Notes: Christopher West on Marriage as a Sacrament

Ephesians 5 comes after Eph 4 for a reason!
-“Wives be submissive to your husbands”
-Paul is not saying “be a doormat/dominated”
-This verse is a rich affirmation of woman’s identity

[Scripture must always be read in context. In Ephesians 4, St. Paul says that Christians “must no longer live as the Gentiles do.: They “are darkened in their understanding… due to their hardness of heart.” So put off “your old nature which… is corrupt through deceitful lusts… and out on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:17-18, 22-24). Who teaches is St. Paul repeating here? What bearing does this passage have on a proper interpretation of Ephesians 5?]
- St. Paul is repeating the teaching of Christ. Christ said, “I came into the world not to be served, but to serve.” (Matthew 20:28)
- Male domination is the result of Original Sin

In the beginning it was man’s role: imitation (stamped into a man’s body) of the gift of Love to woman.
- In fallen humanity this desire twists to domination of the gift.
- Women’s desire to open to, received and return that gift has been twisted to manipulation and use.

Paul is calling us to a true transformation. Paul uses the Gentile’s language “submission” *These truths are not imposed on us by the Catholic Church, but it is in us, comes out in art, music, etc. We have a desire the Church reaffirms and encourages us to listen to our hearts, and allow ourselves to live in it! And to call out to God for the Grace to do it.*

When you see a woman as God sees, you do not desire to lust after her, but reverence her. Like the tabernacle of life- Mary is the ark of the New Covenant. If a person touched the ark of the Old Covenant= dead on the spot. How much more revenue should we have to reach for the Ark of the New Covenant?
- Woman are a symbol of the Church; Husbands- symbol of Christ

“Wives be submissive” - Submission “Under the Mission of” LOVE- “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church.”
- Why do women love the Titanic? Jack loves Rose unto the laying down of his life.
- Why do men loved Braveheart? William Wallace fights to the death b/c he knows his wife is watching from Heaven.

“We can conclude that “the wife’s ‘submission’ to the husband… means above all ‘the experiencing of love.’ This is all the more so because... the submission of the Church to Christ... certainly consists in experiencing his love.” (TOB 92:6)
- A woman must submit to her husband out of reverence for Christ. (Good Read: Love & Respect by Emerson Eggerichs)

“If a husband is truly to love his wife, ‘it is necessary to insist that intercourse must not serve merely as a means of allowing [his] climax…. The man must take [the] difference between male and female reactions into account… so that climax may be reached [by] both… and as far as possible occur in both simultaneously.’ The husband must do this ‘not for hedonistic, but for
altruistic reasons.” In this case, if ‘we take into account the shorter and more violent curve of arousal in the man, [such] tenderness on his part in the context of marital intercourse acquires the significance of an act of virtue” (LR, 272, 275)

Yes, the POPE wrote this.

Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church. Are you men living this virtue? **Marriage is not just one of the 7 Sacraments, but the model sacrament.** We find the “prototype” in marriage. It is the goal of all the sacraments to seek to unite Christ the Bridegroom with the Church, His Bride.

At Baptism: before receiving the sacrament, the priest dips the Pascal Candle into the water font, signifying the embrace of the Heavenly Bridegroom with His Church

Eucharist- Sacrament of the bridegroom and bride- consumption of the marriage

Maybe the Church is the only one who upholds sexual difference matters. When our sexual understanding is off, we will not understand Christ and the Church. **BECAUSE the one flesh union signifies Christ and the Church!**

Saying our bodies have a language- meant to proclaim- Christ Loved the Church

Freely- Not manipulated


Faithfully- “I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)

Fruitfully- I have come so my bride might have life to the full. (John 10:10)

FTFF= Marriage: Look at the promises of the Marriage Rite:

**Questions before the Consent:**

*The Priest then questions them about their freedom of choice, fidelity to each other, and the acceptance and upbringing of children, and each responds separately.*

(Name) and (Name), have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?

The bridegroom and bride each say: I have. Freely- not coerced or manipulated; Totally- no reservation, no halving it, gives everything.

Are you prepared, as you follow the path of Marriage, to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live?

The bridegroom and bride each say: I am. Faithfully- “I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)

Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

The bridegroom and bride each say: I am. Fruitfully- I have come so my bride might have life to the full. (John 10:10)

**Consummation is a renewal of your wedding vows, every time.** Can only fulfilled by sexual intercourse [“As ministers of a sacrament (spouses) are called to express the mysterious ‘language’ of their bodies in all the truth that properly belongs to it. Through gestures and reactions, through the whole body… dynamism of tension and enjoyment- whose direct source is the body in its masculinity and femininity, the body in its action and interaction- through all the man, the person, ‘speaks.’ …Precisely on the level of this ‘language of the body’ … man and
woman reciprocally express themselves in the fullest and most profound way made possible for them by… their masculinity and femininity.

Notes: Andrew Hess on 7 Steps of Sin/Grace
Theology of the Body: Brian J. Bransfield

7 Steps of Sin
-Temptation is the root of every sin
-Sin is a rejection of a gift, turning away from a relationship.
-Sin is absence of goodness. Sin is nothing. You are choosing nothing over something.

