

God's Love and Human Love
& the Sacrament of Marriage

From

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¶ Dominus vobiscum.

¶ Et cum spiritu tuo.

¶ Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

¶ Ex hoc nunc et usque in sæculum.

¶ Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.

¶ Qui fecit cælum et terram.

¶ Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater + et Filius + et Spiritus + Sanctus.

¶ Amen.

Gegrüßet seist du, Maria, voll der Gnade,

der Herr ist mit dir.

*Du bist gebenedeit unter den Frauen,
und gebenedeit ist die Frucht deines Leibes,
Jesus, **der Du in uns die Liebe entzünde.***

Heilige Maria, Mutter Gottes,

bitte für uns Sünder,

jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Todes. Amen.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 13,4-8

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1. God's Love and Human Love

Love, marriage, family and what might be connected to them: the human dignity and also salvation – these are in these times far removed from being seen as taken-for-granted. Rather, for some people they seem to be coming directly out of the past. Nonetheless, they are what they are and what they have always been. And aren't they also very much part of a truly human dimension? We want to ask ourselves: What is it really? And this is very much connected to the question: What is man – what does it mean to be human?

What is love?

Defining the word “love” is not that easy. We see how many things we can “love” and realize how different it can be every time. It is a difference whether I love my job, my hobby, my parents, my home and country, my cat a good pizza, or other people. The word “love” has for some become easily and inflationary used, sometimes misused. We can associate completely different meanings with it. But it pays off to investigate this thing called love a little bit, because we feel how our whole life somehow revolves around it - if it does.

In all the variety of meanings, however, when we hear the word love, we might think of a good feeling and of a romantic idea. In this sense it is a ***longing*** (Deutsch: *Sehnsucht*) for someone out there in the world who is made for me, my “second half”, someone who fulfils and completes me: prince and princess. It is this love between man and woman, in whom a promise of happiness is born, which seems irresistible, appears as the archetype of love par excellence. Incidentally, the archetype for love is the sacrificial loving mother. (This might also be the reason Christians admire and worship Mary, the “Mother of God”.)



As Christians we have a specific approach to the theme of love. Somehow it is related to God. The whole thing of love has its last foundation in God because we believe in a God who is love himself and loves us. We are his children he loves and cares for. He created us because he loves us so that we love like he loves us. Love in this **divine dimension** is thus even more than a feeling, romance, and hormones. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical (Papal writing) “*Deus caritas Est*” (God is Love), dealt with the theme:

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him’ (1 John 4:16). In these words, from the First Letter of John, the centre of the Christian faith, the Christian image of God and also the image of man and his way that follows from it, is expressed with unique clarity. Moreover, in the same verse John also gives us, so to speak, a formula for Christian existence: ‘We have known the love God has for us and we have believed it.’”

Let us take a step back and try to analyse the phenomenon of love a little closer. Basically, experts, philosophers and scientists agree: *We love what does us good*. Let us take an example: a good pizza. If something is good for us, we feel attracted to it. That is an important aspect of love. We make the experience that we need something from outside ourselves. We realise that we are not enough. We need other things to fill a void. Basically, we need food and clothes. But we also make the experience that we need another person who complements us. The old philosophers called love as attraction *Eros*, which in its original meaning is an ***attraction*** and longing in general. However, feeling that we need someone else, we should not make the mistake of treating others like a pizza. A friend does us good, but we cannot just use him like a thing. That is logical, isn't it?

Assignment: What can you say about love?

What is love to you? What other terms do you associate with love? Are there symbols for love?

Create your personal sociogram (mindmap) with the people who are important to you. Draw on the relationship lines what kind of relationship (e.g. honour, devotion, respect...) there is between you and the other person. If you like: Characterize the person or your relationship with a symbol.

Are there possibly more different expressions and forms of love? If so, which ones do you know?

Do you experience that the love for someone else and love of this person to you complete you and help you to become more yourself?

Sympathy

In fact, there is a different dimension to the phenomenon called "love" as there are different things we love like a class in school, a pizza, or a cat. One of them is sympathy. Sympathy is not so much about someone being good for me, but more about me finding someone good, liking him. It is about something we feel good about and we value. If, for example, it is important to me to be friendly to others, then someone who is friendly is sympathetic to me. That is why not everyone finds everyone sympathetic, because every person is a huge complex of many values. Sometimes we cannot say exactly why we like someone or why someone makes us happy. Pope John Paul II philosophically examined love and called this aspect ***appreciation***. That someone pleases us is not yet a conscious decision. Sympathy is primarily a matter of feelings. These feelings refer to values that we find in others because we have them ourselves. At this point we should be careful because we tend to reduce love to "real feelings". This is not entirely wrong, but we must always ask ourselves if the other person really has these values or if I myself have the right values at all. And we have to be cautious and bear in mind that it might be wishful thinking that the person we value has the values we hope for. Feelings can be real, but not what we refer them to. We must therefore always strive to see the other in all his truth, that is, as he really is.

