

The unitive and
procreative
dimensions to the
married life: the
authentic path to...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*, defends the dignity of vocation to the married life. *Humanae Vitae* provides clear guidelines about God's plan for married couples. Within his encyclical letter, Paul VI addresses the principles of conjugal morality to help married couples live the plenitude of their vocation.[1] His encyclical aims to clarify many nominalistic distortions that devalue the authenticity of the vocation to the married life. Paul VI calls to mind a truthful vision that elevates man's dignity of his or her vocation. He makes a deep connection with *Gaudium et Spes*, affirming the call to marriage is a calling from God to love to the extreme.[2] The vocation to marriage is a path of holiness where man and woman can find themselves through the sincere gift of self.[3]

The following paper will closely examine Paul VI's explanation of the loving designs of the vocation to marriage established by God.[4] Marriage by its nature contains fundamental precepts that mark a specific path for both man and woman to become holy. Specifically, through the act of marriage man and woman perfect one another through the sincere gift of self and cooperate with God to generate life.[5] This essay will further examine St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body, concerning the dignity of the vocation to marriage

The Essence of Marriage: Vocation and sign of God's love

Marriage is a vocation, which means it is a profound calling to love. It consists of a conjugal love where both husband and wife place their full potentialities (mind, soul and body) for the greater good of the other and all

<https://assignbuster.com/the-unitive-and-procreative-dimensions-to-the-married-life-the-authentic-path-to-holiness/>

humanity.[6]God who is the “ divine author of marriage” created it for a profound purpose.[7]Marriage is “ eminently human and directed from one person to the other.”[8]It is the love between a husband and wife and must reflect the potentialities of their whole person.[9]The unitive and procreative dimensions in marriage is a “ visible and efficacious sign” to manifest God’s love through the perfection of charity.[10]Married couples surrender their act of free will to become one and attain their ultimate fulfillment.[11]Their communion of love generates the gift of life to cooperate generously in “ His designs of love.”[12]All lay faithful including married couples, are to edify the Church through their state of life.[13]

Marriage: A specific Path to Holiness

The nature of the essence of marriage is a realization of a life of love and virtue that marks a specific path of holiness. Everyone is called to perfection. Christ Himself tells us “ Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”[14]Marriage realizes this calling, as husband and wife edify each other through their interpersonal spousal relationship.[15]Their self-giving love to choose a greater good give them the freedom to live the values of the kingdom. The fruit of this intimate communion brings forth life and a mission to become a family. A family’s “ mission needs to correspond to its nature” as the communion of persons advocate a “ community of love and life.”[16]God is who love, is the centrality of marriage as He defines the identity and mission of a holy marriage.

A holy marriage represents a call to perfection since it is a covenantal bond between the spousal love of Christ and the Church.[17]The communion of

love brings to life a sacramental sign of Christ's union with the Church.

[18]Ephesians explains, "The Church is subject to Christ," as "wives are also to be subject to their husbands".[19]Husbands are also to love their wives as "Christ loves the Church and gave Himself up for her." [20]The root of authentic spousal love consists of a "total self-giving love" that manifests a reflection of God's love that "redeems the human heart." [21]The result of self-giving love results in a great fecundity for the edification and sanctification of the Church.[22]The Church needs holy marriages to reveal the most sacred mystery of God's eternal love, fulfilled in "Christ's spousal love for the Church." [23]The role of marriage has a dignified place within the Church as it manifests aspects of redeeming love.[24]

Original Man: The Origin of Marriage

St. John Paul II, in his general audience section " *What is meant by the Beginning,*" examines the book of Genesis to show the origin of man.[25]He demonstrates how God made both man and woman with an equal dignity in His image.[26]Man was destined to be in ultimate communion with God and partake in a life of grace. Thus, God made human beings unique from all the other creatures. Human beings are distinct in many aspects, as they were given free will to love and an intellect to know, to fully participate in a relationship with God. Through the gift of free will man has the freedom to remain in this ultimate communion and find his highest dignity.[27]St. John Paul II explains "man became the image and likeness of God not only through his humanity, but through the communion of persons." [28]

The “ original unity” of both man and woman confirms their unique calling from all the creatures to reflect the image of God as through the “ act of their conjugal love.”[29]The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains God made man and woman for a profound purpose as they are literally made for each other. “[30]God made Adam a “ helper,” to share in His life of grace. [31]He took the rib from the side of Adam and created Eve. The complementarity of man and woman is foundational, as it leads to the conjugal act.[32]

Both are unique in the eyes of God as he made them “ male and female.”[33]Genesis describes the conjugal act when “ man leaves His father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body (flesh).”[34]The body also reveals the complementarity of man and woman as they are a gift for each other. Adam found the completion of his whole person, as he was given a woman.[35]Adam exclaimed; “ this one at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”[36]The designs of God show the human person is made for communion. This highlights the importance of the “ original man” and “ original experiences” to go back to the foundational elements of who we are as persons.[37]

