

ASIAN
HORIZONS
Vol. 12, No. 2, June 2018
Pages: 233-246

PROCREATION, SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIP, AND SEX AFTER *AMORIS LAETITIA*

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Abstract

A consideration of the models of marriage in the Catholic Church is mandatory for, before educators can prepare a couple for marriage, they must be clear on what model of marriage they will promote. A model is an imaginary construct postulated by analogy with a familiar reality and used to correlate a set of observations. There are two major models of marriage in the Catholic tradition, a procreation model and a spousal relation model. The procreative model dominated in the tradition from the second to the twentieth century; the spousal relation model came to the fore at the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Pope Francis embraces both models in his *Amoris Laetitia*, though he prioritizes the spousal relation models. This essay considers the two models and the present prioritization of the spousal relation model.

Keywords: *Amoris Laetitia*, Marriage, Pius XI, Pope Francis, Procreative Model, Responsible Parenthood, Spousal Relation Model

Marriage is in some distress in the modern world, but every reputable study of the attitudes of young Americans demonstrates they hope to be married and have high hopes for a happy marriage. To make a real contribution to the resolution of the crisis in marriage

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the Catholic Church, indeed *all* the Christian Churches, will have to better fulfil their specifically religious task of clarifying sacrament and covenant. Before educators can prepare a couple for marriage, however, they must be clear on the theory of marriage they will promote. This makes a consideration of models of marriage mandatory.

Models

The acceptance of the theoretical model is widespread in science. A theoretical model is an imaginative construct, postulated by analogy with a familiar reality and used to construct a theory to correlate a set of observations.¹ Models are analogical, that is, they represent and enable us to understand selected aspects of reality and close us off to other, equally important aspects. The astronomer, Arthur Eddington, explains the analogical character of scientific models in a powerful parable. A scientist was studying deep-sea life using a net with a three-inch mesh. After bringing up repeated samples from the deep, he concluded there were no deep-sea fish less than three inches in length.² This parable teaches that the method of fishing determines the catch. The method of asking the questions determines the answers it gets. The scientific way of stating this point is that *all data are theory-laden*; there is no theory-free, neutrally-objective observation. Since this is so, models and theories can never be taken as literal descriptions of reality, as naive realism assumes.

Models do not describe reality literally; they are heuristic devices, aids to discovery and learning. Though a model should never be taken literally, it should always be taken seriously as representing, however inadequately, particular aspects of reality for specific purposes. A model is realistic, but only up to a point. Beyond that point it is open-ended, a fluid source of insight, application, and even modification of existing theory. Models are neither literal pictures nor pure fictions; they are limited and inadequate ways of humanly, and creatively, imagining what is not observable. The validity of a model is established by, not its longevity or accepted intelligibility but its ability to explain *all* the observations it seeks to explain. This latter point is very important in the discussion of models of marriage.

¹Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion*, New York: Harper and Row, 1974, 30; *Religion in an Age of Science*, Harper, 1990, 41.

²Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928, 16.

Models are as widely used in theology as in science. It could not be otherwise when human beings seek to understand the transcendent God and the things of God in this world.³ Remember that scientific models are neither literal pictures nor pure fictions; they are limited and inadequate ways of humanly imagining what is not observable, and that God is not observable, has been, and continues to be, a central affirmation of the Catholic tradition. The great Augustine, perhaps the most influential of all Catholic theologians, affirms that tradition of unfathomable mystery. "If you have understood," he asserts, "then this is not God. If you were able to understand, then you understood something else instead of God. If you were able to understand even partially, then you have deceived yourself with your own thoughts."⁴

Thomas Aquinas also stands in the tradition of God's absolute transcendence and brings us to analogical models. For Aquinas all language about God is analogy. On the one hand, words used about God are not *univocal*, that is, they do not have the same meaning as when they are said of humans, for that would ignore the difference between God and God's creatures. On the other hand, neither are they *equivocal*, having no relation to their human meanings. Rather they are *analogical*, taking their human meanings as a starting point and at the same time insisting that, since these human meanings could never literally apply to God, these human meanings are only analogical images or metaphors of God and the things of God. Analogies, like all models, are to be taken seriously as creating rich images of God but never literally as picturing what God actually is.⁵ If God is unfathomable mystery, known only in limited and inadequate analogical models, then God incarnate in sacrament, including in the sacrament of marriage, is known only in inadequate models. We now turn to the models of marriage employed in the Catholic tradition.

