

Holy Trinity Catholic Church
RCIA Class Transcript
The Sacrament of Matrimony
Lecturer: Father Francis Peffley
Date: January 18, 2005

Tonight we're going to cover the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. I'll talk for the first part of the class, and after we take our break, then our guest speakers will be speaking to us about their experience with Natural Family Planning.

Let's cover the holy Sacrament of Matrimony. A sacrament is a visible sign instituted by Christ to give us grace. Every sacrament has a visible aspect. In Holy Communion, it's the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. In Baptism, it's the pouring of water. In the Anointing of the Sick, it's being blessed with the oil. In Confirmation, it's also being blessed with oil. In Confession, it's the absolution of the priest.

In matrimony, it's the husband and the wife. They are the sign of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Marriage was elevated from a natural bond to a sacrament by Christ Himself. Marriage existed long before the time of Christ, but before Christ, it was a natural institution, or a human institution. Christ elevated it to a supernatural institution, to a sacred bond.

Marriage is both a *contract* and a *covenant*. We should look for a moment, at the difference between a contract and a covenant. In the Old Testament, the contract idea was very prevalent, which is an agreement between a husband and a wife to live together until death do they part. The essence of the contract consists of the mutual consent, or the exchange of vows, whereas the Christian understanding is not only is marriage a contract, but it is also a sacred covenant.

Covenant is reflective of God's relationship with us. God's relationship with us is a covenant relationship. It's one not merely built upon some legal and binding contract, but it's a much deeper relationship that God wants to have with His people. The word "testament" means covenant. There are two – there's an Old Covenant, and a New Covenant. The Old Covenant is what God made with Moses. The New Covenant is what Christ made with us, what God did for us through Christ.

A covenant is a sacred bond, a sacred contract that God wants to have with us. Jesus talks about it in the New Testament, and St. Paul talks about it in the New Testament, that marriage is a covenant relationship that is a reflection of God's relationship with us. God's relationship with us is tender; it's loving; it's self-giving; and it's self-donating. Therefore, marriage should be a reflection of God's love for us. It is a covenant relationship.

St. Paul also talked about how marriage symbolizes Christ's love for His Church. We have the man and the woman, Christ and the Church. Christ is called the bridegroom in Scripture, and the Church is His bride. We have the love between husband and wife, between man and woman, and it should reflect Christ's love for the Church. Christ's love for the Church is infinite. It's total and sacrificial. When we look at the Crucifix, we see how much God loves us, how much Christ loves us. Namely, He loved us totally, unconditionally, and unselfishly. That's the way Christ loves the Church, which is, of course, us. St. Paul says, "The husband should love his wife, as Christ loves the Church." This idea of the covenant relationship that we have with God should be seen, physically, in the love between husband and wife. Marriage is truly a contract, but it's also a sacred covenant.

The question often comes, "When did Christ elevate this natural bond of marriage into a sacrament?" The Fathers of the Church, or the Great Writers of the Church, say that that occurred at the wedding feast of Cana. When Christ went to the wedding feast of Cana, it says, "He elevated the marriage from a natural bond into a sacrament." That's sort of the tradition, that the presence of Christ at that wedding elevated this natural good into a supernatural good. Remember, a sacrament is something supernatural. Marriage originally was a natural institution, a human institution, but it was raised up by Christ, to be reflective of His relationship with the Church.

For a marriage to be a sacrament, both parties have to be baptized. The man and the woman both have to be baptized for it to be a *sacramental marriage*. A baptized person can marry an unbaptized person, and it's still a true marriage, but it's a natural bond until both are baptized. Once both are baptized, then it's elevated to a sacrament. For example, I know some of you may not be baptized, and you may be married to a baptized Christian. Let's say you get baptized sometime during the marriage. Let's say, when you got married, you were unbaptized, your spouse was a baptized Catholic, or baptized Christian, you were truly married in Holy Matrimony, but it was a natural bond. Let's say you get baptized at the Easter Vigil this coming year. At the moment the water is poured over you, at the moment of your Baptism, you are then given the Holy Sacrament of Marriage. As soon as both parties are baptized, that's when the sacrament is done.

