

TOBET4ENGAGED

A Christ-Centered Guide
to Happy Marriages

Theology of the Body Marriage Preparation

Second Edition



TOBET

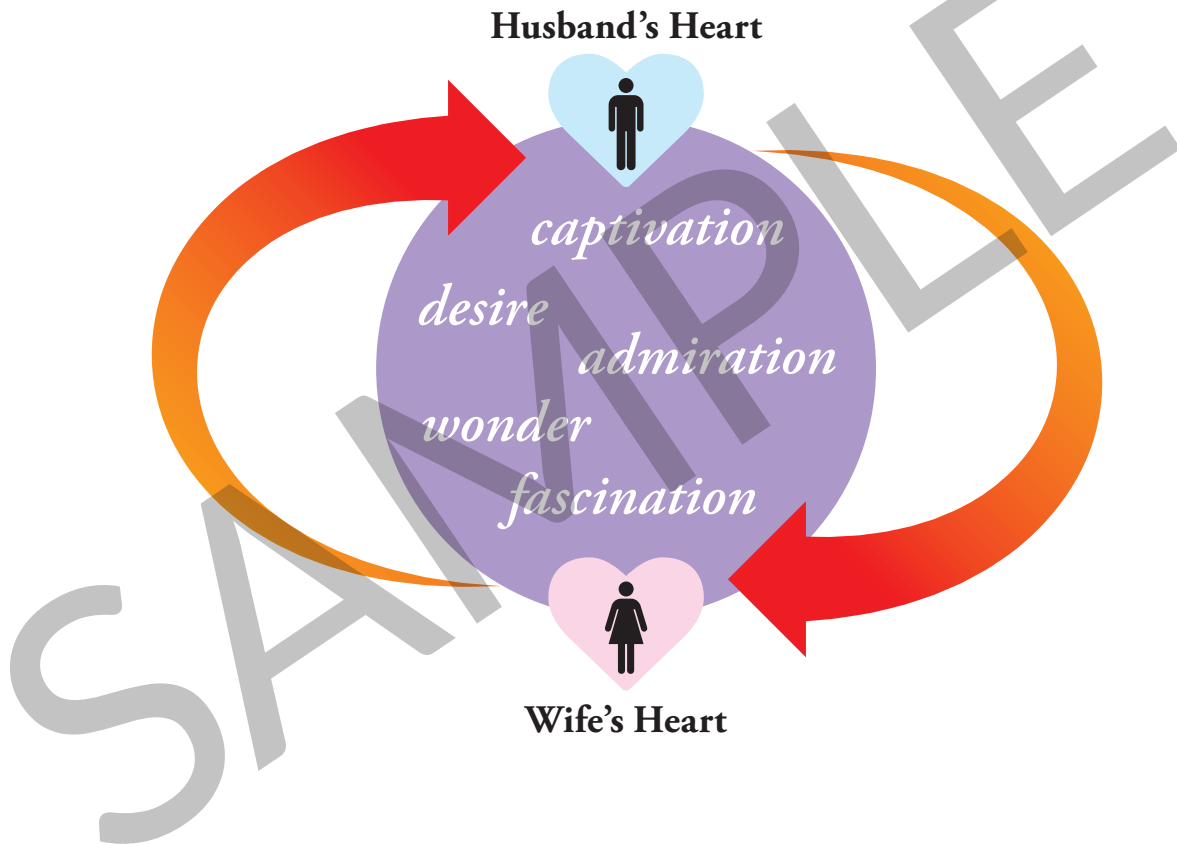
THEOLOGY OF THE BODY
EVANGELIZATION TEAM

Created by Monica A. Ashour, MTS; M Hum
The Theology of the Body Evangelization Team, Inc.

The Wonder of Marriage

MARRIAGE IN THE PLAN OF GOD

In the Beginning there was...



Based on Song of Songs and TOB 1-23; 108. © Copyright 2014 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

“I am my beloved’s and he is mine.”

Song of Songs 6:3

How wonderful it is that you are in love!

You are being drawn to each other into something bigger than yourselves; you are *in* love, “inside” of a great mystery. We will be journeying in this book to take a look at your new relationship in the broadest context of love as you continue to discern your call to marriage. May the wonder and fascination you have for each other deepen to a confident, lifelong love. The gift of self—none other than love—will see you through.

1. When was the first time you realized you were in love with your future spouse?

How Do You Approach Persons and Things?