Unitive Dimension: The Nature of Spousal Love

The original unity St. John Paul II describes in Genesis is foundational to understand the unitive dimension in marriage. Pope Paul VI describes the unitive dimension when both husband and wife have a “ specific and exclusive love” that allows them to mutually give themselves to each other. [38]The source of their love comes from God’s love and not out of their own

interests. They do not see each other as an object of pleasure, but as a human person who deserves and has a high dignity.[39]God is at the center of their love and directs their whole persons to enrich each other to attain together their “ human fulfillment.”[40]

The spousal love of marriage in its essence elevates the totality of the whole human person in his intellect, emotions and body to come to a fuller realization of self.[41] *Humanae Vitae* distinguishes spousal love from a “ natural instinct” and elevates its dignity to an “ act of free will.”[42]Spousal love is the initiator of a greater good as man and woman consent “ no longer become two, but one flesh through an intimate union of their persons and actions.”[43]The surrender of the will to the other is what orders the mutual-self donation expressed as they entrust themselves to God. Both persons give an “ inalienable I” as they belong solely to God and each other.[44]They restore their original unity and reflect the image of love by their self-giving love.[45]“ Love is a choice,” made from the responsible choice of the human heart.[46]Love, especially in a vocation is not limited solely to mere emotions. It requires an act of the will to manifest the perfection of love through a selfless charity.

The divine mystery of love is revealed through spousal love; through the nuptial meaning of body[47]St. John Paul II transmitted the importance of the gift of sexuality and the human body as it unifies the human persons. The human soul, united to the body, is a composite. It is what makes an individual a human person. The body defines the core being of a person with its sex: its masculinity and femininity.[48]Adam and Eve discovered their own dignity from their bodies, “ not as objects but rather as human
<https://assignbuster.com/the-unitive-and-procreative-dimensions-to-the-married-life-the-authentic-path-to-holiness/>

persons.”[49]Through the gifts of their own bodies they “ became on flesh.”[50]The body is the “ visible expression that makes love possible.”[51]When the total self-giving is realized through the will, the body acts as the outward sign of this total self-giving.[52]

Both the soul and body have the nature of gift as its core foundation. Man and woman realize these gifts to each other through their own masculinity and femininity.[53]Man, through his masculinity is “ the active initiator of love that guards it,” while woman “ cooperates to receive the gift from the other.”[54]The more husbands and wives authentically give themselves to each other, the greater joy and peace they will experience within their hearts. The more openness they have to receive each other’s gifts, the more solid their communion of persons will be.[55]Since the person is made in the image of God, who is self-giving love, he could only find himself through the sincere gift self.[56]

Chastity: The Full Concrete Realization of Spousal Love

For spousal love to become fecund it needs to be grounded in the virtue of chastity. Chastity is the successful integration of sexuality with the person.”[57]It includes all the dimensions of the human person: the inner unity of man in his” bodily and spiritual being.”[58]The person who is chaste maintains the “ integrity of powers of life and love placed in him.”[59]Married couples that practice chastity find an authentic peace and security in their relationship. Rather than acting on disordered passions, they act on a life of virtue. Chastity is what makes married couples holy. Guided by the “ fruits of the spirit,” they perfect one another.[60]

Procreative Dimension: Life-Giving Love

When both man and woman fully realize the unitive dimension of their marriage they produce abundant fruits from it. Pope Paul VI describes the procreative dimension as “ the union of the two persons perfects one another they are able to cooperate with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.”[61]Love by its nature is to produce a life that flows from the act of unitive love.[62]Procreation affirms the love of God as life reveals the “ gift of creation from God to man.”[63]The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains “ every marriage must be ordered per se to the procreation of human life.”[64]Man and woman must be open to life since “ God, who is love,” by His nature produces life.[65]When there is a denial in procreation, sex devalues itself and becomes a self-gratifying act.

One of the most fundamental points Paul VI presents is the moral evil of contraception.[66]The Church condemns contraception as it violates the natural law of God as creator. Contraceptive methods disorder original nature of marriage designed by God. It denies the total self-gift as man and woman only give part of themselves. Love, is a gift and a task that is manifested through full responsibility.[67]Without these fundamental dimensions the intention and meaning of the marital act would be distorted. Holy Mother Church is an advocate to construct a civilization of love and life within our society. By preserving the whole moral love of marriage, she defends the dignity and role of both husband and wife.[68]In Genesis, God called forth the transmission of life as He commanded Adam and Eve to “ be fertile and multiply.”[69]God speaks of the length on the nature of marriage prescribed by God. Love is not something abstract; rather it is concrete. For <https://assignbuster.com/the-unitive-and-procreative-dimensions-to-the-married-life-the-authentic-path-to-holiness/>

this reason, children are the most potent fruit of the love of marriage.