Models of Marriage

There are two major models of marriage in the Catholic tradition. A procreative model emphasizes procreation in marriage and a

³Perhaps the most influential discussion of theological models is Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974. See also Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, New York: Herder, 1972, 281-294; Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960; Kevin Irwin, "Models of the Eucharist," *Origins* (May 31, 2001) 33-44.

⁴*Sermo* 52, PL 38, 360.

⁵See Aquinas, ST 1, 3. For a comprehensive treatment of analogy, see David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, New York: Crossroad, 1981 and William Hill, *Knowing the Unknown God*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1971.

spousal relation model emphasizes relationship between the spouses. Sexual intercourse between the spouses, obviously, plays an essential role in the procreative model. It plays an essential role also, if perhaps not so obviously, in the spousal relation model. The procreative model dominated the Catholic tradition of marriage from the second to the twentieth century. It imaged marriage as a socio-religious institution in which a man and a woman become husband and wife in order to become mother and father; in order, that is, to procreate children. That model has its origin in the Genesis command to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:22), but it was greatly strengthened in the Christian Church’s struggle to legitimate marriage as something good. At the opening of the second century, echoing the biblical “God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good” (Gen 1:31), Clement of Alexandria combated the Gnostics, who argued that sexuality and marriage were evil, by asserting that they were good because they were created by the good God. They are good, however, only when used for procreation and for no other purpose.⁶ Lactantius agreed: “We have received the genital part of the body for no other purpose than the begetting of offspring, as the very name itself teaches.”⁷

In his fourth-century debate with the Manichees, Augustine also presented marriage and sexuality as good because they were created by a good God.⁸ Procreation is the primary purpose of both sexuality and marriage because “from this derives the propagation of the human race in which a living community is a great good.”⁹ Earlier in the same book, however, he had suggested another good of marriage, which “does not seem to me to be good *only* because of the procreation of children, but also because of the natural companionship of the sexes. Otherwise, we could not speak of marriage in the case of old people, especially if they had either lost their children or had begotten none at all.”¹⁰ This is a clear linking of marriage to not only procreation but also the relation of the spouses. Consideration of this relationship in the twentieth century will yield a quite different model of marriage.

In the thirteenth century, Aquinas gave this priority of procreation its most reasoned argument. “Marriage has its principal end in the

⁶*Stromatum*, 2, 23, PG 8, 1086 and 1090. See also *Paed.*, 2, 10, PG 8, 498.

⁷*Divinarum Institutionum*, 6, 23, PL 6, 718.

⁸*De Nupt. et Concup.*, 2, 32, 54, PL 44, 468-69; also *De Bono Coniugali*, passim, PL 40, 394.

⁹*De Bono Coniug.*, 9, 9, PL 40, 380.

¹⁰*De Bono Coniug.*, 9, 9, PL 40, 375. Emphasis added.