That might be a surprise for you. You're already validly married. However, for it to be a sacrament, both parties have to be baptized. The Sacrament of Matrimony would actually be conferred at the time of your Baptism, which means that it will even strengthen your marriage all the more.

For a marriage to be a valid marriage in the eyes of God and the eyes of the Church, for it to be a sacrament, the man and the woman who come before God to be married have to be free to marry, namely they don't have a previous marriage bond. As you know, marriage is until death do they part. If somebody's

still married to their previous spouse, then that's still considered a valid marriage with their previous spouse, unless the previous spouse passes away. If the Church has examined the previous marriage through the annulment process, and shown that one of the essential ingredients that should have been there at the time of the first marriage was lacking, therefore, perhaps it was not a true marriage from the very beginning. We'll spend a few minutes talking about the annulment process a little bit later.

This man and woman that come together before marriage have to be free to marry. They have to have mutual agreement, and openness to children, and also a desire and an ability to enter into a loving, lasting relationship of communication, and what we call unity of life, or oneness of life.

Before Christ, the Chosen People had gotten away from some of the true teachings of God about Holy Matrimony. Over the course of the years, because some of the Jewish people were intermarrying with some of the pagans, monogamy began to become, in a sense, optional. Of course, that was never the case in God's plan. In God's mind, marriage is monogamous, and polygamy is a sin, even in the natural order, even in natural law. When Christ came, He had to clarify that again. If you look into the Old Testament, Solomon had 300 wives, and 700 concubines. That's an extreme example. That was not the common practice. However, some of the Chosen People had drifted into polygamy, and so, Our Lord had to reiterate the sacredness of the marriage bond.

Also, what happened at the time of Moses, is that Moses had began to grant decrees of divorce, for the sake of the safety of the wife. What was happening was that, in some of the places in the Old Testament, if a husband was displeased with his wife, he couldn't divorce her, so he would have her killed. Because of that, Moses began to soften God's teaching on divorce and remarriage. It was a terrible sin for the husband to kill off his wife, or the wife to kill off the husband, just so he or she could marry again. So Moses, out of the hardness of peoples' hearts, began to grant a decree of divorce.

When the Lord came, He said that was not to be done. It was wrong to grant these decrees of divorce. That's why He said, "And I say to you, he who divorces his wife, and marries another, commits adultery." This is in Luke, Chapter 16, Verse 18. You may want to look up that passage, where Our Lord talks about the indissolubility of marriage. He says, "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery. The man who marries a divorced woman likewise commits adultery." Our Lord is reiterating the indissolubility of marriage. If somebody divorces his spouse, and marries another, if he was truly married, and if the spouse is still living, they'd currently be living in an adulterous relationship, because his first wife is still alive. Our Lord, in a sense, reclarified God's teaching about how, "A man shall leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife, and the two shall become as one. What God has joined, man must not divide." Of course, that does bring an end to the marriage bond, or, if a true marriage never

existed from the beginning, then the Church has that authority from Christ to be able to determine if a true marriage was there from the beginning. If there were serious, essential ingredients that should have been there that were never present, then perhaps, a vow of marriage was never entered upon. That's the annulment process.

Indissolubility is a very important word, the indissolubility of marriage. That's a reflection of Christ's love for His Church. The other great aspect of marriage, besides its indissolubility, is the unity, again reflective of Christ's union with His Church. The Church and Christ are one. Husband and wife are one.