Persons	Things
Are to be loved	May be used
Are not to be controlled	Can be controlled
Are subjects of their own lives	Can be objectified
Make their own choices	Have no choice
Are free	Have no freedom
Are unpredictable	Are static
Are mysterious	Can be categorized

© Copyright 2013 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

“The only *proper* response to a person is *love*,” says Saint John Paul. Each and every person we encounter deserves a response of love—the stranger, bank teller, waiter, the homeless person, a teacher, a person who experiences same-sex attraction, the saint, the prisoner, your future in-laws!—every person you encounter deserves a response of love. This is especially true of your spouse, the person you encounter most.

Saint John Paul also gives a compelling depiction of the opposite of love. He says the opposite of love is not hatred; the opposite of love is *using* another.

We are to use things, not people. People are to be loved.

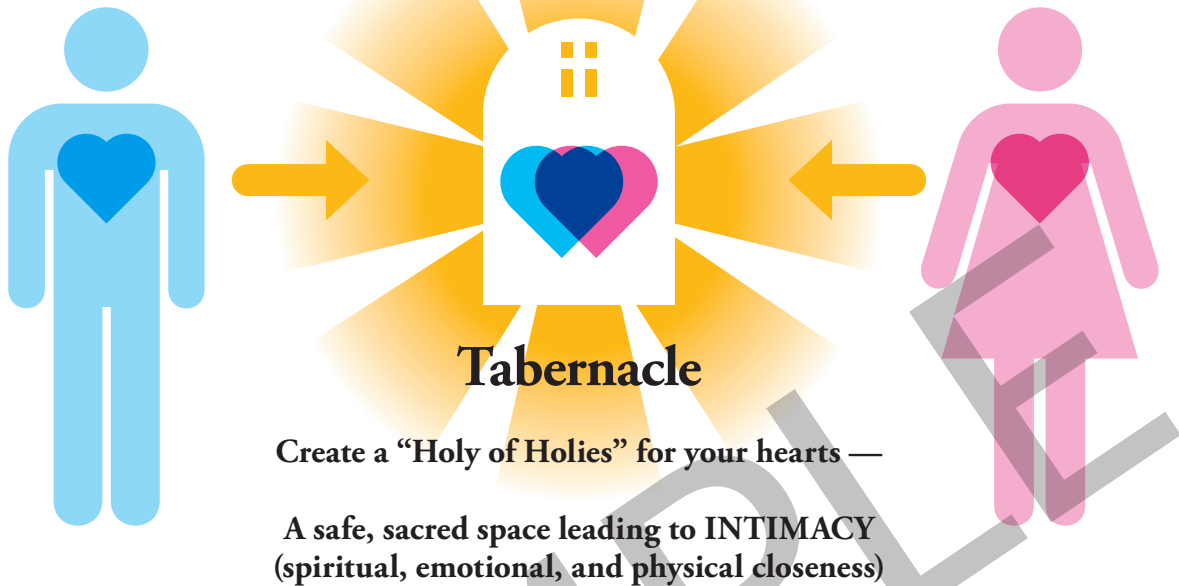
Nowadays, the media depicts people jumping straight into sexual relationships, skipping over life-long, committed belonging, and they call that love. The Church sees love differently. We know that no good brother would lust after his own sister or vice versa. TOB challenges us to develop a proper way of seeing one’s beloved as a person to love, not as an object to be used.

1. Have you ever thought of loving your future spouse as you would a sibling?
How does such a loving vision of the other protect the relationship from falling into use?
2. In what ways have you been tempted to use your future spouse? How can you avoid those temptations?
In what ways do you anticipate being able to reverence and love your spouse as a person? How can you strengthen those behaviors?
3. How can you make sure you see each other as *persons*—including in the area of sexuality—so as to safeguard love now and throughout your marriage?

