

Prayer Book

for

Spouses



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PUBLISHERS TO THE HOLY SEE

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The need to pray

God has blessed the love of married people from the beginning. The Lord Jesus refined and raised up this love with a special gift of grace and charity which is conferred on the couple on the day of their marriage. Praying together will help the couple to preserve and enrich that highest of values, their love, in their marriage.



Lord, may they both praise you when they are happy and turn to you in their sorrows.

May they be glad that you help them in their work and know that you are with them in their need.

May they pray to you in the community
of the Church,

and be your witnesses in the world.

May they reach old age in the company
of their friends,

and come at last to the kingdom of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.¹





Prayer of Engaged Couples

Engaged couples will want to ask the blessing of God at this important stage of their lives. They will want to prepare themselves for their wedding, and pray that their love may grow in the light and strength of the love Christ has for his Church: the love of which the sacrament of marriage will be the sign.



Father, in my heart love has come alive for a person you made, and whom you too know and love. It was you who brought me to meet her (him) and come to know her (him), as once, in paradise, you brought Eve and Adam together so that man should not remain alone. I thank you for this gift. It fills me with profound joy. It makes me like you, who are love itself, and brings me to understand the value of the life you have given me.

Help me not to squander the riches you have stored in my heart. Teach me that love is a gift that must not be suffocated by selfishness; that love is pure and strong and must not be soiled or corrupted; that love is fruitful and should, beginning

even now, open up a new life for myself and the person who has chosen me.

Loving Father, I pray for the person who is thinking of me and waiting for me, and who has placed in me complete trust for the future; I pray for this person who will walk along the path of life with me; help us to be worthy of one another and to be an encouragement and example to one another. Help us to prepare for marriage, for its grandeur and for its responsibilities, so that the love which fills us body and spirit may rule our lives for evermore. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Approaching marriage

As you know, you are about to enter into a union which is most sacred and most serious, a union which was established by God himself. By it he gave man a share in the greatest work of creation, the work of the continuation of the human race. And in this way he sanctified human love and enabled man and woman to help each other live as children of God, by sharing a common life under his fatherly care.

Because God himself is thus its author, marriage is of its very nature a holy institution, requiring of

those who enter into it a complete and unreserved giving of self. But Christ our Lord added to the holiness of marriage an even deeper meaning and a higher beauty. He referred to the love of marriage to describe his own love for his Church, that is, for the people of God whom he redeemed by his own blood. And so he gave to Christians a new vision of what married life ought to be, a life of self-sacrificing love like his own. It is for this reason that his apostle, St Paul, clearly states that marriage is now and for all times to be considered a great mystery, intimately bound up with the supernatural union of Christ and the Church, which union is also to be its pattern.

The union is most serious, because it will bind you together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate that it will profoundly influence your whole future. That future, with its hopes and disappointments, its successes and its failures, its pleasures and its pains, its joys and its sorrows, is hidden from your eyes. You know that these elements are mingled in every life and are to be expected in your own. And so, not knowing what is before you, you take each other for better or worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death.

Truly, then, these words are most serious. It is a beautiful tribute to your undoubted faith in each other, that, recognizing their full import, you are nevertheless so willing and ready to pronounce them. And because these words involve such solemn obligations, it is most fitting that you rest the security of your wedded life upon the great principle of self-sacrifice. And so you begin your married life by the voluntary and complete surrender of your individual lives in the interest of that deeper and wider life which you are to have in common. Henceforth, you belong entirely to each other; you will be one in mind, one in heart, and one in affections.

And whatever sacrifices you may hereafter be required to make to preserve this common life, always make them generously. Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy, and perfect love can make it a joy. We are willing to give in proportion as we love. And when love is perfect, the sacrifice is complete. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son and the Son so loved us that he gave himself for our salvation. "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends."

No greater blessing can come to your married life than pure conjugal love, loyal and true to the end. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts today never fail, but grow deeper and

stronger as the years go on. And if true love and the unselfish spirit of perfect sacrifice guide your every action, you can expect the greatest measure of earthly happiness that may be allotted to man in this vale of tears. The rest is in the hands of God. Nor will God be wanting to your needs; he will pledge you the life-long support of his graces in the holy sacrament which you are now going to receive.²



The domestic church

In virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony by which they signify and share (cf. *Eph* 5:32) the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing of their children. Hence by reason of their state in life and of their position they have their own gifts in the People of God (cf. 1 *Cor* 7:7). From the marriage of Christians there comes the family in which new citizens of human society are born and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, those are made children of God so that the People of God may be perpetuated throughout the centuries. In what might be regarded as the domestic Church, the parents, by word and example are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They must foster the vocation which is

strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state — though each in his own way — are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect.³



