



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* *Knights of Malta* *

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Chancellor's Update

Marriage – A Great Sacrament

As we enter this New Year and focus on the January Pro-Life rally in the United States, what comes to mind is the family, the basic unit of society. This brings us to the topic of marriage. We strongly recommend the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom in particular homily 12, 19, 20, 21 and his sermons on Marriage and How to Choose a Wife. See how modern St. John sounds even after 1700 years.

St. John says in his Sermon on Marriage the following: "Marriage was not instituted for wantonness or fornication, but for chastity. Listen to what Paul says: "Because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." (1 Cor7:2) These are the two purposes for which marriage was instituted: to make us chaste, and to make us parents. Of these two, the reason of chastity takes precedence. When desire began, then marriage also began. It sets a limit to desire by teaching us to keep to one wife. Marriage does not always lead to childbearing, although there is the word of God which says, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." (Gen 1:28) We have as witnesses all those who are married but childless. So the purpose of chastity takes precedence, especially now, when the whole world is filled with our kind. At the beginning, the procreation of children was desirable, so that each person might leave a memorial of his life. Since there was not yet any hope of resurrection, but death held sway, and those who died thought that they would perish after this life, God gave the comfort of children, so as to leave living images of the departed and to preserve our species. For those who were about to die and for their relatives, the greatest consolation was their offspring. To understand that this was the chief reason for desiring children, listen to the complaint of Job's wife. "See," she says, "your memory has perished from the earth, your sons and your daughters." (Cf Job 18:17) Likewise Saul says to David, "Swear to me that you will not destroy my seed, and my name along with me." (1 Kings 24:22, 1 Sam 24:21) But now that resurrection is at our gates, and we do not speak of death, but advance toward another life better than the present, the desire for posterity is superfluous."

From St. John's homily 12: "There is nothing more pleasurable than virtue, nothing sweeter than orderliness, nothing more honorable than dignity. Those who celebrate weddings such as this will find true pleasure, but pay attention now to what is required for such a marriage. First, look for a husband who will really be a husband and a protector; remember that you are placing a head on a body. When your daughter is to be married, don't look for how much money a man has. Don't worry about his nationality or his family's social position. All these things are superfluous. Look instead for piety, gentleness, wisdom, and the fear of the Lord, if you want your daughter to be happy. If you

insist on her marrying a wealthy man, you are hurting her, not helping her. He will treat her like a slave because she comes from a family poorer than his. Instead, she should marry a man whose financial condition is the same as hers, or even one who is poorer—that is, if your desire is to give your daughter to a husband, and not to sell her as a slave to a master. When you are satisfied that the man is virtuous, and decide what day they will be married, beseech Christ to be present at the wedding. He is not ashamed to come, for marriage is an image of His presence in the Church. Even better than this: pray that your children will each find such a virtuous spouse; entrust this concern of yours into His hands. If you honor Him in this way, He will return honor for honor.” All translations of St. John Chrysostom “On Marriage and Family Life” are by Catherine P. Roth & David Anderson.

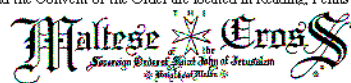
From Regulations for the Recruitment of Members in our OSJ manual:

All matters in a marriage are very serious, although none more so than faith. The couple's coordinated love for God should be a source of harmony. It is to be understood that along with Knighthood, Marriage is also a Religious state of life, a Religious vocation. Because the partners exchange vows with each other, it can be further stated that Marriage is raised to an "Order of Matrimony."¹

This concept, advanced by the Second Vatican Council², was previously proposed as early as the twelfth century, as cited by Henri Daniel-Rops:

Jacques de Vitry (d.1240) went so far as to say that married people "also belong to an Order, the Order of Matrimony." His words were echoed by the Dominican, Henry of Provins: "The Order of Matrimony is by no means of recent origin, but has existed as long as humanity itself. Our Order and that of the Friars Minor have been recently established; indeed, all religious Orders are later than the Incarnation. But the Order of Matrimony is as old as the world. I will go even further: our Order is the work of a mere mortal, but God Himself founded the Order of Matrimony at the beginning of time." And the good Dominican concludes with this irrefutable argument: "At the time of the Deluge, those whom God preferred to save were married people." Robert de Sorbon (1201-74) described marriage as a "sacred Order," of which, said Pérégrin, God alone is the Superior.³

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¹ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992), Articles 1537 and 1631.

² Cf. Vatican Council II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (1965), Articles 11, 20, 30, 31 and 33; also cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964), Articles 10, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36: AAS 57.

³ Henri Daniel-Rops, Cathedral and Crusade (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1957), 285-286.