procreation and education of offspring.” It has also “a secondary end in man alone, the sharing of tasks which are necessary in life, and from this point of view husband and wife owe each other faithfulness.” There is a third end in believers, “the meaning of Christ and Church, and so a good of marriage is called sacrament.” For Aquinas, then, marriage has three ends: a primary end, procreation; a secondary end, faithful love; and a tertiary end, sacrament. “The first end is found in marriage in so far as man is animal, the second in so far as he is man, the third in so far as he is believer.”¹¹ This is a tightly reasoned argument, as is customary in Aquinas, and its *primary end - secondary end* terminology dominated Catholic marriage manuals for the next seven hundred years. Remember, however, that the validity of a model is determined, not by its intelligibility, the authority of its author, or its age, but the fact that it explains all the observations it seeks to explain. Aquinas’ authority cannot obscure the fact that his argument is a curious one, since the primary end of specifically *human* marriage is dictated by the human’s generically *animal* nature. It was on that basis that his argument was challenged in the twentieth century. Before that challenge, however, it had been enshrined for the first time in an official Catholic document in the *Code of Canon Law* in 1917.¹² “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and nurture of children; its secondary end is mutual help and the remedying of concupiscence” (Can 1013,1).

The procreative institution is the result of a contract in which “each party gives and accepts a perpetual and exclusive right over the body for acts which are of themselves suitable for the generation of children” (1917 Can 1081, 2). Notice that the procreative marital contract was about *bodies* and *acts*; the procreative institution was not about *persons* and their mutual love. Couples who hated one another could consent to the procreative institution as long as they exchanged legal rights to each other’s bodies for the purpose of the procreation of children. This model of marriage as procreative institution was thrust on to centre stage in the 1960s in the debate over artificial contraception. We do not intend in this essay to enter into a detailed analysis of that debate, but neither can we pass over it in silence, for it is inextricably connected to our discussion of Catholic models of marriage.¹³

¹¹ST, 3 (Suppl.), 65, 1, c.

¹²See Urban Navarette, “Structura Juridica Matrimonii Secundum Concilium Vaticanum II,” *Periodica* 56 (1967) 366.

¹³Those who are interested in that debate and its arguments can profitably begin in Charles E. Curran and Robert E. Hunt, *Dissent in and for the Church: Theologians and*

Pope John XXIII established a commission to study the issue of birth control, later confirmed and enlarged by Pope Paul VI. Two sides emerged in the Commission's debates and both a majority report and a minority report were eventually submitted to Paul VI who, professing himself unconvinced by the arguments of the majority, approved the minority report in his encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*.¹⁴ The differential between the two groups is easily categorized. The minority report, which became the controverted part of the encyclical, argued that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life."¹⁵ The majority report argued that it is *marriage itself*, not "each and every marriage act," that is to be open to the transmission of life. It asserted that "human intervention in the process of the marriage act *for reasons drawn from the end of marriage itself* should not always be excluded, provided that the criteria of morality are always safeguarded."¹⁶ The differential between the two positions was the differential created by adherence to two different models of marriage, the minority report being based on the procreative model that had become traditional, the majority report being based on a spousal relation model that emerged and flowered at the Second Vatican Council.

The question of contraception had been pre-empted from Council debate and reserved to the Pope and the Commission he had set up to study it. It was exempted, therefore, from the discussion of the meanings and ends of marriage from which the spousal relation model of marriage emerged as an established Catholic model. In 1968, theological ethicist Richard McCormick commented that "the documents of the Papal Commission represent a rather full summary of two points of view... the majority report, particularly the analysis of its rebuttal, strikes this reader as much the more satisfactory statement."¹⁷ That judgment continues to be the judgment of the majority of Catholic ethicists and the vast majority of Catholic couples, because they argue from the same spousal relation model on which the majority report was based. Fifty years later, despite a concerted minority effort to make adherence to *Humane Vitae* a test

Humanae Vitae, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969 and Germain Grisez, John C. Ford, Joseph Boyle, John Finnis, and William E. May, *The Teaching of Humanae Vitae: A Defense*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.

¹⁴For detail on this, see Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1991, 11-33.

¹⁵*Humanae Vitae*, 11.

¹⁶Cited in Longley, *The Worlock File*, 233. Emphasis added.