2. Different Dimensions of Love

We spoke of different dimension of love, such as attraction and appreciation. One more dimension would be **affection** (*Zuneigung*): Affection is that form of love which is fundamental in many relationships and is characterized by sympathy and **trust**. It is also usually not consciously experienced or noticed, and often it is only the lack of it that makes us aware of it. Affection, for example, is the natural movement between mother and child. One could describe it as natural and spontaneous friendship.

Unlike in English or German there are different words for the phenomena called love in other languages, which can give us a deeper understanding of the content and dimensions of love. In Greek there are three different terms for that: *Philia*, *Eros* and *Agape*.

*Assignment: Research the meaning of the words **Philia**, **eros** and **apage** and fill in the missing fields:*

	Philia	Eros	Agape (Latin: <i>Caritas</i>)
<i>Kind of Love</i>	Between friends, people who appreciate each other	Desiring love, attractive power, passion	Giving love, connection of the soul, devotion, divine dimension, sacrifice
<i>Further descriptions</i>			
<i>Duration</i>			
<i>Interests (wellbeing myself/others)</i>			
<i>Promise</i>			unconditional
<i>Duration</i>			

Philia = Friendship

Let us have closer look at friendship, which in ancient understanding is also a dimension of love. It was the philosopher Aristoteles who analysed friendship and said that it can exist between people for various reasons: 1) because one benefits from the other (=common interests), 2) because it is enjoyable, e.g. doing sports together, or 3) because a friend wants something good for his friend. In the latter understanding Aristoteles would speak of a friendship as a **virtue**.

We need to have closer look at the friendship and focus on that good we just spoke of. *Philia* contains three important elements. There is something I want *for* another person. This includes that there is a good, which is want for another, a “you” and not the only the “I”; it is simply *wanted* for another person. So this love is not just some dull feeling, sympathy, an affection or attraction. It includes all of those, but there is one more dimension, namely an **act of the will**. In other words, to turn sympathy into true friendship and love, a decision (*Entscheidung*) is needed. Your thoughts?

Eros

Well, and then there is *eros*. *Eros* generally refers to a desiring, passionate or romantic love. In this sense, in antiquity *eros* was overpowering reason as a divine power, an equivalent to “life energy”, it was even a God. It was further also referred to as *theia mania* (“madness from the Gods”). This **passion** was often described involving a “love’s arrow”. If these arrows would “wound” someone and overwhelm this person with desire and longing, also referred to as “lovesickness”. (It said that there is no cure for this kind love.)



Eros however has undergone various interpretations over the course of time. Today it (unfortunately) terms as “erotic” and includes everything from sensuality and passions to sex and perversities. *Eros* is degraded to sex. And this is not even an affirmation of the human body, because sexuality is seen as a mere material thing that is used and often exploited.

About a 100 year ago, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalyses, observed the phenomenon of a dehumanization through an exaggerated stimulation of the sexual instinct: “Children who are sexually stimulated are no longer fit to be raised. The destruction of **shame** causes a disinhibition (*Enthemmung*) in all other areas, a brutalization and disregard for the personality of the fellow human being.” This observation is of course also applicable to adults. The personality of the “lecher” (*Wüstling*) is often described as insensitive,不顾后果, false, and cruel. So – what is shame?

At this point the (epidemic) problem of pornography should shortly be addressed and with it the early sexualisation and thus the destruction of shame which deliberately occurs in most schools and through the media. The consequences of the consumption of pornography are rarely mentioned.

Firstly, there is a big threat of addiction, which has scientifically been proved. Secondly, it also not only ruins relationships, but also raises the inability to have good, solid, and lasting relationships. It devalues intimacy as something **holy** and everything what is needed to have a good relationship, namely sensitivity and self-control. Porn is a selfish pursuit of pleasing one’s own desires, thus cultivating selfishness – making people become losers. Thirdly, moreover it supports an entire industry, which is built upon a complete disrespect for the dignity of women. Christianity and the Church were always against pornography, as they are against prostitution.