Love one another

I give you a new commandment:
Love one another;
Just as I have loved you,
You must also love one another.
By this love you have for one another,
Everyone will know that you are my disciples.
(*John* 13:34-35)





Recalling our Promises

Bond of marriage

Father, in the great mystery of your love you have consecrated the bond of marriage as a symbol of Christ's union with his Church. May our lives give witness to the sacrament we celebrate in faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.⁴



Freedom

We are ready freely and without reservation to give ourselves to each other in marriage. We are ready to love and honour each other as man and wife for the rest of our lives. We are ready to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church.⁵



Consent

I take you for my lawful husband (wife), according to the rite of our holy Mother the Church.

I take you to be my lawful wedded husband (wife) to have and to hold from this day forward,

for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part.

We have declared our consent before the Church. May the Lord in his goodness strengthen our consent and fill us both with his blessings. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.⁶



Blessing and rings

May the Lord bless these rings which we give each other as a sign of our love and fidelity. May the Lord bless and consecrate us in our love for each other. Grant that we who wear these rings may always have a deep faith in each other. May we do God's will and always live together in peace, good will and love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.⁷



Nuptial Blessing

Father, by your power you have made everything out of nothing.

In the beginning you created the universe and made mankind in your own likeness.

You gave man the constant help of woman
so that man and woman should no longer be two,
 but one flesh,
and you teach us that what you have united
may never be divided.

Father, you have made the union of man and wife
so holy a mystery
that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ
 and his Church.

Father, by your plan man and woman are united,
and married life has been established
as the one blessing that was not forfeited by
 original sin
or washed away in the flood.

Look with love upon this woman, your daughter,
now joined to her husband in marriage.
She asks your blessing.
Give her the grace of love and peace.

May she always follow the example
 of the holy women
whose praises are sung in the scriptures.

May her husband put his trust in her
and recognize that she is his equal
and the heir with him to the life of grace.

May he always honour her and love her
as Christ loves his bride, the Church.

Father, keep them always true
to your commandments.
Keep them faithful in marriage
and let them be living examples of Christian life.

Give them the strength which comes
from the gospel
so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others.
Bless them with children
and help them to be good parents.
May they live to see their children's children.
And, after a happy old age,
grant them fullness of life with the saints
in the kingdom of heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.⁸



Indissolubility

The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. Hence by that human act whereby spouses mutually bestow and accept each other a relationship arises which by divine will and in the eyes of society too is a lasting one.⁹



Children

By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown. Thus a man and a woman, who by their compact of conjugal love “are no longer two, but one flesh” (*Mt* 19:6), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day. As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them.¹⁰



Love and marriage

Christ the Lord abundantly blessed this many-faceted love, welling up as it does from the fountain of divine love and structured as it is on the model of His union with His Church. For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Saviour of people and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.¹¹



Human love

The biblical Word of God several times urges the betrothed and the married to nourish and develop their wedlock by pure conjugal love and undivided affection. Many people of our own age also highly regard true love between husband and wife as it manifests itself in a variety of ways depending on the worthy customs of various peoples and times.

This love is an eminently human one since it is directed from one person to another through an

affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity, ennobling these expressions as special ingredients and signs of the friendship distinctive of marriage. This love God has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting and exalting gifts of grace and of charity. Such love, merging the human with the divine, leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves, a gift providing itself by gentle affection and by deed; such love pervades the whole of their lives: indeed by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater. Therefore it far excels mere erotic inclination, which, selfishly pursued, soon enough fades wretchedly away.¹²



One in heart and mind

Holy Father, you created mankind in your own image and made man and woman to be joined as husband and wife in union of body and heart and so fulfill their mission in this world.

Father, to reveal the plan of your love, you made the union of husband and wife an image of the covenant between you and your people.

In the fulfillment of this sacrament, the marriage of Christian man and woman is a sign of the marriage between Christ and the Church. Father, stretch out your hand, and bless them both.

Lord, grant that as they begin to live this sacrament they may share with each other the gifts of your love and become one in heart and mind as witnesses to your presence in their marriage. Help them to create a home together and give them children to be formed by the gospel and to have a place in your family.

Give your blessings to your daughter, so that she may be a good wife and mother, caring for the home, faithful in love for her husband, generous and kind. Give your blessings to your son, so that he may be a faithful husband and a good father.