¹⁷Richard McCormick, *Notes on Moral Theology 1965-1980*, Lanham: University of America Press, 1981, 164.

case of Catholicity, the debate between the procreative and relational models continues in the Church and is far from resolved.

In his *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis shows he is aware of the procreative model of marriage and the questions it imposes on the regulation of births, but he does not assign to it the priority it has traditionally been assigned. The Church, he says, must never desist “from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God’s plan in all its grandeur” (AL, 307). Children are undoubtedly an important part of that plan for human sexuality and marriage, and newly married couples are to be encouraged “to be generous in bestowing life” (AL, 222). Marriage, however, he continues, quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, “was not instituted solely for the procreation of children” but also that mutual love “might be properly expressed, and that it should grow and mature” (AL, 125; see GS, 50). For this reason, and for other “sufficiently serious reasons,” one of which, poverty, he continually returns to, spouses may be led “to limit the number of their children” (AL, 42). The teachings of Paul VI’s *Humanae Vitae* and John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio* are not abrogated. In fact, “they ought to be taken up anew, in order to counter a mentality that is often hostile to life” (AL, 222), but, he asserts, the couple “will make decisions by common counsel and effort.” They are to “thoughtfully take into account both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which the future may bring,” but Francis is adamant, as he is in the case of other “irregular situations” (AL, 301), that after careful discernment of their situation “the parents themselves and no one else should make this judgment in the sight of God” (AL, 222; see GS, 50). The teachings of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II are not abrogated; they are in no way denied or developed. They are, however, deprioritized. The only absolute rejection of contraception in *Amoris Laetitia* is “forced State intervention” (AL, 42). Regarding married couples, “the use of methods [of fertility regulation] based on the ‘laws of nature and the incidence of fertility’ (*Humanae Vitae*, 11) are to be *promoted*...” Pope Francis’ language, *promoted*, rather than *absolutely required*, deemphasizes the teachings of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II and emphasizes two traditional Catholic ethical doctrines that Francis highlights throughout his Exhortation, the authority and inviolability of an informed conscience and the ethical impact of particular situations.¹⁸

Once again citing *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pope states that “decisions involving responsible parenthood presuppose the formation of

¹⁸See Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, “*Amoris Laetitia*: Has Anything Changed?” *Asian Horizons* 11 (2017) 62-74.

conscience, which is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There each one is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depth of the heart” (AL, 222; GS, 16). Earlier he had complained that “we often present marriage in such a way that its unitive [that is, spousal relation] meaning, its call to grow in love and its ideal of mutual assistance are overshadowed by an almost exclusive insistence on the duty of procreation” (AL, 36) and that we “find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them” (AL, 37). Of the limitations of spouses, he argues that “from our awareness of mitigating circumstances – psychological, historical, and even biological – it follows that without detracting from the evangelical ideal, there is a need to accompany with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth as these progressively appear.” I sincerely believe, he continues, that “Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, always does what good she can, even if in the process her shoes get soiled in the mud of the street.” His final conclusion could not be clearer: “The Gospel itself tells us not to judge or condemn (cf. Matt 7:1; Luke 6:37)” (AL, 308). The Exhortation’s teaching is clear. The objective teaching of Paul VI and John Paul II with respect to the procreative model of marriage remains in force, but so too do the traditional Catholic teachings of the subjectively mitigating force of circumstances and the authority and inviolability of spousal consciences. This stance leads Francis to prioritize the spousal relation model of marriage over the procreative model.

Spousal Relation Model

In December, 1930, Pope Pius XI published his encyclical on marriage, *Casti Connubii*. The encyclical was a direct response to the Anglican Church’s recent approval of artificial contraception and Pius insisted that procreation was the primary end of marriage. He suggested also the importance of a spousal relation model of mutual love. This mutual love, he taught, proved as always by loving deeds, has “as its primary purpose that husband and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life... and above all that they may grow in true love toward God and their neighbor.” So important is this mutual love and life of the spouses, Pius argued, that “it can, in a very real sense, be said to be *the chief reason and purpose of marriage* if marriage be looked at not in the

restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and educating of the child but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.”¹⁹ If we do not focus in a limited way on procreation, Pius taught, but broaden the model to embrace also the spousal love and life of the spouses, then that spousal love and life is the primary reason for marriage.

