



# LIFE MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford  
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November 2011

vol. xi • no. 2

## Marriage: A Communion of Love and Life By Theresa Notare

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Why does the Church teach that marriage is a communion of love and life? Think about it, love and life are deeply intertwined in human nature. Human nature is made to be social, to receive the love of others and to reach out in love to the other. The deepest form of self-giving is love, and love is life-giving. This “fact of life” proceeds from God Himself.

Sacred Scripture reveals that God is love, that the world was created out of His love and that men and women were created in God’s image (Gn 1:1-27). Since the Trinity is a communion of three loving persons, to be made in God’s image means that all men and women are called to form loving relationships, “communions of persons.” This is why the Church teaches that God has given all His children a vocation to love like Him. It is a universal call to holiness.

These foundational teachings take on a unique character in marriage. Marriage is a unique kind of communion of persons because God designed it to unite man and woman to each other completely—body, mind and soul. In other words, marriage is the “one-flesh” union which God designed to be love-giving and life-giving. This is the seamless purpose of marriage!

In marriage husband and wife maintain their individuality as persons, but as spouses, live more than a side-by-side kind of existence. Rather, spouses exist “*mutually one for the other.*” It is precisely due to the unique character of marital love that “husband and wife serve as a symbol of both life and love in a way that no other relationship of human persons can” (*Marriage, Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, p. 11). Husband and wife receive a “kind of

consecration” in a sacred ministry to serve love and life (see *Gaudium et Spes*, #48). As stewards of these gifts, spouses hold the responsibility to nurture marital love and its life-giving potential.

Respecting and nurturing the spousal communion of persons should be foremost in the minds of husbands and wives. Together, spouses should be on the alert for things that can tear at their union— especially pride, selfishness, mistrust, unkindness, and the inability to forgive. Add to this list the use of pornography and contraception which popular culture has sadly accepted as “mainstream.” They are not. They poison the very gift of human sexuality because they distort the mutual generosity and respect at the heart of God-like love.

Among the good things that will support and strengthen their marriages, spouses should embrace the virtue of chastity. Yes, chastity, marital chastity is an essential virtue for nurturing and respecting God’s plan for marriage.

Chastity “refers to the peaceful integration of sexual thoughts, feelings, and desires” in a person’s life (see *Marriage, Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, p. 48). Chastity promotes sexual maturity. In marriage, it enables spouses to love each other selflessly. It also empowers spouses to work with God in the right planning of His will for their family. Chastity is a virtue that fortifies the marital communion of persons—a communion of love that is total, faithful, exclusive, and open to life (*Cf. Humanae Vitae*, #9). Hand in hand with each other and the Lord God, this is the noble calling that husband and wife embrace in marriage, a true communion of love and life.

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For additional commentary on life issues, check out “Life Lines” on the first Friday of each month in *The Observer*.

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