Father, grant that as they come together to your table on earth, so they may one day have the joy of sharing your feast in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.¹³





Open to Life Together

Loving new life

O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the true God and Mother of the Church, grant to our homes the grace of loving and respecting life in its beginnings, with the same love with which you conceived in your womb the life of the Son of God. Blessed Virgin Mary, protect our families, so that they may always be united, and bless the upbringing of our children.

Our hope, look upon us with compassion, teach us to go continually to Jesus and, if we fall, help us to rise again, to return to him, by means of the confession of our faults and sins in the Sacrament of Penance, which gives peace to the soul. We beg you to grant us a great love for all the holy Sacraments, which are, as it were, the signs that your Son left us on earth.¹⁴



Prayer before making love

Father, send your Holy Spirit into our hearts. Place within us love that truly gives, tenderness that truly unites, self-offering that tells the truth and does not deceive, forgiveness that truly receives, loving physical union that welcomes. Open our hearts to you, to each other and to the goodness of your will.

Cover our poverty in the richness of your mercy and forgiveness. Clothe us in our true dignity and take to yourself our shared aspirations, for your glory, for ever and ever. Mary, our Mother, intercede for us. Amen.



Prayer to have a child

God our Father, all parenthood comes from you. Allow us to share in that power which is yours alone, and let us see in the child you send us a living sign of your presence in our home. Bless our love and make it fruitful so that a new voice may join ours in praise of you, a new heart love you, and a new life bear witness to you. Amen.



Prayer for openness

Father, you desire so much for us. Your plan for our happiness far exceeds any dream or hope we could ever think of on our own.

We ask you Father, to open our hearts to receive your ambition for our marriage.

May we overcome any resistance we might have, such as fear of failing or of being rejected, feeling unworthy or hopeless. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.¹⁵



Prayer for trust

Father, we praise you for your goodness. Thank you for bringing us together and for supporting us in our marriage. Help us to trust. Help us to overcome any barriers to trusting each other. Give us courage, compassion, hope, wisdom and persistence. Give us an open heart so that we might truly hear and see the pain that our spouse is experiencing and have the courage of self-sacrificing love to ease their burdens. We ask this through Jesus, our Lord. Amen.¹⁶



Prayer of Tobias and Sarah

The Book of Tobit recounts the story of this young couple. Their love is guided by God's angel Raphael, and protected from the demons through prayer - seen in the messianic symbol of the heart of the fish. Christian couples are encouraged to surround their love making in prayer and gratitude.

When they had finished eating and drinking and it seemed time to go to bed, the young man was taken from the dining room to the bedroom. Tobias remembered Raphael's advice; he went to his bag, took the fish's heart and liver out of it and put some on the burning incense. The reek of the fish distressed the demon, who fled through the air to

Egypt. Raphael pursued him there, and bound and shackled him at once.

The parents meanwhile had gone out and shut the door behind them. Tobias rose from the bed, and said to Sarah, ‘Get up, my sister! You and I must pray and petition our Lord to win his grace and his protection.’ She stood up, and they began praying for protection, and this was how he began:

You are blessed, O God of our fathers;
blessed, too, is your name for ever and ever.
Let the heavens bless you
and all things you have made for evermore.
It was you who created Adam,
you who created Eve his wife
to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race was born.
It was you who said,
“It is not good that the man should be alone;
let us make him a helpmate like himself”.
And so I do not take my sister
for any lustful motive;
I do it in singleness of heart.
Be kind enough to have pity on her and on me
and bring us to old age together.
And together they said, ‘Amen, Amen’,
and lay down for the night.¹⁷



The couple's happiness

You are blessed, my God, with every blessing that is pure; may you be blessed for evermore! You are blessed for having made me glad. What I feared has not happened; instead you have treated us with mercy beyond all measure.

You are blessed for taking pity on this only son, this only daughter. Grant them, Master, your grace and your protection; let them live out their lives in happiness and in grace.¹⁸



Song of the Bride

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.
Your love is more delightful than wine;
delicate is the fragrance of your perfume,
your name is an oil poured out,
and that is why the maidens love you.
Draw me in your footsteps, let us run.
The King has brought me into his rooms;
you will be our joy and our gladness.
We shall praise your love above wine;
how right it is to love you.

How beautiful you are, my Beloved,
and how delightful!

His left arm is under my head,
his right embraces me.

My Beloved lifts up his voice,
he says to me,
'Come then, my love,
my lovely one, come.
For see, winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth.
The season of glad songs has come,
the cooing of the turtledove is heard
in our land.
The fig tree is forming its first figs
and the blossoming vines give out their fragrance.
Come then, my love,
my lovely one, come.