Eros thus, we can say, can be destructive. But it is not bad in itself. It needs to be transformed. This understanding Plato had. Plato argued that *eros* is initially felt for a person, but with contemplation it can become an appreciation for the beauty within that person, or even an **appreciation for beauty** itself in an ideal sense. As Plato expressed it, *eros* can help the soul to “remember” beauty in its pure form. It follows from this, that it can contribute to an understanding of truth.

Eros is described in the book *Song of Songs* of the *Bible*. Considering that Jesus Christ resurrected with his body, Christianity does value the corporal dimension of man. However, the *Bible* has warned of the drunken, undisciplined *eros*. In this sense it does not lead to the divine, but to the fall of man. We are also threatened by this fall today. In Christian understanding *eros* needs **purification**, so that it can lift us to the height of our existence. Purification and thus also maturation (*Reifung*) are not possible by overpowering and suppressing desires, but by practicing virtue, especially moderation, as well as strengthening our self-control and also the willingness to make sacrifices. In other words: *Eros* requires for its completion something called benevolence (*Wohlwollen*) and Agape.

3. More on the Eros

In the last chapter we had a look at *philia* and *eros*, which are both Greek words. *Eros* is a word which can be understood very differently. Its main characteristic is permanent aspiration and desire. Even when it seems to give, *eros* continues to be a “desire to possess”, but nevertheless it is different from a purely sensual love in being the love that tends towards the supernatural. This understanding the philosopher Plato had. *Eros* is neither purely human nor purely divine, it is something intermediate.

According to Plato, the gods do not love, because they do not experience desires, inasmuch as their desires are all satisfied. They can thus only be an object, not a subject of love (*Symposium*). *Eros* is thus the way that leads man to divinity, but not vice versa. Nevertheless, *eros* remains always, for Plato, an egocentric love: it tends toward conquering and possessing the object that represents a value for man. To love the good signifies to desire to possess it forever. Love in the sense of the *eros* is therefore always a desire for immortality.

*Assignment: Research the **Myth of the Missing Half** from Plato's Symposium (the spherical man/Kugelmensch) and write it down in your own words on one page*

- Youtube: *Greek god Zeus – Splitting of Man – Greek Mythology*,
- *Speech of Aristophanes* (in the language of love),
- Or: *Plato – Symposium (The Drinking Party) Full Play*.

Benevolence

There is one aspect of all the dimension of love, which was mentioned talking about *philia* and which we need to have a closer look at. Aristotle reminded of a love of friendship, which includes: “to want **a good for someone else**.” This attitude, which includes a decision, is called “benevolence”, in German: *Wohlwollen*. I want what is good for the other. Here love is not just a feeling that possesses me, where we say: “I am falling in love”, although this is partially true. Still, benevolence means that love becomes something where I actively do something. Because in order to do something good for the other, a decision is needed that is made with my heart. Without this decision there will never be a real friendship and never a happy ending (for prince and princess).

Love as benevolence is most likely what we understand as pure or true love that gives selflessly without expecting anything. The interesting thing about it is that you do not go away empty-handed. On the contrary, love as benevolence is the kind of **love that fulfills** us. Why? Because it is the kind of love through which we really fully realize ourselves as human beings, provided we overcome our egoism and are ready to give. Selfless love is where we go beyond ourselves. Pope Benedict XVI once said: “Where we release our closed self and thus find ourselves”. Certainly, the aspects of attraction, feelings and sympathy for love belong to it. But without benevolence, loving others cannot succeed. We must want the good for the other for his own sake.

Storge

The old Greek also spoke about one other dimension of love, which they called *storge*. This is the familial love which refers to natural or instinctual affection, such as the love of a parent towards offspring and vice versa. It is an inner connection you have for your blood relatives.



Agape

Agape, finally, is a word, which is not easily described. One can say that it is a form of friendship in which one loves the other not only for his own sake, but **the other's sake**. It is *philia* in its true and highest form: The good is seen in the other. More than material goods I want higher goods, such as happiness, for my friend. These are goods that make him a better person.

Agape thus is a selfless love. The Latin word for *agape* is *caritas* (which can also be translated as dearness), the English word is *charity*. It is the word for love that is most often used in the New Testament. This sacrificial kind of love (Greek: *agape*) is also characteristic of God's love for us, which means that *agape* has a **spiritual dimension**. (*Agape hat nicht nur eine geistige, sondern auch seelische Dimension.*) In selfless loving, one no longer sees only man's natural goal, but his supernatural destiny. We love the other also for God's sake.