*“Only a person can love
and only a person can be loved.”*

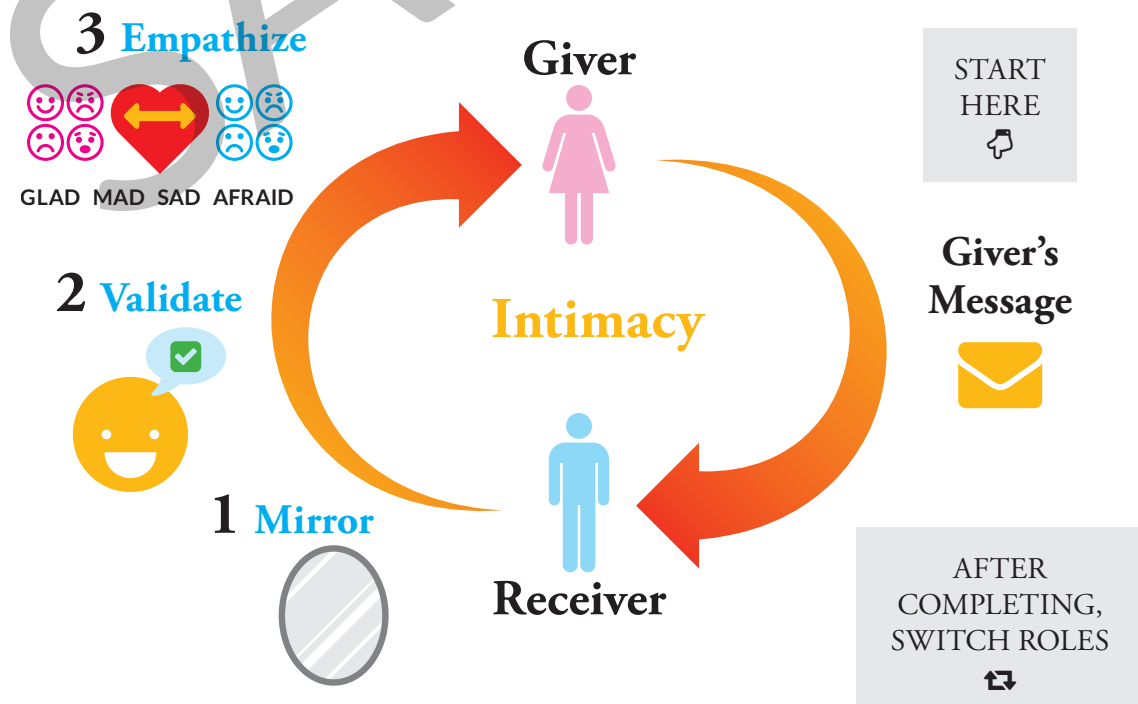
Pope John Paul II, *The Dignity and Vocation of Women*, 29

Replace Fighting with Safe Dialogue



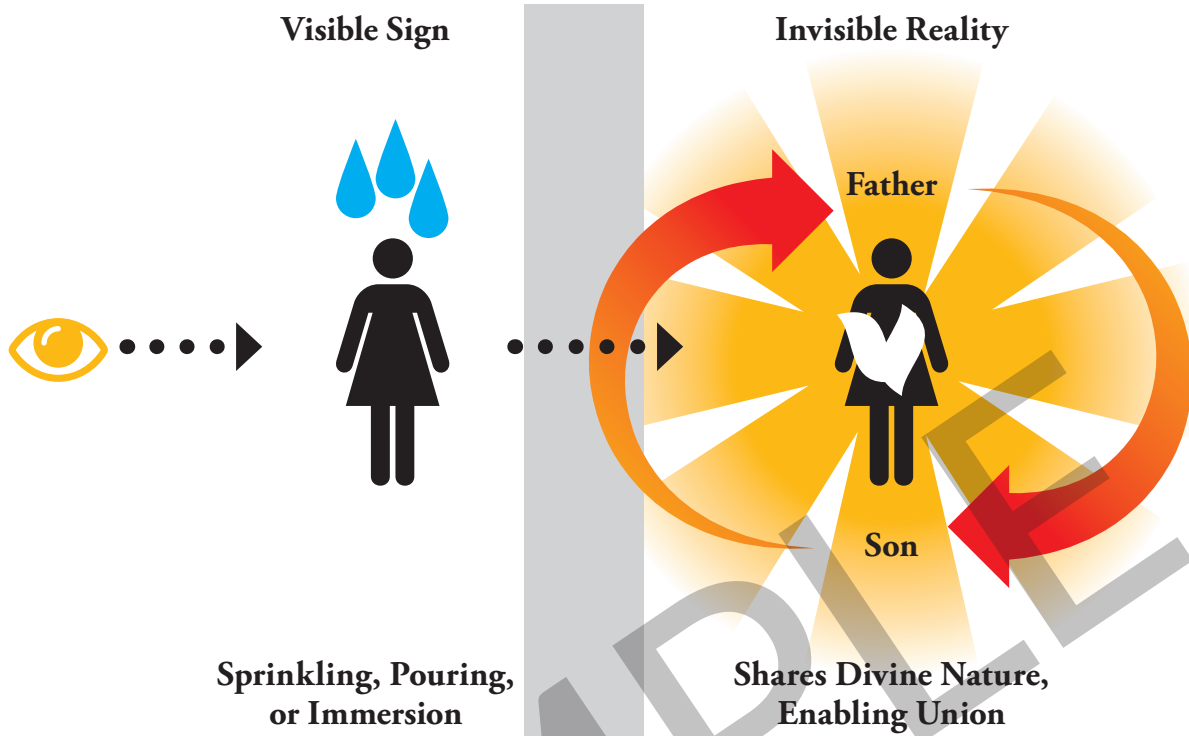
Based on concepts by Drs. Ron and Kathryn Rombs. © Copyright 2015 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

