



Sacraments 20/36: The Tri-partite Theory of Matrimony

Sacramentum Tantum What the Sacramental Rite itself looks like. This is both the Matter and Form of the Ritual of the Sacrament that we see. In Matrimony, the Matter is the bride and the groom. The Form is: the vows taken, received by a priest or deacon, in a Catholic church, in front of 2 witnesses.

Res Tantum What the immediate result of the Sacrament is, the grace given and its ultimate meaning. The purpose of Matrimony is that it gives the strength for the couple to endure each other and inspire others to such a great love that they share. This love will naturally overflow into the love of children. Their sacramental bond is a symbol to the rest of us as to how much God loves us.

Going back to St. Augustine, the Church continues to teach that there are four goods of marriage.

- 1) The Good of Unity: "I will *join with you* in a sacramental bond to bring about your good."
- 2) The Good of Indissolubility: "I will join with you *forever*."
- 3) The Good of Fidelity: "I will join with you and *only you*."
- 4) The Good of Offspring: "We will be open to the blessing of *children*." (this does NOT mean that couples unable to have children are blocked from marriage)

Annulments: If any of these four goods are not intended, the priest cannot preside over such a service. If, in hindsight, any of these goods were not intended (one person placed an *obex* (an obstacle) in front of a good, that is grounds for an annulment. Other reasons include force and fear, fraud, and future conditions. An annulment is not based on what happened later. It focuses on the intention and freedom of the bride and groom at the moment they took their vows. There are many painful reasons why divorce occurs, but these may not be grounds for an annulment.

Gay "marriage": So now we can see why the Church does not recognize homosexual unions as true marriages. The Matter is not valid: it must be one man and one woman. Also, the good of children cannot be promised as it is a biological impossibility. It is not about hate, but about the reality of creation.

Res et Sacramentum What the abiding, everlasting purpose of the Sacrament is. In Matrimony, this is the indissoluble bond of the man and woman. Three of the sacraments have a permanent and eternal "Character" that comes with them and can never be repeated: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders. When looking at the *Res et Sacramentum* of Matrimony, we can call it a "Quasi-Character." Why "quasi"? Think of the vows: "till death do us part." The bond ends with death, so the living party would be able to marry again if they so desired.

The teaching on annulments in the Church does not take away from the lifelong bond of Matrimony. Annulment does not say the marriage is no longer valid. It says that the Sacramental bond was never valid in the first place because of an *obex* / obstacle at the time of the vows.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Catechism Summary of Matrimony