Pius XI suggested there is more to marriage than the biologically-rooted procreative model can explain. He suggested a spousal-relation model, a suggestion which was quickly taken up by European thinkers, most influentially two Germans, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Heribert Doms. In the opening paragraph of his book *Marriage*, von Hildebrand highlights the problem with the procreative model. The modern age, he suggests, is guilty of anti-personalism, “a progressive blindness toward the nature and dignity of the spiritual person.” This anti-personalism expresses itself in various forms of materialism, the most dangerous of which is biological materialism, which considers humans *only* as more highly developed animals. The procreative model of marriage, with its emphasis on the sexual function of the human body, is wide open to the charge of biological materialism. It ignores the higher, personal, and spiritual characteristics of the human animal. To correct this biological, materialistic approach, von Hildebrand offers a new model of marriage, claiming support from *Casti Connubii* for his central thesis that marriage is for the building up of a loving communion between the spouses. Conjugal love, he argues, is the primary meaning and end of marriage and “every marriage in which conjugal love is thus realized bears spiritual fruit, becomes *fruitful* – even though there are no children.”²⁰ The resonance of this interpersonal description of marriage and lovemaking with the lived experience of married couples is clear.

Doms agreed with von Hildebrand that what is natural or unnatural for human animals is not to be decided exclusively on the basis of what is natural or unnatural for non-human animals. Humans are specifically spiritual animals, and their sexuality is not to be judged on the exclusive basis of animal biology. Human sexuality is essentially the capacity and the desire to join, not only one’s body, but also and primarily one’s very self with another human being. Sexuality drives men and women to make gifts of themselves (not just of their bodies) to other persons, to create a communion of persons which complements and fulfils the lives of both. In this

¹⁹*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 22 (1930) 548-49. Henceforth AAS.

²⁰von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, London: Longman’s, 1939, 25, emphasis in original.

perspective spousal intercourse, which is not to be reduced to only genital intercourse, is an interpersonal activity in which a woman gives herself to a man and a man gives himself to a woman, and in which each accepts the gift of the other to signify and create spousal communion.

The primary end of sexual intercourse, then, is spousal union, and this primary end is achieved in every act of sexual intercourse in and through which the spouses enter into intimate communion. Even in childless marriages, marriage and sexual intercourse achieve their primary end in spousal union, what Doms calls the *two-in-oneness* of the spouses. “The immediate purpose of marriage is the realization of its meaning, the conjugal two-in-oneness... This two-in-oneness of husband and wife is a living reality, and the immediate object of the marriage ceremony and their legal union.” The loving union of the spouses tends naturally to the creation of a new person, their child, who fulfils both parents individually and as a two-in-oneness. “Society is more interested in the child than in the natural fulfilment of the parents, and it is this which gives the child primacy among the natural results of marriage.”²¹

The Catholic Church’s reaction to these new ideas was, as so often in theological history, a blanket condemnation, which made no effort to sift truth from error. In 1944, the Holy Office condemned “the opinion of some more recent authors, who either deny that the primary end of marriage is the generation and nurture of children, or teach that the secondary ends are not essentially subordinate to the primary end, but are equally primary and independent.”²² In 1951, as the ideas of von Hildebrand and Doms persisted and gained more adherents, Pius XII felt obliged to intervene again. “Marriage,” he taught, “as a natural institution in virtue of the will of the creator, does not have as a primary and intimate end the personal perfection of the spouses, but the procreation and nurture of new life. The other ends, in as much as they are intended by nature, are not on the same level as the primary end, and still less are they superior to it, but they are essentially subordinate to it.”²³ Twenty-three years later, the Second Vatican Council would reject the model in which this papal argument is based.