How to Have a Safe Dialogue



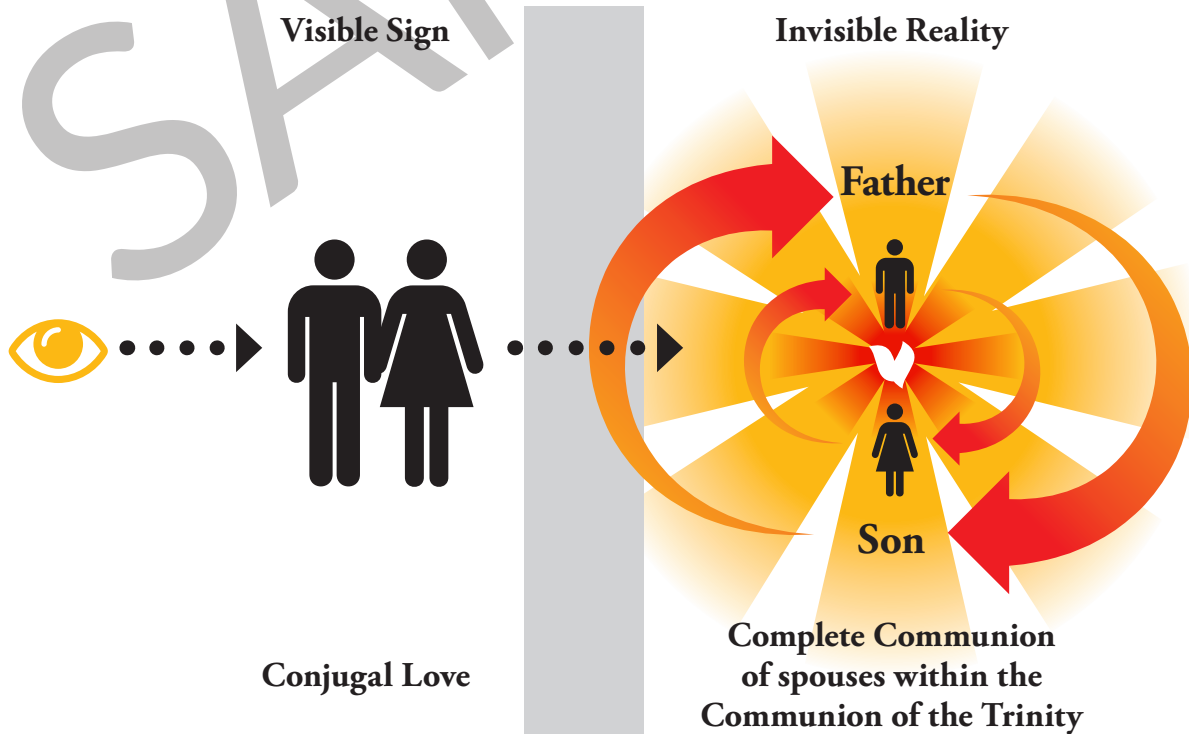
Based on *A New Way to Love: A Guide for Catholic Couples* by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. and Helen LaKelly Hunt, Ph.D., with Drs. Kathryn and Ron Rombs.
© Copyright 2015 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