My dove, hiding in the clefts of the rock,
in the coverts of the cliff,
show me your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet
and your face is beautiful.¹⁹



Song of the Bridegroom

Come from Lebanon, my promised bride,
come from Lebanon, come on your way.

You ravish my heart,
my sister, my promised bride,
you ravish my heart
with a single one of your glances,
with one single pearl of your necklace.

What spells lie in your love,
my sister, my promised bride!

How delicious is your love,
more delicious than wine!

How fragrant your perfumes,
more fragrant than all other spices!

Your lips, my promised one,
distil wild honey.

Honey and milk are under your tongue;
and the scent of your garments
is like the scent of Lebanon.

Set me like a seal on your heart,
like a seal on your arm.

For love is strong as death,
jealousy relentless as Sheol.

The flash of it is a flash of fire,
a flame of the LORD himself.

Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown.²⁰



Expecting a child

Father, we thank you for your marvellous gift; you have allowed us to share in your divine parenthood. During this time of waiting, we ask you to protect and nurture these first mysterious stirrings of life. May our child come safely into the light of the world and to the new birth of baptism. Mother of God, we entrust our child to your loving heart. Amen.



After the birth of a child

Father, we thank you with all our heart for the child you have given us. We consecrate him (her) to you; let us remember he (she) is yours as well as ours. Help us to bring up our child to be a source of your blessing. Amen.



Children: gift of marriage

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. The God Himself Who said, “it is not good for man to be alone” (*Gn* 2:18) and “Who made man from the beginning male and female” (*Mt* 19:4), wishing to share with man a certain special

participation in His own creative work, blessed male and female, saying: "Increase and multiply" (*Gn 1:28*). Hence, while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Saviour, Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day.²¹



Transmission of life

For God, the Lord of life, has conferred on people the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life in a manner which is worthy of man. Therefore from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes. The sexual characteristics of man and the human faculty of reproduction wonderfully exceed the dispositions of lower forms of life. Hence the acts themselves which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity must be honoured with great reverence. Hence when there is question of harmonising conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere

intentions or on an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. Such a goal cannot be achieved unless the virtue of conjugal chastity is sincerely practised.

Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law. All should be persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of human beings.²²



What is love?

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end. (1 *Cor* 13:4-8)





Prayers of a Married Couple

Remember us today

Father, all-powerful and eternal God, we give you thanks and bless your holy name. You created mankind as man and woman and blessed their union, making them a help and support for each other. Remember us today. Look kindly on us and grant that our love may be completely unselfish, a gift like that of Christ to his Church. May we live many years together in joy and peace, and may we always give you heartfelt praise through your Son and in the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Teach us to love

Father, you called us to found this family together. Give us the grace to animate it with your love: may our family always comfort those who live in it and welcome those who enter it. Teach us to make progress in your sight through our love for each other, to do your will all the days of our life, to submit our plans to you, to ask your help, to offer you our joys and sorrows, and to lead to you the children you give us. Lord, you are Love; we thank you for our love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of dedication of newly married couple
to the Precious Blood**

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the joy of our wedding. Through all the years of our life you have watched over us to bring us together in holy Christian marriage. Lord, bless us, for we are united in love of you and of each other. Redeemed by your Precious Blood and strengthened by your grace, may we live in kindness and fidelity, in unflinching trust and love so that our whole life may be pleasing to you.

Mary, who with Joseph made a happy home at Nazareth for Jesus, take us into your motherly care. You who showed concern for a newly married couple at Cana, help and us. May our union on earth lead to that eternal union in which all the blessed will be joined together, praising the Redeeming Blood of Jesus, the Lord. Amen.²³



Prayer for spousal unity

O God, by your power you have made everything out of nothing.

In the beginning you created the universe and made us in your own likeness.

You gave man the constant help of woman so that man and woman should no longer be two, but one flesh, and you teach us that what you have united may never be divided.

Lord Jesus, look with love upon us in our life together as husband and wife.

We ask your blessing to live with each other in peace and harmony.

May we always bear with one another's weaknesses and grow from each other's strengths.

Help us to forgive one another's failings and grant us patience, kindness, cheerfulness and the spirit of placing the well-being of one another ahead of self.

May the love that brought us together grow and mature with each passing year.

Bring us both ever closer to you through our love for each other. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Gratitude and trust

We thank you, O God, for the love you have implanted in our hearts.

May it always inspire us to be kind in our words, considerate of feelings, and concerned for each other's needs and wishes. Help us to be understanding and forgiving of our human imperfection.

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