The experience of *agape* is the discovery of the other and thus the overcoming of all selfish traits. Love becomes care of the other and for the other. In this sense, the word **ecstasy** originally means a constant way out of the self-contained ego to release the ego, to surrender and thus to true self-discovery. In this context, the inner interweaving of love of God and love of neighbour should be remembered. *Agape* is an expression of love formed in faith. As is well known, the Greatest Commandment of God's **revelation** is as follows:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the greatest and first commandment. But another is like it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (*Matthew 22, 37-40*)

"God is love" (1 John 4,7)

So far, we have discovered different dimensions in our analysis of love. The dimension of attraction means that we do not suffice to ourselves. We feel that someone else complements us, we are **completed**. The dimension of sympathy means that we find others good and that we should strive to discover the true good and bring it out in the other. The dimension of the good will includes our active response; it is the place where we can commit ourselves to true love. Love is true when we want what is good for the other. From God we can now learn another dimension of love that transcends the three dimensions. God, after all, sacrificed his own Son for the sins of mankind. "There is no greater love than when one gives his own life for the other" (*Jesus, John, 15,13*).

That is exactly what God did for us, he gave himself. For you and for me. From him we learn what selfless devotion is. As Christians, we believe in something incredibly great, namely, that God is love. And that we are only in this world because of that, so that we live to love our loved ones. And this kind of love also happens in the special love of marriage. Two people give themselves to each other. One gives his own self to the other, so to speak. That is something else rather than simply wanting what is good for the other. Pope John Paul II calls this "nuptial love". But this **self-giving** does not mean to give up oneself, nor should it be one sided – it should be mutual. When we surrender and lose ourselves, we gain our own self. In particular, it enables us as a person to mature and develop our personality. "I love you" also always means to discover that the other is good, simply because s/he exists, and not only because s/he does me good. This love reaches its full potential in marriage, where two people really give themselves to each other and to God completely.

4. True Love wants Eternity

So, in the last lessons we had a look on love in all its different dimension. We spoke of human love and also God's love. Which are the different dimensions of human love again? Please write them down:

Concerning the dimension of God's and also Jesus his love, I kindly ask you to watch the video on *youtube 3mc – Episode 20 – What does it mean that God is love?*¹ and to write a short summary:

In this following chapter we want to have a look at yet another dimension of love, a physical and at the same time also spiritual dimension – and what it is ideally connected with, namely marriage. Remember, these topics like the entire topic of love are very much connected with the questions: What does it mean to be human? And also: How should I live my life in order to find true **happiness**?

One aspect of love and its “rise” (see the picture: *Jacob's ladder*) or inner purification is that love wants finality. It wants exclusiveness (“only this one person”) and in this sense there is a “forever”. This is the natural goal of love, which Plato also spoke of: **it wants eternity**. (It was actually Friedrich Nietzsche who spoke the words: *Liebe will Ewigkeit*.)

With regard to the **sexuality** (better: “corporality”, Deutsch: *Leiblichkeit*) of man, let us make a comparison: There are different ways to live a relationship. These can be compared to the ways of getting into possession of something: buying, stealing, or giving. If I now compare these areas to relationships, and especially to a sexual relationship, it follows that it is not difficult to see how this can be done:

- Buying = prostitution - it is about the ego.
- Stealing = rape - it is about the ego
- Giving = Love - it is about the you



These are the three essential ways in which love can be lived physically. All these three are possible but, as is well known, not equally good, that is, in accordance with the **nature of man**. On the physically level thus, a person can perfectly express which understanding of love he or she has.

If a relationship is about the ego, then the other person is reduced to an object for his desires (often the woman, but not always). This is the case, for example, when the devotion is not “entire”, which can lack from both sides. As a result, love can easily be deceived, and emotional wounds can arise.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxO5Z-PjPLg&t=21s>



True love as a gift wants the good of the other. Two qualities in particular belong to the nature of the gift, namely **“entirely” and “forever”** - which in any religion finds its equivalent in and through marriage and its symbol of wedding rings. There are different aspects of the bond of marriage:

- It is a gift that embraces the whole person, since it involves not only instinct, emotion and sensory perception, but is also primarily an act of the will.
- Entirely, since the object of gift-giving is one's own person. This includes all areas of life and the whole being of the human being as man or woman, which is given to the other person and strengthens an (irrevocable) physical-emotional bond.
- Forever (faithfulness) since a gift cannot be taken back.
- Fruitful, since this love is on the one hand, an enrichment for both, in so far as they complement each other, and on the other hand also by wanting there to be “more of the other”, which finds its expression in children, who in a certain way are a “part of both”.

