

# faithhelps



## A Learning Companion to FAITH Magazine

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By Paulette Burgess

Vol. 2, Issue 7.1

### Discussion: Vocation and covenant

There is an anecdote about the groom who, when asked at his wedding, "Do you take this woman to be your wife – for richer and for poorer, for better and for worse?" replied "Yes, no, yes, no."

- A **vocation** is a life long calling from God. Matrimony and Holy Orders are referred to as the sacraments of vocation. How do these two sacraments fit that category? Compare and contrast these two important vocations.
- The media often uses the words wedding and marriage interchangeably when, in fact, they have very different meanings. How could a couple have a disastrous wedding but a delightful marriage? How about a perfect wedding and a catastrophic marriage?
- Explain the difference between a contract and a covenant. Why is a civil marriage sometimes called a contract but the sacrament of marriage a covenant?

**Lesson: What can we learn from these wedding traditions?** The wedding ceremony is teeming with ritual and tradition but do you know the origin of these traditions?

- **The bride's white dress** – The secular belief was to symbolize or represent the bride's virginity but the Church sees it as a sacramental. Each of the seven sacraments build upon each other. At our Baptism we "put on Christ" in the form of a pure white garment and at the sacrament of Holy Matrimony we renew our love for Jesus Christ as we begin a new life with our spouse; therefore we "put on Christ" in the form of a white dress.
- **The wedding band** – A circle has no beginning and has no end. As the bride and groom pledge their bond of love before God they vow to remain as one until death do they part.
- **The bride's family on the right and the groom's family on the left** – Many early marriages were arranged as a method of joining families to increase wealth and power. Unfortunately many of these families were archenemies. In order to keep peace during the ceremony they sat on separate sides of the church. For added security the groom was sure to keep his right hand free enabling him to reach across his waist to pull his sword from the sheath if a riff occurred. In order to achieve this his bride must walk on his left.
- **Throwing rice** – Rice represents fertility. The more rice that is thrown the more children the couple will be blessed with.
- **Sharing wedding cake** – The bride and groom take turns feeding each other a piece of wedding cake to represent the desire to care and provide for each other throughout their married life.



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### entering the covenant of marriage

#### Activity: Actions speak louder than words. Practice nonverbal communication.

Statistics claim that the divorce rate in the United States is almost 50%! Many marriage counselors name lack of communication between the husband and wife as one of the leading causes of failed relationships. Some couples don't realize that communication consists of two parts: verbal and nonverbal. "Actions speak louder than words" is a lesson we all should learn. Can you read the nonverbal cues you are receiving from others?

- **Arms folded across the chest** – Stubborn, their mind is made up.
  - **Legs crossed away from you** – uncomfortable in the present situation.
  - **Legs crossed toward you** – relaxed in your presence.
  - **Hands behind back** – unsure of situation, doubtful.
- Facial expressions:**
- **Raised eyebrow** – surprise or doubt.
  - **Furrowed eyebrows** – anger or displeasure.
  - **Biting lower lip** – nervous or unsure.

Test your nonverbal reading skills by turning on a daytime soap opera. Turn the sound off and watch



for nonverbal cues. If they are good actors you will be able to pick up the gist of the scene by their actions alone. Now that you know, be aware of the nonverbal signals you are sending to others!

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By Fr. Bill Ashbaugh  
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### Spiritual Exercise: How to recommit to God and each other

Last year, my mother and father celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We had a Mass and, during it, Mom and Dad renewed their wedding vows to each other. It was a very moving experience for my entire family. It helped us to think about and renew the vows and commitments we have made in our lives.

Renewing our vows and promises is a very powerful experience whenever it occurs. It strengthens the heart and clears away the chaff. It refines and purifies our intentions and our will.

This past year, I celebrated my ninth year as a priest. I was with three other men in the boundary waters of Minnesota who were thinking about vocations and life commitments. One was thinking about becoming a priest, another was married and considering becoming a deacon, and the third had just gotten engaged to be married. Each of these vocations require the gift of one's whole self. It was a great and deep joy for me to cele-

brate the Eucharist with all of them on my anniversary day and to pray for them and their desire to commit themselves to God. I could not think of a better time to do it!

Christ's self-offering at Mass and His commitment to us empowers all of us to commit ourselves to Him. His love enables us to love in return. Love is at the heart of commitment.



#### October Exercise

For our Spiritual Fitness this issue, I would like to offer a number of ways we can renew our commitment to God and one another.

##### 1 Morning self-offering

When you wake up, thank God for the day and offer yourself and the day to Him. Pray: "Thank you God for this day. I am your servant Lord. I offer myself to you and all that this day holds. Help me to be your faithful servant, Lord. Amen."

##### 2 Renew your commitments in the context of Mass

At Mass, think of all of your life commitments and then renew them by an act of your will. Put yourself on the altar with the bread and wine

and offer yourself – your voice, your attention, your praise and your thanks to God. Offering one's whole self to God is never easy. One of the beautiful prayers that I know some priests say is: "Lord, may I celebrate this Eucharist in union with you, as though it were my first Eucharist, my only Eucharist, my last Eucharist."

##### 3 Face to face renewal of a commitment

If you have made a commitment to someone, go to them and tell them face to face that you renew your commitment to them. If married, plan with your spouse to renew your marriage vows on your anniversary day. Many married couples I

know do so in the context of Mass where they can pledge their love to each other, and then receive Jesus in Holy Communion as a reminder that the love and life they share comes from Him.

##### 4 Recommit your life to God right now

Say the following prayer: "Father in heaven, you have created me. I am nothing without you. I thank you for everything in my life. I thank you for Jesus. Jesus, I want to be closer to you. With the help of your grace, I commit myself to you and your care. Take me Lord, and hide me

in your wounds. Breathe into me your breath of life. Breathe your Holy Spirit into me, so that I may live and be all yours. Take out my stony heart, and give me a heart of flesh. Renew in me a steadfast spirit and sustain me. Keep me along your paths and do not let me go astray. Give me a determination of spirit to keep my promises to you and to everyone that I have made special commitments to in my life. Amen."

– Fr. Bill Ashbaugh is pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Howell



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