked of them. Such responsibility and a commitment to offer so much love and dignity to a woman “is no joke, you know; it’s serious,” he said to applause.

While the analogy between husband-wife and Christ-church may be imperfect, he said, its spiritual significance is “revolutionary, and simple at the same time, and within the means of every man and woman who trust in God’s grace.”

This love has been inscribed by God in the human creature, “and with Christ’s grace, countless Christian couples, even with their limits, their sins, have achieved” it, the pope said.

The selfless, reciprocal, fruitful and indissoluble union between a man and a woman is part of God’s original plan and “the sacrament of marriage is a great act of faith and of love,” he said.

Marriage “gives witness to the courage to believe in the beauty of the creative act of God and to live that love that drives one to always go beyond, beyond oneself and beyond one’s own family,” he said.

“The Christian vocation to love without reserve and without measure is what, with Christ’s grace, is at the foundation of the free consent that constitutes marriage,” the pope said.

The pope said the church is intimately bound up in every Christian marriage and it is edified with each union’s “successes” and suffers with every failure.

“But we must ask ourselves in all seriousness: Do we fully accept — we as faithful and pastors, too — this indissoluble connection between the relationship of Christ and the church with the relationship of marriage and the human family? Are we willing to seriously take on this responsibility? That is, that every marriage takes the path of the love Christ has for the church? This is something huge.”

--from *Catholic News Service*