We can only discover who we really are when we give ourselves as gifts, but also only when we are receptive to the **gift of love**. The serpent (in the Biblical story of *The Fall of Man*) which tells us that “God is a tyrant who wants to deprive you of what you desire” tempts us to doubt and lose confidence in our gift. It says to us: by obeying God, keeping the commandments, and living a virtuous (in particular also *chast, keusches*) life you do not really gain freedom. It is also possible without renunciations (*Verzichte*) in life. God does not want your true happiness.” If we give in to this temptation, then love as devotion can easily become a possession without love. And those whispers are, as has been and is shown again and again, empty promises and lead to unfreedom. They are lies and actually most of the time bring destruction.



The “giving of oneself” without self-interest arises from the consciousness of being a wanted gift. To restore this original love – through practice in the virtue and grace of God – is our **vocation** (*Berufung*). Only in giving, the human being is not a mean, but a “you”! Love and to be loved is the goal of man, in love he finds his happiness and his eternal salvation (= integrity, inner order, happiness).

What is decisive in love is simply **goodwill**, i.e. that I want to do good to the other person, that I want to be a good person. In this sense in a unique way the “you” and “I” become a “we”, a unity (*Einheit*). Not only that we do something together (e.g. pursue common goals), but through the community the man and woman the spiritual (besser auf Deutsch: *geistige oder seelische*) bond grows. The man “confirms” the woman as a woman and at the same time the woman “confirms” the man as a man. Both help each other to grow and realize their potential as human beings. Through the “we” everyone becomes more what he is or can be.

Such a relationship ideally is then open not only to the fruits that come from complementing each other, but also to the fruits that constitute the specific “we-relationship”, including children which are “objectified love” (according to the beautiful words of the author of German Romantics Novalis). Here again man and woman can even more realize their potential as man and woman, namely as (responsible) father and mothers.

5. Marriage – a Covenant

We have seen, then, that love in all its forms, is characterized by a certain friendship that is manifested through benevolence (*benevolentia*). This also makes it clear why **giving and love are connected**. *Eros* and *agape* should not be separated from each other but integrated into the whole of our freedom. If one wants to do good to the other, giving is the most natural movement in love. It wants renunciation (*Verzicht*), it becomes ready to **sacrifice**: “He who seeks to save his life will lose it; he who loses it will win it.” (Jesus, Luke 17, 33)

Well, we have touched one issue and a more detailed questioning is difficult to avoid now. We all know what the Church – and by the way – all religions of the world teach concerning **sex before marriage**. And while we are at it: Why does the Church have a certain position concerning the use of contraceptives (*Verhütungsmittel*)? And we all know that in our “Western” society where there is a more “liberal” understanding concerning these and other issues being propagated. (And with no doubt it is a big challenge in this society to live a chaste life before marriage.)

So, why is the Church still so stubborn and does not want to adopt to “progressivism”? To give one short answer: A Christian life is a life which ought to be lived in the view of the supernatural, our eternal destiny – **the eyes of God** and not by the confines of the world: “Don’t become like the people of this world. Instead, change the way you think. Then you will always be able to determine what God really wants—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.” (*Paul, Romans 12,2-4*)

Concerning the question of contraception and thus birth-control, there is a big danger of a reductionism, reducing love to sex and thus using the other selfishly as an object to please my own desires. Sex should always be part of a “whole” and thus **true understanding of love** that needs to grow and mature. The bad fruits of the use of contraceptives is a certain mentality which lacks responsibility and in consequence also leads to abortions. This entire topic Pope Paul VI spoke of the in his Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. (We will deal with the difficult abortion question later.)

There are questions each of you might want to answer for himself. Some answers were given in the previous chapter: What are the reasons for a “**true love waits**” and thus for the virtue of chastity (*Keuschheit*)? What could one gain by living it? What about *your* understanding of love?

Marriage in the eyes of God and the Church

In the book of Genesis, we find the beautiful passage: “God made man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them” (*Genesis 1,27*). In this verse, we find an intrinsic goodness and **dignity to each human being**. We also recognize a goodness to our human sexuality – both man and woman are made in God’s image and likeness, and both masculinity and femininity are equally good. Yes, man and woman are different – anatomically, physiologically, and even psychologically (as admitted by many psychologists, even “feminist” ones), which is also “very good” (God). These differences do not indicate inequality, instead **complementarity**. In this complementarity lies a big potential for inner growth and maturity.

In a verse of *Genesis* (1,28), we read: “God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.’” Here is marriage, a God-given, God-designed **institution**. If we could think of the best way to realize that “image and likeness of God,” it would then be in marriage. In this union, man and woman – each made in God’s image and likeness with their similarities and their uniqueness – come together as one. Pope John Paul II reflected that in marriage “man” in the moment of communion truly became the image of God, “an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons”.

