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BLESSING ON A MARRIAGE

ALL STANDING, a hymn may be sung.

Having entered, the PRIEST opens the Word, and reads the following or other sentence.

In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them mankind in the day they were created. *Genesis 5: 1, 2*

The PEOPLE SIT as the married couple approaches the PRIEST, the woman at the right hand of the man.

PRIEST: You have come before the Lord to enter into a covenant with Him and to ask His blessing on your marriage. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

The PRIEST then reads one or more of the following or other selections from the Word.

241 God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth.” *Genesis 1: 27, 28*

242 He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder. *Genesis 2: 24; Matthew 19: 4–6*

243 Conjugal love in its essence is nothing else but the wish of two to be one, or, in other words, a will on their part that their two lives become one life. To carry out that will is the constant endeavor of this love, and all that it does flows from it. *CL 215*

244 The first heat in marriage does not join two people together, because it draws its character from a love for the opposite sex, which is a love belonging to the body and on that account to the spirit. And whatever is in the spirit as a result of the body does not last long. But love that is in the body as a result of the spirit does last. Love belonging to the spirit, and to the body as a result of the spirit, is insinuated into the souls and minds of married partners together with friendship and mutual trust. When friendship and mutual trust join together with the first love in marriage, conjugal love results, which opens

the partners' hearts and inspires in them the sweet enjoyments of love, and this more and more deeply as friendship and trust are added to the original love, and as that original love enters into this friendship and trust and they into it. *CL 162*

Regarded from its origin and correspondence, this love is celestial, spiri- **245**
tual, holy, pure and clean, more so than any other love which exists from
the Lord in angels of heaven or people of the church. Consequently, if conjugal
love is received from its author, who is the Lord, it is accompanied by holiness
from Him, which continually purges and purifies the love. *CL 64: 1*

Regarded from its origin and correspondence, this love is celestial, spiri- **246**
tual, holy, pure and clean, more so than any other love which exists from
the Lord in the angels of heaven or people of the church. It is also the fundamen-
tal love of all celestial, spiritual, and consequently natural loves. Moreover, into
this love have been gathered all joys and all delights, from the first to the last of
them. But no others come into that love and no others can be in it but those who
go to the Lord, and love the truths of the church and do the good things it
teaches. *CL 57*

The PRIEST addresses the couple by their Christian names, and says:

When husband and wife have been married by civil contract:

You have been united in marriage in accordance with the requirements of civil law. These requirements are for the protection of human society on earth. They are bonds of external order. Now you have come before the Lord to ask Him to bless your union and to enter into a spiritual covenant with Him. In approaching the Lord you acknowledge that the priceless gift of love truly conjugal is given to those who through their life together become established in supreme love to the Lord and in mutual love to one another. This blessed state cannot be granted in a moment. Conjugal love grows, day by day, as each partner strives through a life of true repentance to serve the Lord above all else, and as each is determined to do every good to the other.

When husband and wife have been married in another church:

You have come into the presence of the Lord to ask His blessing on your union, and to confess before Him your faith in the eternity of marriage as set forth in the Heavenly Doctrine concerning love truly conjugal. In approaching the Lord you acknowledge that the priceless gift of love truly conjugal is given to those who through their life together become established in supreme love to the Lord and in mutual love to one another. This blessed state cannot be granted in a moment. Conjugal love grows, day by day, as each partner strives to serve the Lord above all else, and as each is determined to do every good to the other. If

couples live in this way, then their souls and minds are gradually knit together by the outpouring of love to the Lord. Their individual lives become one life, which neither death nor hell can sunder. After the death of their bodies, they will meet again, love each other yet more tenderly than they have on this earth, and enter a heavenly society as one angel.

PRIEST: Now let me ask: Do you acknowledge that the marriage of conjugal love is from the Lord Himself, and is with angels and people on earth according to their acknowledgment of Him in heart and life?

COUPLE: I do.

PRIEST: Do you now as husband and wife wish to enter into a spiritual covenant with the Lord, whereby from being two you shall be one in His eyes?

COUPLE: I do.

PRIEST: Will you, as a symbol of your spiritual covenant with the Lord, here in His presence, declare your love to one another and ask His blessing?

The HUSBAND faces his wife, takes her hands, and addressing her by name, says:

(Name), in the presence of the Lord I declare my undivided love for you, and ask Him to bless our marriage now and forever.

Addressing her husband by name, the WIFE says:

(Name), in the presence of the Lord I declare my undivided love for you, and ask Him to bless our marriage now and forever.

Taking the ring from his wife, the husband shall hand it to the PRIEST, who will elevate it.

PRIEST: May this ring be a sign and token of love truly conjugal.

The PRIEST returns the wife's ring to the HUSBAND, who places it on the fourth finger of the wife's left hand, and holding it there says after the Priest or by himself:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom and Husband of the Church, I return this ring now dedicated as a token of my desire to seek a conjugal union with you which I pray shall endure to eternity.

The WIFE says or repeats after the Priest:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom and Husband of the Church, I receive this ring as a token of my desire to seek a conjugal union with you which I pray shall endure to eternity.

(When there is a second ring, the wife takes it from her husband and gives it to the Priest, who will dedicate it and return it to the wife who then places it on the fourth finger of the husband's left hand in silence.)

PRIEST: Let us pray.

ALL KNEELING, the Priest offers one of the following or other prayer:

A

O Lord, the fountain of life and the source of love in heaven and on earth, we ask You to bless this couple; unite their hearts in love to You and to one another; open their eyes upon their relations and duties; sustain them in the trials of life, and confirm them more and more in every good word and work. Inspire them continually with conjugal love; give them one heart, one mind, and one way; lead them in the paths of righteousness and peace, to the fullness of joy in the life everlasting. Amen.

B

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator and Preserver of the human race, the author of life, and the source of love to angels and to people on earth, send Your Divine blessing upon this couple. Grant them the knowledge to see Your way, and the power to do Your will, that they may ever grow and increase in all spiritual intelligence and wisdom; that they may be conjoined more closely with You; that they may be prepared by life together on earth for an eternal oneness in Your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

ALL: Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the earth. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 9-13

The PEOPLE STANDING, the husband and wife still kneeling, the Priest lays his hands on their heads, and says:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Numbers 6: 24-26

The PEOPLE SITTING, the husband and wife rising, the Priest says:

Through this ceremony you have entered into a covenant with the Lord. You have shown your willingness to work together in His name. As you look to Him all things will be possible for you to achieve. The states of love truly conjugal are innocence, peace, tranquility, inmost friendship, full confidence, and a mutual desire of soul and heart to do to the other every good. And from all these states come blessedness, happiness, delight and pleasure, and from the eternal enjoyment of these, heavenly felicity. The Lord will grant all these things and more as you turn to Him together. May you ever be mindful of His covenant.

ALL STANDING, a musical selection may be sung.

The Priest pronounces the Benediction, closes the Word, and retires.