What are the dispositions that somebody should have when they enter into a Christian marriage? First of all, they should prepare for the Christian marriage. They should be very wise and prudent in choosing this soul mate, their spouse, because they're going to be living with that person for the rest of their life. There has to be prudence and wisdom in choosing one's marriage partner. One should really pray about it, to know that this is the person that God wants you to marry. The person should understand one's own faith and responsibilities that come about in marriage, and pray every day for their marriage partner, because marriage is about getting your and your spouse to Heaven. The husband's job is to get his wife to Heaven. The wife's job is to get her husband to Heaven. The two of them together, to raise up children that will one day be in Heaven as well. That's the ultimate goal of marriage, is union with God in Heaven.

It's such an important, such a beautiful sacrament, that Christ elevated it to a sacrament, so that graces would be there for strength, to be able to live out that holy sacrament.

To receive the graces of the Sacrament of Marriage, the person would have to be in the state of grace. We talked about this before. The Sacrament of Matrimony is what's called a sacrament of the living. This means that the person would need to be in the state of grace to receive all the strength, and power, and grace that that sacrament gives. It's the same thing we talked about at Confirmation – you have to be in the state of grace to receive all the strength that God would want to give you in the Sacrament of Confirmation. You might say, "When I was confirmed, I might not have been in the state of grace. Was I validly confirmed?" The answer is yes, you were truly confirmed. The graces won't kick in until the person goes to Confession, and gets back in the state of grace.

The same thing happens in Holy Matrimony. That's an important thing to remember. Let's say you got married in the Church, and you might not have been practicing the Faith that well at the time. Maybe you hadn't gone to Confession in ten years, and you had mortal sins on your soul. Let's say you had been living together as boyfriend and girlfriend before the wedding, committing the sin of fornication, and you never went to Confession before the wedding. What happens in that case? Are we truly married? The answer is yes. You truly did

receive a Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, but all the graces that God wanted to give you won't kick in until you repent of those sins, go to Confession, and seek God's forgiveness. Then the graces of the holy Sacrament of Matrimony will kick in, once you're in the state of grace.

Perhaps that's one of the reasons there are so many divorces in our country, because a lot of times, people getting married, their relationship with God isn't very good. They are truly married, but they don't have the power, or the strength, or the grace to live that sacrament as well as they would like. The people who then later on go to Confession a couple of years after their marriage, or in some cases get baptized, then they receive all these special graces, which is really strength and help from Almighty God.

In every sacrament, there are what we call form and matter. We talked about this a while ago, in some of the other sacraments. The matter of a sacrament is the "stuff" of the sacrament, namely:

- In the Eucharist, it's bread and wine
- In Baptism, it's water
- In Confirmation, it's the anointing

In matrimony, the matter is the husband and the wife, the man and the woman that present themselves before the priest, and two witnesses to exchange their consent, and their intention to enter into a union. The form of a sacrament is the words:

- In the Eucharist, it's, "This is My Body. This is the cup of My Blood."
- In Baptism, it's, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."
- In Confirmation, it's, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The words, that are the form of the sacrament (and matter and form have to be there for a sacrament to be truly valid, and to exist), the words are the exchange of consent and the wedding vows that the couple makes. What's also interesting, in matrimony, is that in all the other sacraments, it's the priest or the Bishop who administers the sacrament; whereas in marriage, it's the couple that administers the sacrament to each other. That's really unique. If you look at all the other sacraments, in the Eucharist, it's the priest who says the words, "This is My Body. This is the cup of my Blood." In Baptism, it's the priest, or the deacon, who pours the water, and says, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." In Confession, it's the priest saying, "I absolve you from your sins." Remember, it's always Christ who says those words through the priest: "I baptize you," "I absolve you," "This is My Body." It's Christ acting through the priest, whereas the one sacrament where that is different is in matrimony. In matrimony, it's the husband and the wife that exchange the sacrament, by making their vows. The priest, or the deacon, is merely the witness.

Does everybody see the difference between that? When you get married, it might be the only sacrament that you'll ever administer, which is a great blessing. You don't even realize that you are administering that sacrament to each other, by your exchange of vows. If you are both baptized, you are administering that sacrament to each other. The priest or deacon is merely the witness for that.