One might ask: What about those who do not marry for God's sake or those couples, which do not have children? Please have a look at the two footnotes.^{2/3}

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the *Gospel* affirmed the teaching of *Genesis*. When asked by the Pharisees about divorce, Jesus replied: "Have you not read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and declared, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become as one'? Thus, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined" (*Matthew 19,3*). Yes, because of these words, for Catholic a divorce is not allowed. (Only an annulment is possible if the marriage did not fulfill the right preconditions.)

Given a basis in the Sacred Scripture, we hold marriage a **covenant** (*Bund*) in Christian understanding. The Magisterium of the Church said in the *Pastoral Constitution of the Church* (#47-52) of the *II. Vatican Council* beautifully about marriage: Marriage is a partnership of life and love designed by God and endowed by Him with its own proper laws, with various benefits, and with various ends in view. Both husband and wife "surrender themselves to each other" and give their "irrevocable personal consent". Marriage involves a mutual giving of two persons, which entails total fidelity and permanence.

Marriage as a sacrament

And yet for Catholics, marriage is not only a covenant. Marriage as a covenant is a permanent bonding of life and love. Marriage however is not only a natural bond, but also a "sacred sign", a sacrament. Christ himself raised marriage to a sacrament. Therefore, Catholics speak of marriage as a **sacrament**, which is also more than a contract. Let us just remind ourselves what a sacrament is. Please "do the google" and answer the question: What is a sacrament and what does it bring about?

St. Paul frequently used the image of Christ and His Church in explaining the love of husband and wife (e.g. *Ephesians 5,22*). Therefore, when a couple **exchanges vows**, they are promising a love of fidelity, permanence, exclusivity, and perpetuity to each other and God. Man and woman enter a life-giving covenant with God – as wife and husband.



Is all of this difficult to read and to understand? In any case, just watch a summary and write your own summary: *Sophia sketchpad: Marriage* or: *3mc - Episode 48 - What is marriage*.⁴

² We read that being a father and a mother we can realize ourselves as man and woman. In other words: While virtues perfect man in his actions, here, in a certain way, being as man and woman is perfected by fatherhood and motherhood. This dimension is not lacking in consecrated virginity but takes on a spiritual dimension. It is not without reason that a priest will call a priest "*Pater*" (Latin for. father). A priest "marries" the Church; a nun "marries" the bridegroom (Christ) himself. And yes, the Catholic Church does not allow "gay-marriages", which is not a discrimination, if one wants to understand and tolerate the Church's anthropology of man and woman.

³ We also see from this why it can be painful for infertile couples. This is not because one is unhappy because one cannot have a "thing" (people who consider a child as an object have an even more fundamental problem), but because the dimension of fatherhood and motherhood cannot be brought about in the natural way. Also, their relationship can still be fruitful through adoption or spiritually.

⁴ www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjwPsZaK4Do, www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkrjMa_LFC8,

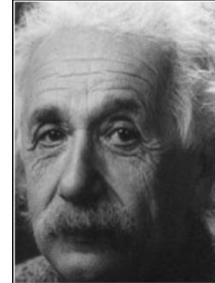
6. Successful Relationships

This last chapter of the topic of human love, God's love and marriage, will concern itself not with what a good relationship is – that is for each of you to discover – and Mr. Macheck wishes you all the best and just reminds you not to forget about **God and the virtues**.

Rather this chapter asks how a good relationship can be possible. What can maybe you do to have a **wonderful**, fulfilling, and happy relationship and eventually also marriage? What a task. Some practical aspects and hopefully useful hints. Well, maybe to the first hint: One needs to be mature enough. And just like anything in life, there is no easy way (after you fall in love). Also, relationships require work, forgiveness, even self-denial and sacrifice: "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (*Matthew 7, 14*).

And in order to **become mature**, remember what God said: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." (*Genesis 2, 24-25*) Yes, becoming mature includes: you eventually must grow to become independent (enough) of your parents. Use the next years of your life for that.

One other piece of advice for men: Do not forget that the woman was the last "piece" of God's creation. If there was trial and error in God's creation, He got it right at the end – definitely, in terms of beauty. Just do not forget: Just like love itself, the woman is the greatest **mystery of mankind**. Even smart Albert Einstein knew that. Anyhow, there might be other aspects to consider, which might be worth considering!



Some men spend a lifetime in an attempt to comprehend the complexities of women. Others pre-occupy themselves with somewhat simpler tasks, such as understanding the theory of relativity!