Though the Council did not deal in detail with marriage and the sacrament of marriage, *Gaudium et Spes* did provide material

²¹Heribert Doms, *The Meaning of Marriage*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1939, 94-95.

²²AAS, 36 (1944) 103.

²³AAS 43 (1951) 848-9.

intimately related to our present discussion. It defined marriage as a “communion of love... an intimate partnership of life and love” (GS, 47-48). In spite of insistent demands from a small Vatican minority to repeat the centuries-old procreative model of marriage, thus consigning spousal love to its traditional secondary place, the Council declared the mutual love of the spouses and their passionate desire to be best friends for life to be of the very essence of marriage. It underscored its preference for a spousal-union model by making another important change in the received tradition. When faced with demands to describe the consent that initiates marriage in the traditional way as legal *contract*, the Council demurred and chose to describe it as spousal *covenant*. Marriage is founded in “a conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent” (GS, 48). Though in truth “contract” and “covenant” share many of the same meanings, the biblical word “covenant” is saturated with overtones of mutual personal and steadfast love, characteristics which are now applied to marriage. The spouses, the Council teaches, “mutually *gift and accept one another*” (GS, 48, emphasis added); the focus on animal bodies and acts is replaced by a focus on persons. In their marital covenant, spouses create, not a procreative institution, but a loving spousal union which, since genuine love is steadfast, is to last as long as life lasts.

This marital love is “eminently human,” “involves the good of the whole person,” and is “steadfastly true.” It is singularly expressed and perfected in genital intercourse, which signifies and promotes “that mutual self-giving by which the spouses enrich one another” (GS, 49). Marriage and the marital love of the spouses are still said to be “ordained for the procreation of children” (GS, 48), but that “does not make the other ends of marriage of less account,” and marriage “is not instituted solely for procreation” (GS, 50). The Catholic Church revised its theology of marriage in the twentieth century, moving beyond the model of marriage as exclusively procreative institution to embrace a model of spousal union which includes the mutual love and communion of the spouses. Francis reiterates that revision in *Amoris Laetitia*.

The Pope opens a long reflection on love in general and spousal love in specific with a judgment that reveals his mind on its importance in marriage. All the words he could say, he insists,

would be insufficient to express the Gospel of marriage and the family, were we not also to *speak of love*. For we cannot encourage a path of fidelity and mutual self-giving without encouraging the growth, strengthening, and deepening of conjugal and family love. Indeed, the

grace of the sacrament of marriage is intended before all else 'to perfect the couple's love' (AL, 89).²⁴

That judgment tells us all we need to know about Francis' model of marriage, and he follows it with an extended reflection on both Paul's paean to love in 1 Cor 13:4-7 and the fruitfulness of spousal love in marriage.

"Love is patient and kind," Paul writes (1 Cor 13:4). The Greek word translated as "kind," *chresteuetai*, used only here in the entire Bible, is a derivative of *chrestos*, "a good person, one who shows his goodness [and his love] by his deeds" (AL, 93). The loving person/spouse is one whose love is manifested in deeds, the one who responds in action to the lover's demand: "Don't *talk* of love, *show* me." He/she is always at the service of the other, seeking to respond to the other's needs, the other's pleasure, the other's healing in any negative situation, never, in Paul's words, insisting "on its own way" (v. 5). Francis offers this very advice later in his Exhortation when he speaks of the necessity of dialogue in a marriage. Dialogue, he insists correctly, "is essential for experiencing, expressing, and fostering love in marriage and family life" (AL, 136) and dialogue requires that we "keep an open mind. Don't get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions but be prepared to change or expand them. The combination of two different ways of thinking can lead to a synthesis that enriches both" (AL, 139). This notion of open dialogue leads to the consideration of the spousal relation in a marriage and to the rejection of every kind of unequal submission of one to the other. "Every form of sexual submission," Francis declares, "must be clearly rejected. This includes all improper interpretations of the passage in the Letter to the Ephesians where Paul tells women to 'be subject to their husbands' (Eph 5:22). This passage mirrors the cultural categories of the time" (AL, 156), he says, but it also comes after a previous instruction to Christians to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21). Christians are to be subject, to give way, to one another and so also are Christian spouses to give way to one another. John Paul II puts this plainly in a catechesis on marriage. "Love excludes every kind of subjection whereby the wife might become a servant or a slave of the husband... The community or unity which they should establish through marriage is constituted by a reciprocal gift of self, which is also a mutual subjection."²⁵ Which brings us to our conclusion about the spousal relation model of marriage.