The two purposes of marriage would be summarized by saying "*love and life.*" Those are the two purposes of Holy Matrimony. The love, of course, is the love between husband and wife. The life aspect is procreation and education of children. This word "procreation" is just a perfectly chosen word, because that's what you, as husbands and wives, do. You "pro-create." Obviously, only God can create out of nothing, but He gives husbands and wives that incredible ability, that gift, to participate in the creative act of God. That's why sexuality, marital union, marital relations, is such a sacred thing. It's an incredible act of procreation with God involved. Our guest speakers tonight will talk about the sacredness of marriage, and how contraception is a sin against this life aspect, this life-giving aspect, of marriage; because contraception is a direct violation against this life-giving principle.

In marriage, we have the love-giving principle, which is the man shall leave his father and mother behind, and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become as one. Marriage has this love-giving aspect between spouses. They show their love for each other, and the greatest act of love within marriage is the marital act. The life-giving aspect is the other aspect. Marriage should be love-giving and life-giving. Life-giving, the great ability of procreation, because every new life that's conceived, God Himself has to infuse the immortal soul. The husband and wife supply the material aspect (the body of the child), but God has to provide the soul of the child, which is an immortal soul, made in His image and likeness, which will praise God for all eternity – an amazing thing. We see how marriage should be both love-giving (love between husband and wife), and it should also be life-giving (the procreation and education of children).

You bring children into the world, and it's your sacred duty to raise them in the Faith – to teach them about God, to teach them about Our Lord at the Church, and to educate them. Obviously, not only in arithmetic, and languages, and English, and all those other things, but to educate them in the Faith.

Some of the duties of married couples are, of course, to:

- Love each other in a pure way
- Be devoted to each other
- Love each other till death do they part (the indissolubility aspect of marriage)

The husbands have special duties in marriage. Wives have special duties in marriage. The Catechism talks about some of the duties of husbands, namely to:

- Exercise authority in the marriage, which they receive from God

- Treat their wife with gentleness, love, respect, and to provide for the needs of the spouse, and the children

This is found in Ephesians, Chapter 5, Verse 25. St Paul writes, “Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loves the Church.” How did Christ love the Church? He loved the Church totally, unconditionally, unselfishly, a total self-giving, a self-donation. “Husbands love your wives, as Christ loves the Church, and sacrificed Himself for her to make Her holy.” Husbands sacrifice themselves for their wives. They lay down their life even. That’s what it means to be a husband: to be willing to die for your wife, to be willing to lay down your life for your wife. Paul goes on, “In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own body.” Just as they take care of, respect, and feed and clothe their own bodies, so they too should show love for their wives. For a man to love his wife, is for him to love himself. Remember, the two have become one. It is very, very important.

The special duties of the wife, and The Catechism talks about, are to be devoted, to be watchful, zealous, and industrious in forming the home. The writers have often talked about how the woman is the heart of the home. The man is the spiritual head of the family; the woman, the heart of the family. This is also found in Ephesians, Chapter 5. Paul says, “Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord. Since, as Christ is the head of the Church, and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife. As the Church submits to Christ, so should wives, to their husbands, in everything. Let every wife respect her husband.”

In Scripture, we call this the “Elbow Reading,” or the “Elbow Homily,” because every time we read this at Mass, or every time a homily is given, the husband is elbowing his wife, saying, “Honey, did you hear that? You’re supposed to be submissive to me.” But then, of course, when it says, “Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church. To be willing to sacrifice yourself for your wife,” the wife elbows the husband back, and says, “Did you hear that?”

Paul goes on to talk about the duties of parents to their children. That is, of course, to take care of their physical needs, their intellectual needs, their spiritual needs, and to show the children loving care, and give them example of living in a truly Christian home. St. Paul says, “Parents, never drive your children to resentment, but in bringing them up, correct them, and guide them as the Lord does.” That’s when the kids elbow their parents, saying, “Parents, don’t nag your children, lest they lose heart.” We should be reminded of these sacred duties, of husbands and wives in marriage.