Sacramental Vision of Baptism



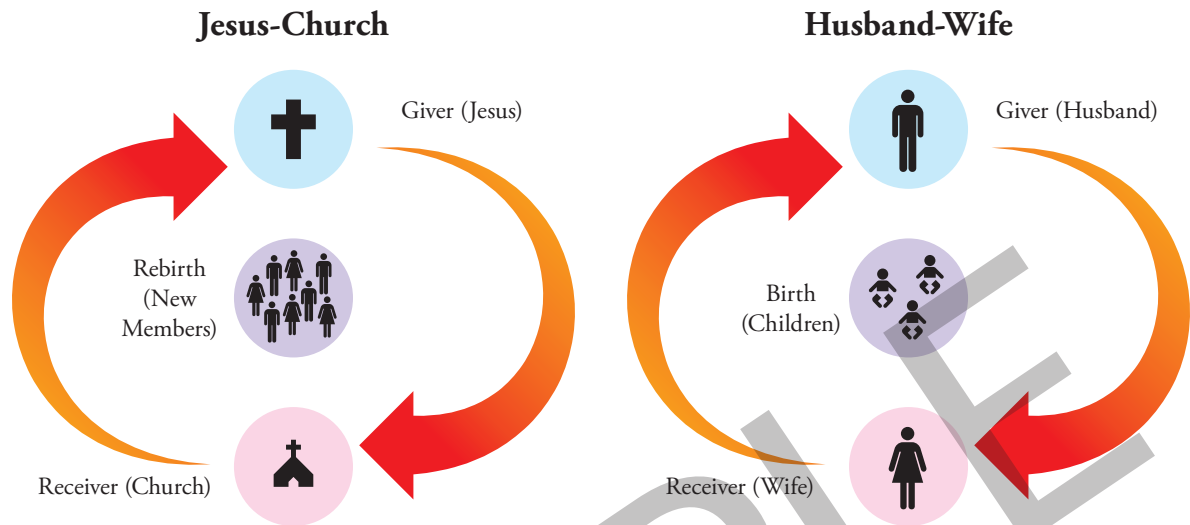
Based on TOB 87:5; 93:3-7; 98:1-3. © Copyright 2013 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

Sacramental Vision of Marriage



Based on TOB 13:2-4; 16:3-19:6; 93:1-7; 117b:6. © Copyright 2014 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

Sacramentality of Marriage



Ephesians 5

“As the Church is submissive to Christ, so wives, be submissive to your husbands
 “As Christ loves the Church, so husbands, love your wives
 “handing himself over, [husbands are to hand themselves over]
 “for her to sanctify her that she might be holy, [husbands are to sanctify their wives so they might be holy.]”

© Copyright 2014 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

The word *submission* sometimes is taken wrongly to mean the husband makes uncompromising demands on his wife without taking into consideration his wife’s opinion and feelings. St. Paul, however, tells us in Ephesians 5:21 to “Be mutually submissive”—to *receive* each other’s unique gift and anticipate each other’s need. The wife is to trust her husband in that she *receives* his sacrificial love—he is to die for her as Christ died for us.

Do you really want to know what marriage is about? Study the left side of this diagram: Take seriously what it means that on the Cross, Jesus the Bridegroom, the New Adam, gives Himself by *giving* Freely, Fully, Faithfully, and Fruitfully...and beneath the Cross, Mary who represents all of us as the Bride, the New Eve, gives herself by *receiving* Freely, Fully, Faithfully, and Fruitfully. What happened in Jerusalem on Calvary is the *Wedding par excellence*, which is “re-presented” at every Mass.

1. What do you think about *submission* being *accepting* or *receiving* someone’s loving gift of self?
2. Do you work on *submitting* to Jesus’ love for you?
3. What signs in your relationship now point to mutual submission and reciprocal reverence, first to Christ and the Church and then to each other?
4. Future wife: Do you think you will lovingly receive this man? Do you think he is trustworthy of receiving your vulnerable gift? Does he model Christ? Do you think he is capable of laying down his life completely for you? If so, what signs point to this in him? If not, what should you do about it?
5. Future husband: Do you think you are worthy of the vulnerable trust this woman places in you (are you ready to die for her, especially daily)? Do you think she is capable of receiving your vulnerable gift of laying down your life? Does she model Mary? If so, what signs point to this in her? If not, what should you do about it?

“We do not forget that the one and only key for understanding the sacramentality of marriage is the spousal love of Christ for the Church (see Eph 5:22-23).”

TOB 81:4

Responsible Parenthood

Number and Spacing of Children

Extreme:

We decide without God

Any contraception is right

Violates human nature, especially fertility

“Just Cause”

Couple decides with God using reason, prayer, and respect for God-given fertility

Duty toward God, yourselves, your kids (current & future), society, the Church, and even humanity as a whole.