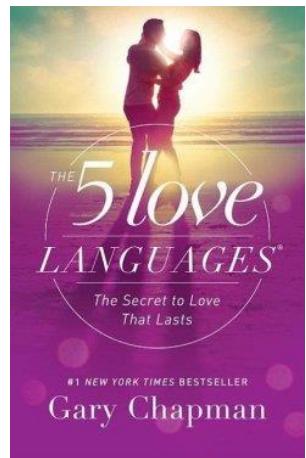
— Albert Einstein —

AZ QUOTES

The five languages of love

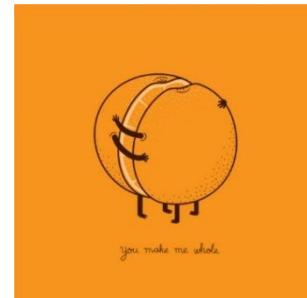
Nietzsche said that the most important thing you need for a good relationship was a good **communication**. (After all, what you will be doing for the most time in a relationship is to talk to each other.) Well, there is the language we speak, and we should simply be able to communicate well. This in particular helps us to express our feelings, and then there is also a language of love. It was the American Pastor Gary Chapman who discovered that there are five languages of love that makes communication in a relationship successful:

- words of affirmation,
- acts of service,
- receiving gifts,
- quality time,
- and physical touch.



Have a look which language you speak and which your darling, partner or spouse speaks. Tell the other you really care about him or her in the language that person understands best. Just as it is the case with the temperaments, two languages are predominant in each person. Do the research: www.5lovelanguages.com.

And yes, having spoken of the temperaments, try understanding the other better knowing his or her temperament. Also, regarding temperaments, we are looking for the one who complements us! In German there is the expression “*meine bessere Hälfte*” and in Spanish there is the expression *media naranja*. Find your other half of the orange!



And then there is Jay Shetty

Jay, a former monk, is a good friend of yours. You do not believe it? Then listen to what he has to say in one of his numerous clips. For example: *Jay Shetty's Best Relationships Advice Ever*. Please write down his five best advices and at least three virtues which you think are needed for a good relationship and marriage:

A couple that prays together, stays together

Contrary to widespread statistics, which say that in many (Western) countries 50% of marriages end in divorce, the separation rate in marital relationships where there is regular prayer is less than 1%. (Of course, the propaganda in our media does not speak about that.) In these relationships there are three persons, man and woman, and “above” them, as it were, the **guarantor of unity, God**.⁵ And by the way, statistics proved that married couples are happier than unmarried ones and also that married Catholic woman are happier than...⁶

These facts remind us about the **sacrificial love**, which is a core part of the Christian faith, reflecting the Holy Trinity: A true relationship and marriage is a communion of three. And we are called to love as Jesus loved – to give and not take. For those who give, will receive.



What about an inspiring movie? One recommendation: *The Adjustment Bureau*. Have a look at the trailer...

To grow in love, there are no limits. Well, so much for the theory. However, life is about living it. Create your little heaven here on Earth (with God's help)! Do allow nothing to stand in the way of your **true happiness**. If you are a prince, conquer a true princess's heart. Do not be afraid. And do not be afraid to be romantic. Embrace love! May God bless you and your (future) spouse.

⁵ www.imom.com/the-8-benefits-of-praying-with-your-spouse/#.Xn9MUIhKjIV,

www.ncregister.com/daily-news/divorce-statistics-indicate-catholic-couples-are-less-likely-to-break-up

⁶ <https://de.catholicnewsagency.com/story/neue-studie-religiöse-frauen-sind-in-der-ehe-am-zufriedenstein-4666> By the way, there is a good “Is it love?” test: <https://www.prolife.com/DrLauraSchlessinger.htm>

7. Excursion: The Adjustment Bureau & the Question of Fate

There might be one topic worth contemplating. And that is the question of love regarding destiny or fate. Am I meant to find a certain life partner or have another vocation? What will the future bring? We are touching on a big theological question. (**Theology** = speaking about God, or the science concerning divine matters). Is everything chance, destiny – and what is God's role and ours in this big drama. Do we have free will?

Mr. Machek recommends watching the movie *The Adjustment Bureau*, which in his humble opinion contains some good theology. The film is an **science fiction romantic thriller** written and directed by George Nolfi, and based on the story *Adjustment Team* from Philip Dick. Nolfi said about his film: „The intention of this film is to raise questions – that's what art should do.“

Starring Matt Damon and Emily Blunt, the film tells the story of an ambitious United States congressman, David Norris, who discovers that what appear to be chance in his life, are actually events controlled by a **mysterious**, powerful bureaucracy with its agents. (The German speaking audience might be reminded of *Momo* from *Michael Ende*, the little girl with her turtle and the men in grey stealing the time of the people.)