It’s a reflection of the Trinity. Our parish, of course, is Holy Trinity parish. Remember, the Trinity is a unity of love. You have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: three Divine Persons, and yet, One God. In a sense, the Trinity is a family. United, they’re One God, one being, one essence, and yet, three Divine

Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Father. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father. Three distinct Persons, and yet, they're one Being, one Essence, and one God. One God, three Divine Persons - the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

Marriage and family life is to be a reflection of the Blessed Trinity. In the Trinity, The Catechism talks about how, from all eternity, the Father loves the Son, and the love between the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is uncreated and eternal. The eternal love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father, is a Divine Person, namely, the Holy Spirit.

In marriage, the reflection is that the husband loves the wife, and their love is so incredible, so one, that a new life is formed, and that is the child. The child is what we call the incarnation of the love between husband and wife. It's an amazing thought – Bishop Sheen once said that. He said, "When you see a baby, you see your child. You look at that child and say, 'Wow.'" At another time that child would not exist. You procreated that child with God. You procreated that new life with God. Your love was so strong, so intense, that actually, it became incarnate, enfleshed so to speak, in a child. When you see your child, you see the visible incarnation of love between husband and wife. The reflection of your love is made concrete, made visible, in your child. It's such a wonderful thought to think about, how beautiful it is for the husband and wife to come together in the holiest of all actions, the marital embrace, the marital act, and to be procreators with God, in bringing about a child that has an immortal soul, that will praise God for all eternity in Heaven.

(A question). Even in the Book of Genesis, it says, "A man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become as one." That's right in the Book of Genesis, which is the very first book of the Bible. So, it was clear in God's teaching, even from Genesis, that you're only supposed to have one spouse, and that's really written on our heart. It's what we call natural law. It got even clearer when God revealed the Ten Commandments to Moses, when He said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." That was "right in your face." "You're drifting away, people!" This is the commandment – Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness, etc. We'll go through those Ten Commandments, in a couple weeks, one by one. That was a very clear statement of marriage.

There were also the prophets, and we'll talk about that. Many of them talked about marriage as a reflection of God's covenant love for the people. They did bring that out, but it wasn't as clear. Like I said, a lot of them were drifting away from that until Christ came, and said, "He who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery." In some of the people of the Old Testament, they really had a double standard. They were saying it was okay for the man to have multiple wives, but not the woman. She could not have many husbands. She was considered an adulteress – he was considered a great old guy, like Solomon.

That was not right – that double standard. That’s why it was such a shock when Christ said, “The man who divorces his wife, and marries another, commits adultery.” Namely, the man commits adultery. In the Old Testament, they believed it was the woman who was committing adultery if she were to remarry, but not the man. Our Lord clarified that, and said no, it’s not a double standard. This is the way it should be.

(A question). Every child that’s conceived, even if it’s conceived through rape, or incest, or through lust, is a sacred child. God is the One who has to infuse the immortal soul, even if the child was conceived in a bad way, without the love of husband and wife. Let’s say two teenagers living together, or two college kids, and there’s no marriage commitment there, but there was lust, or even during drunkenness, or during a rape, that child is conceived. God is still the One that has to infuse that immortal soul. That child is still made in God’s image and likeness, even if it was conceived in a bad way. Even without love, the child is still sacred and precious. That’s why abortion is always wrong, because it’s a sacred life, and God has infused that immortal soul into the child. The child is still made in the image and likeness of God. We’ll talk about this more in the Fifth Commandment in a couple weeks, when we talk about “Thou shall not kill,” the topic of abortion. Even in cases of rape or incest, the child is conceived; it has a right to life. No one has the right to kill that child, even if it was conceived in a bad way. The child still has dignity. It’s still made in the image and likeness of God. It’s still a child of God, no matter how it was conceived.