Extreme:

God decides without us

Even NFP is wrong

Violates human nature, especially reason



Physical Condition

Psychological Condition



Economic Condition

Social Condition



Based on TOB 121:2 & 125:3; *Humanae Vitae* 16; *Gaudium et Spes* 50. © Copyright 2014 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

Marriage is not just about one person or even just about the two spouses. Rather, it is about the whole family and the influence that marriage and family life have beyond the walls of the home. For this reason, the Church has given some guidelines to think and pray about when deciding on the number of children to have. Many couples we know use NFP to limit their families, having only three children because a serious matter arises, including severe post-partum depression, loss of job due to an injury, or care for a special needs child, like my nephew, Nicky. Couples might discern that they need to limit their family size. Yet, we know other couples, including one with children with special needs, who believe they are called

to have a bigger family. There is no magic number that the Church gives; instead, the Church gives the instruction that such a decision should be based on the common good and taken seriously.

1. Have you talked to each other about openness to a large family? What do you think? What does your future spouse think?
2. What does it mean that one's duty toward one's children (current and future) should be taken into consideration? What about one's duty toward the Church, God, or the rest of society?

“Love is demanding. It makes demands in all human situations; it is even more demanding in the case of those who are open to the Gospel. Is this not what Christ proclaims in ‘his’ commandment? Nowadays people need to rediscover this demanding love, for it is the truly firm foundation of the family, a foundation able to ‘endure all things.’”

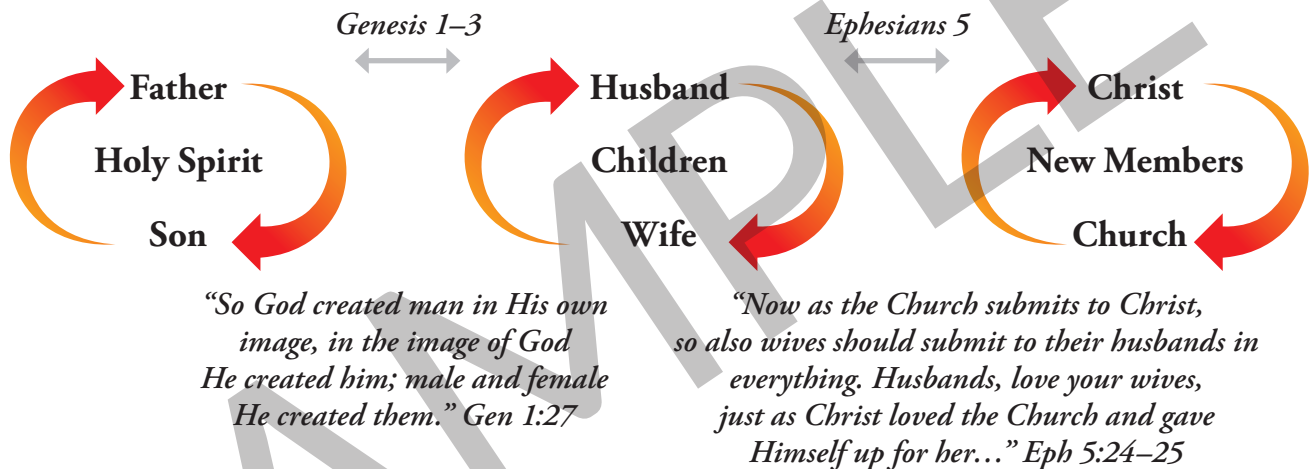
John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 14

CONCLUSION:

Marriage as the Mirror of the Gospel

BRINGING CHRIST TO THE WORLD THROUGH MARRIAGE

Your Marriage in the Big Picture



© Copyright 2014 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.

*“Everything of mine is yours
and everything of yours is mine.”*

— The Son to the Father in John 17:10

As we conclude, let's remember the early diagram showing God's blueprint of love resulting in fruitful communion. Your future marriage, entering into Free, Full, Faithful, and Fruitful Love, will reflect God's blueprint: giving, receiving, returning, and being open to fruitfulness. You are to be the "best natural sign" to the world of God's plan for human love.

1. What concrete steps can you take in your day-to-day, often mundane tasks of your marriage and family life to ensure you are the "best natural sign" of reciprocal giving and receiving of free, full, faithful, and fruitful love?
2. Take the time to discuss this diagram and what it now means to you and your future marriage.