After an event not planned by these controllers, a romantic encounter with a beautiful woman occurs, who also is a dancer. Norris struggles against manipulation of the Adjustment Bureau despite their promise of a great future for him. So, Norris faces a dilemma: Will he resign himself to fate, or **pursue his love**, even if it means risking everything? I will give no more spoilers.

The Adjustment Bureau addresses questions concerning chance, destiny, fate, free will, providence, divine plans, faith and of course love. In any case, the film leaves room for different interpretations and can be seen critically. However, it does **raise some questions** such as:

- Is there a “plan” for life? Do you believe God has chosen a path for you?
- What is the ultimate goal of the plan? Specific goals? Is it professional success, being a celebrity or is it just world progress? Is it to save the world from annihilation?
- Who do you think the “chairman” is in this movie? Who/what does he represent?
- Who are the men in hats? Are they angels?
- Is what we choose to do also somehow destined to be? Do we really have free will, or are our lives already planned out for us?
- If you marry, do you simply choose your mate, or is there some sense in which the two of you were destined for each other?
- Various Church teachers taught that in addition to God's revealed will (what we are asked by God to do), there is also God's secret will (what will take place). Does the film agree with this theology? Do you also believe this is true?

How might this movie provide the opportunity to dialogue with Muslims and Jews about similar themes? Is there a difference in what each of these three religions believes about the topic?

Which thought do you have about the film? Which questions does it raise for you?

Fate and Providence

So, what's the plan? Is your life determined by fate or providence? What is the difference between these two? There is a slight but yet important difference. The concept of destiny (Latin: *fatum*, Deutsch: *Schicksal*) means that there is a fixed order of causes in the course of world events, everything is predetermined, there is neither chance nor freedom. Providence or divine providence is God's active doing (*Gottes Wirken*) in the world, in which human will play an important role. God calls us to **actively participate** in his will.



To see the difference between fate and providence might not be easy. As Christians we believe that God is the first cause of all events and we believe that God is still active "creating", there is a *creatio continua*. Man is only the second cause of things. God indeed foresees everything that happens - one speaks of divine providence – in the sense of "foreknowledge". But this knowledge does not annul the freedom of the foreseen actions. God foresees them as **free actions!** Divine knowledge is above time: "Just as you do not force by your remembrance that what has happened is what has passed, so God does not force by his foreknowledge that what will happen must happen." (St. Augustine)

Luckily (for Catholics) there is a **Catechism**. What does it say? "God is sovereign Lord over his counsel. But to carry it out, he also makes use of the cooperation of creatures. This is not a sign of weakness, but of the greatness and goodness of God. For God gives his creatures not only the existence but also the dignity to act, to be cause and origin of each other and thus to cooperate in the execution of his counsel." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 306). Alright? *Alles klar?*

God is **omnipotent** and he reveals his will for our salvation to us. St. Augustine compared God's omnipotence to a Roman emperor: He ensures his rule by distributing his power in such a way that it cannot be dangerous to him. In this way he grants more power to one subject and less to another according to his own discretion. He can even grant power to the enemies of his state, but only as much as is conducive to the strategic safeguarding of his rule; perhaps he wants to demonstrate his superiority to the outside world in a powerful way, or he wants to educate the citizens of his state to be obedient. (This is also the purpose of evil in the world – it must ultimately serve God!)

Accordingly, there is **grace**, which is divine influence that operates in humans to regenerate and sanctify, to inspire virtuous impulses, and to impart strength to endure trial and resist temptation. Just like God's omnipotence and grace is not contradictory to man's free will. Grace demands the free consent of man. However, freedom is not only the freedom of decision, not the freedom to do what one wants (understood in a modern, "negative" sense). True freedom is freedom for the good ("positive" freedom)! St. Augustine: "Free will is the freer the healthier it is, and the healthier the more subject to divine and to grace."

The freedom of the human being shows itself in the movie by fighting for something, not being discouraged by obstacles. At the end of the film, Harry (with his hat) assumes that the whole thing was a **test**: David and Elise were to be forced to discover their free will and explore how far they would go for what they wanted. All people should use their free will properly.

Harry Mitchell:

"Most people live life on the path we set for them. Too afraid to explore any other. But once in a while people like you come along and knock down all the obstacles we put in your way. People who realize free will is a gift, you'll never know how to use until you fight for it. I think that's The Chairman's real plan. And maybe, one day, we won't write the plan. You will."



And now these three remain:

FAITH
HOPE
and
LOVE

But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

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