(A question). People say, “How is it, if marriage is until death do us part, what’s our relationship like in Heaven?” Jesus had to answer this question in the Bible. The Sadducees came up and said there was a woman who was married to one of seven brothers, and the brother died before they had children. According to Jewish law, the next brother had to marry that woman and raise up children in honor of his brother. That second brother died before children were born. The third brother died before children were born, and the fourth brother, the fifth brother, the sixth brother, and the seventh brother. She went through seven men. This woman was bad luck, as we say. Because all of them died before any children were born, the Sadducee said, “Whose wife will she be in the Resurrection on the Last Day?” Jesus said, “You are badly mistaken, because we will be like the Angels in Heaven. In Heaven, there is neither marriage, nor being given in marriage.” We’ll be like the Angels in Heaven, which means that there won’t be marriage in Heaven, but will your love for your spouse from Earth be stronger or weaker? The answer is that it’ll be stronger in Heaven, because in Heaven everything is perfected, elevated, purified, and ennobled. So, you’ll have a stronger bond with your spouse in Heaven than you could have had on Earth, because everything is perfected in Heaven.

Will you strictly be married in Heaven? No, because we’ll be like the Angels. We won’t have our bodies in Heaven, until the General Resurrection. That’s a later talk in RCIA, when we get our glorified bodies back up in Heaven. When we die,

and our soul goes to Heaven, you're not married in Heaven, but you do have that special relationship with your children, with your spouse, but it's even greater. It's even more sublime, perfected, even more beautiful in Heaven. You still have that special relationship, that special bond, just like you would with a friend you had on Earth, but it'll be even greater than that. Will you strictly be married in Heaven? According to Jesus, you're not actually married in Heaven, but you'll have that special relationship with that person, loving that person even more than you did on Earth.

Sometimes, the question comes up about divorce. The Bible talks about divorce as a dissolution of the marriage bond. A civil divorce does not dissolve a true marriage. If the person was truly married in the eyes of God, a civil divorce does not break that true marriage that existed. Only through death, or through the annulment process (if it can be shown that a true marriage never existed), then that person would be free to enter into their first true marriage. Sometimes the Church allows couples to separate or divorce for grave reasons, either temporarily or permanently, if there's a serious danger to one's physical well-being or spiritual well-being. If one of the parties is an abusive, alcoholic spouse, and for the sake of the safety of the other spouse, or the safety of the children, often times, a separation or a divorce might be acceptable, or lawful, in that case. In God's plan, the ideal situation is marriage until death do you part - a loving relationship of affection, communication, tenderness, and self-giving. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen, because sometimes you marry the wrong person, or the other person has alcohol or drug problems, or gross infidelity, and sometimes it's very difficult to keep a marriage together. Sometimes they go through counseling, and they do everything they can, but the other person just doesn't want to remain married anymore. In some cases, separation or divorce is acceptable, but there are very serious reasons why that would be allowed.

What we've experienced in our culture is a breakdown of marriage and the family. This has been very detrimental to our society, because the family unit, the husband and the wife, is the basic unit of society. Our culture is only as strong as the families. Our society is only as strong as the marriages and the family life that it's built upon. One of the greatest things we can do is to prepare young couples for marriage, so that they don't marry the wrong person, and that they are mature, and have a real understanding of marriage.

There are certain essential ingredients that have to be there for a marriage to be valid in the eyes of God. Some of these things are maturity, that the person has to be at least of a certain age. In The Catechism, it talks about how the male has to be at least 16. The woman, or girl, at least 14. Those are pretty low ages, wouldn't you agree? It's referring to validity, that to be married in the Church, you have to be at least that age. Of course, how many 16-year old boys, and 14-year old girls, are mature enough to enter into a lifetime commitment? Very few.