²⁴Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, AAS 98 (2006) 218, emphasis original.

²⁵John Paul II, *Insegnamenti V/3*, Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1982, 205-6.

The Second Vatican Council defined marriage as “a community of love... an intimate partnership of life and love” (GS, 47-48). *Community* derives from the Latin *communis*, and is defined as common sharing, common ownership, common responsibility. For genuine love it is not enough that I should love another, my love must be reciprocated. It adds to a one-sided love a community or communion between lover and beloved in their love. For the majority of modern men and women, the communion created by love continues to be publicly formalized in marriage and, in the communion between spouses, spousal love includes the reciprocal responsibility to maintain and grow the friendship-love that founded the communion in the first place. Catholics look upon this rich love as such a gift of, and a way to, God that they hold marriage as the sacrament, the symbol in the world, of the friendship and self-sacrificing love between God and God’s people and Christ and Christ’s church.²⁶ Though feelings are frequently associated with love, feelings are not of its essence. Loving is essentially doing something. It is affirming the being, the very well-being, of another.

The first life generated in a marriage, the life on which all other lives in the marriage depend for their viability, is the life of the spouses together, their two-in-one-bodiness. “The first communion,” Pope John Paul II argues, “is the one which is established and which develops between the husband and wife. By virtue of the covenant of married life, the man and the woman are no longer two but one flesh and they are called to grow continually in their communion through day to day fidelity” (FC, 16). The communion of the spouses is an important end of their marriage, indeed the very end for which they decided to marry in the first place.

Most parents will agree with the Vatican Council’s claim that “children really are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute substantially to the welfare of their parents” (GS, 50), and so we need not spend time establishing procreation as an end of marriage. We do, however, given the physical, emotional, and social fate of children in contemporary families,²⁷ need to spend some time underscoring that the generativity and fruitfulness of a marriage are not achieved by the biological generation of children. To be parentally fruitful requires not only the momentary act of intercourse but also the long-term nurture of the children resulting from that

²⁶See Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology*, Omaha: Creighton University Press, 1995.

²⁷For detail, see Michael G. Lawler, *Family: American and Christian*, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1998, 3-82.

intercourse into functioning adulthood. Maternity and paternity may generate children; only motherhood and fatherhood, the long-term nurture of those children, generate functioning adults. It is the generation of functioning adults that has always been the desired end of the act of procreation, and it is certainly functioning adults that are required today in both society and church.

Conclusion

Christian marriage is a covenant and communion of love between a man and a woman, love that is kind, love that serves, love that does not seek its own, love that gives way, love that is steadfastly faithful. Because it is both a covenant and a communion of steadfast love, it is a permanent and exclusive state and a prophetic symbol of the steadfast covenant and communion between Christ and Christ's Church. It is modelled as both a procreative institution and spousal relation, and Pope Francis embraces both these models in *Amoris Laetitia*, though he prioritizes the spousal relation model. That Christian marriage is such a reality, however, is not something that is simply so; it is something that is to be constantly made so. Permanence is not a static quality of marriage, but a dynamic quality of human covenant and love on which marriage, both secular and Christian, is founded and thrives.