Primordial Effect: Affects the rest of humanity
-Relationship with God
-Relationship with Each Other
-Relationship with the World

Read Genesis 3: The Fall of Man
Step 1: Bypass the Family Structure
-Serpent asked the woman- approaches Eve because she is alone
-Man & Woman is too perfect of a model of God, too strong. Must break apart
-Adam was nearby, but Eve is not inclined to go to Adam for whatever reason/not relying on Adam. Even perceived she was alone.
-Sin thrives on our perception of being alone.
-Wound- Satan tries to remedy w/ unsatisfying fillings.
-Sin needs isolation before it takes root [ex: industrial/sexual/technological revolution- contributed to the breakdown of the Family.]

Step 2: The Innocent Little Question
-“Did God really say…?”
-“Help me understand” mentality= tricked into dialogue with devil
-Devil casts shadow over whole garden- Eve defends God
-Instead of rejecting devils proposal there and moving on, she enters into dialogue.
-Even fallen angels retain their superior intellect to even Adam & Eve before the fall
-Good to discern moral life, but sometimes entertaining what we know is wrong leads to sin/is a near occasion of sin.

Step 3: The Lie
-Denying truth- “You will be like God”
-Tries to convince us of something “not true” which makes us less of who we are. Confuses our identity
-Causes pain and puts sin in our path as a remedy which causes more pain.
-Desert Fathers- Step away from culture which was becoming comfortable, in order to be purified.
-Fathers writing show: no dialogue with devil/temptations. They shut it down at the first sign.
-We must trust that when we resist temptation, the Lord will send His angels to minister to us.

Step 4: Fear
-Where the lie is, fear is soon to follow. They need each other to work.
-Without fear the lie cannot last very long
-If fear comes when facing a lie, temptation becomes stronger
-Adam should have intervened here, but if he was nearby, he probably entered/bought into that dialogue himself.
Step 5: The Choice and the Act
- The choice + the action = the Sin.
- Willful choosing in Eve’s heart- her desire is already a sin.
- Actions can never be separated from the whole person. [Cannot say “they are a good person but they do bad things” Yes, we are all inherently created Good, but the will/action chosen shows the disposition of our hearts.
- Man has begun to take things. No longer in act of giving and receiving, but way God did not intend = taking.
- Obedient love of faith vs. selfishness/taking in name of “freedom”
- It is not natural for man to make himself happy/that he is his own god. That’s God’s role.
- Thing by which man is supposed to engage the world and be free gift, is now in opposition to the world.
- In choosing to take, he is inflicting a New Wound.

Step 6: Hiding
- “Breezy time of day” = dusk / getting dark = darkness is setting in the heart of man.
- Alienation from God, Himself, the Other, and the World.
- Hide = distract people from our inadequacies.
- God’s Question: “Where are you?”
  Giving A&E opportunity to some sense of reflection/some sense of penance.
  Not where they ought to be.
- Can still discern God but cannot see Him, no longer walking WITH God.
  2-Fold Damage: Does not totally cut us off from God, but does make discerning His presence more difficult.
  Sight of God is taken away from us.
- Now seek refuge in things in which they had dominion, in order to hide their inadequacies.

Step 7: Blame
- Sin cuts straight to the root of our relationship
- See that they’ve been downfall instead of completion of one another.
- Direct attack on the Trinity Image within us.

When you can identify the ritual, you can overcome it! (By Grace)
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Power of God is more powerful.
7 Steps of Grace:
Grace is Simpler than sin. Simplicity is sign of perfection.

Read John 1:26-56
Step 1: Enter Family Structure
-Redemption seeks to reestablish unity
Step 2: Announcement of Saving Plan
- Angel doesn’t mask words, but states it clearly. Direct/ clear announcement of God’s plan by the Angel Gabriel
- Speaks truth of God to embolden Mary. She can act boldly because of clarity
Step 3: Truth
- Every lie must/will be undone by Truth
- Life called to discern truth
- Need humility to let go of little lies we hold onto.
- “True discretion of Truth is not obtained except through humility.”
- Humility allows us to discern truth
Step 4: Be Not Afraid- Entrust
-Where devil manipulates fear, Angel Emboldens Trust.
-Angel knows Mary is troubled, so calls upon her trust.
- Mary knows if it is good and God wills it, she can do it by Grace.

Step 5: The Choice/Act- Fiat
-God does not take away consequences of sin, but gives grace for man to learn to overcome it. God does not “wave a wand” and remove sin of A&E, but teaches man to overcome it!
-Eve falls through Yes to sin. Mary redeemed by Yes to Grace.
-Mary’s yes is not isolated from Grace, because of Christ’s yes to the Father. God is outside of time!
-Sacrifice is always the raw material God uses to convert man to love.
-Jesus comes to show us it is fundamental to sacrifice our lives back to the Father.

Step 6: The Visitation
-Only by living Charity do we know God’s life is in our life.
-Love has to be shared, must go out/cannot be hidden!

Step 7: The Magnificat
-Mary goes out of herself/gifts herself.
-A&E give attention away through blame- Mary gives attention to God [w/o false humility]
-Mary can give perfectly because she knows she is loved by God/knows herself.