That's why the Church recommends couples not being married at that young age. They should wait longer, so they have more maturity.

Also, neither of them has to have had a previous marriage. They also have to not be related, as brother and sister, or cousins. If you get further and further apart from the relationship, as distant cousins, there is a degree where somebody can be far enough away related to still be allowed to be married validly. Normally, that's a complicated issue. You have to find out exactly how they're related. There has to be a far enough distance in their relationship for them to enter into a valid marriage. Also, for it to be valid, they have to have an openness to having children.

They have to have an intention of being faithful, and having a permanent relationship, until death do they part. This is talking about the annulment process. The annulment process looks into the marriages to find out were all these ingredients present at the time of the wedding. Sometimes they are present, and sometimes they're not. There are many cases where an annulment is granted, which means a true marriage never existed from the beginning for a couple of reasons. Sometimes, there was a great deal of pressure, or being forced to enter into a relationship. You have the case of a young woman who might come from a very dysfunctional family, with a lot of alcohol abuse, maybe physical abuse. She's 20 years old, and she meets a fellow, and says, "I just have to get out of my house, because it's a terrible situation. I'm getting beaten up." So, she just marries this guy, in a sense, because she felt pressured just to get out of the house. That could possibly diminish her freedom, her ability, to enter into a true marriage.

You also have the case where teenagers get pregnant. They would not have married each other, but because of the child, they go ahead and get married, not because they really love each other, and understand what marriage is all about. In a sense, this baby has forced them, or pressured them, into getting married. That does not always mean it was an invalid marriage, but it could be possible grounds that would have to be examined. Would they have gotten married if the child is not in the picture? That's something that the tribunal would have to look at.

Let's say it was found out that, very shortly after the wedding, the husband was unfaithful, or the wife was unfaithful. If you can prove at the time of their marriage, that one or both never had an intention of being faithful, that could very well invalidate a marriage right from the beginning. That's different than a husband and wife that have a good, solid marriage for 25 years, and one of them commits adultery. That does not invalidate a true marriage. But, if there was an intention from the very start, that could mean maybe it was not a true marriage from the beginning.

That's why I, as a priest, or any other priest, we do not give annulments. Only the Church can do that, after carefully it interviews the individual, and gets three witnesses to fill out questionnaires. That's usually the parents, the brothers, and the sisters of the person involved. After the interviews, and a whole lot of research, trying to determine were all those necessary conditions present at the time of the wedding. Was there openness to having children? Was there an intention of being faithful, and having a permanent relationship until death do you part? Was there an understanding of what marriage is all about? A maturity level? Or, was there being forced into the relationship? Being forced or pressured into the situation?

For example, there are many times people get married just to get a green card, to come into the country. That's what we call a simulation of marriage, where this girl might just want to come into the country, and she marries a guy, and never met him before, just to get the green card. That's an obvious example of a lack of a true marriage bond being established.

Those are just some of the grounds. I know some of you are going through an annulment process already. Some of you might need to do so. I hope that clarifies the situation on what an annulment means. It's not a Catholic divorce. It doesn't mean that a true marriage existed, and now we're dissolving a true sacramental marriage. It means that something was lacking from the very beginning to make it a true marriage in the eyes of God, and the eyes of the Church.

(A question). There were pre-arranged weddings. I think there still are, over in certain countries. Not in Catholic countries, or Christian countries, but in other religions they still have prearranged marriages, maybe Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim, I'm not sure. Some of you may know better than I do. I know that in some of the parts of the world there are still arranged marriages. Arranged marriages could very well be valid. Some of them might not be. You can't say all of them are valid, or all of them are invalid. It depends on a lot of these factors that we talked about. There were cases in rural families where they might have been related as cousins, and that requires special dispensation from the Bishop or the Pope, to be married within a certain relationship.

(At this point, Father Peffley introduced a married couple, who talked about their experience with Natural Family Planning. Their narrative is not included here. The class ended at that point.)