Gaudium et Spes explains, “ by its very nature married love is ordered to the “ procreation and education of the offspring and is in them that it finds its crowning glory.”[70]The creation of a new life is the “ participation of living in the image and likeness of God” the creator to love as He loves.[71]Some marriages may not be able to physically conceive, but that does not take away the “ blessing and completeness” of their “ distinctive communion of persons.”[72]

Responsible Fatherhood and Motherhood

The role of fatherhood and motherhood also play an essential role in the transmission of life. Motherhood and fatherhood consist in a communication of the gift of life through “ generation and education.”[73]Husband and wife are called to responsible parenthood to protect the dignity of the gift they have conceived.[74]Their mutual mission flows from an enrichment of their own masculinity and femininity.[75]Cardinal Scola explains that the roles of parenthood establish their child’s “ freedom and fulfillment of their person.”[76]St. John Paul II in *Redemptoris Custos* explains fatherhood consists in an authority as a service totally obedient to God’s will. [77]Motherhood also requires a selfless love to not seek herself first, but those entrusted under her own care. *Mulieris Dignitatum* states: “ God entrusts the human being to her in a special way.”[78]Together fatherhood and motherhood are complimentary to each other and have an equal dignity. [79]Even though motherhood and fatherhood have their distinct role, they have one ultimate calling: to be transformed “ in Christ to become holy, to glorify God and to reach eternal with Him.”[80]Together husband and wife

<https://assignbuster.com/the-unitive-and-procreative-dimensions-to-the-married-life-the-authentic-path-to-holiness/>

with their children are called to help each other reach a life of holiness to obtain salvation.

Conclusion

The vocation to the married life is a dignified calling that requires a faithful response to preserve its nature. Both husband and wife are to edify each other through their sincere gift of self. When a man and woman willingly chose to act upon a self-giving love, they fully realize the identity of who they are called to be. The primary purpose of marriage is for the begetting and raising of children that faithfully realizes the natural law and the divine plans of God.[81]

Paul VI in *Humane Vitae* found the importance of preserving the nature of marriage. It restores man to his original dignity and leads him to the authentic path to holiness. St. John Paul II emphasizes the need for holy vocations to the married life. Holy marriages continue to edify the body of the Church and lead her children to eternal salvation.[82] They are fundamental during these times, as they promote the dignity of the human person in a culture of death that fails to recognize the gift of love and life. Married couples through their example self-giving love and life-giving fecundity realize God's loving designs in the Church and the whole world.

Bibliography

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995.

- John Paul II, General Audiences, in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006.
- John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1988.
- John Paul II, Pope. Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem, On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* On the Occasion. Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1988.
- John Paul II, Pope. Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*. Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1989.
- Hardon, John. *The Catholic Catechists Manual*. Rome: Inter Mirifica, 1989.
- Hilderbrand, Dietrich von. *Man and Woman love and the Meaning of Intimacy* Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1996.
- Ouellet, Cardinal Marc. “ Marriage and the Family with the Sacramentality of the Church: Challenges and Perspectives,” *Communio* , no. 41 (Summer 2014): 231.
- Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*. Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968.
- Schu, Walter. *The Splendor of Love*. New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003.
- Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), n. 40

- Shivanandan, Mary. *Crossing the Threshold of Love*. Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999.
- Scola, Angelo Cardinal. *The Nuptial Mystery*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009.
- William E. May, *The Anthropological Vision of Humanae Vitae* . The Catholic University of America 2008 1.
- Wojtyła, Karol. *Love and Responsibility* , trans., endnotes, and forward by Grzegorz Ignatik. Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006.

[1]William E. May, *The Anthropological Vision of Humanae Vitae* (The Catholic University of America 2008,) 1.

[2]Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), 40

[3]Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), 24.

[4]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) 8.

[5]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) 9.

[6]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 7.

[7]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) §9.

[8]Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), §40

[9]Ibid., 4

[10] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1654.

[11]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) §9.

[12]Ibid., 12

[13]Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), §40

[14]Matthew 5: 48 NAB

[15]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 7.

[16]John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* , On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1994). 7

[17] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1661.

[18]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) 9.

[19]Ephesians 5: 24, NAB.

[20]Ibid., 5: 25

[21] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1644.

[22]Ibid., 1601

[23]Ibid., 230-231

[24]Cardinal Marc Ouellet, “ Marriage and the Family with the Sacramentality of the Church: Challenges and Perspectives,” *Communio* , no. 41 (Summer 2014): 231.

[25]Pope John Paul II, *General Audiences in Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 9: 5, 131-145.

[26] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1654.

[27]Ibid., 1730

[28]Pope John Paul II, General Audience (14 November 1979), in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 9: 5, 162.

[29]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 79.

[30]Ibid., 9

[31]Genesis 2: 24 NAB

[32]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 79.

[33] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1654.

[34]Genesis 2: 18 NAB

[35]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 7.

[36]Ibid., 7.

[37]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 79.

[38]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 79

[39]Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans., endnotes, and forward by Grzegorz Ignatik (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 130.

[40]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) 9.

[41]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) 9.

[42]Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 36.

[43]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 12.

[44]Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 36.

[45]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 79

[46]Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans., endnotes, and forward by Grzegorz Ignatik (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 130.

[47]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 83.

[48]Ibid., 83

[49]Ibid., 81

[50] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1605.

[51]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 83.

[52]Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 36.

[53]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 83.

[54]Pope John Paul II, General Audience (14 November 1979), in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 9: 5, 162.

[55]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 84.

[56]Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), n. 24

[57] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 1654.

[58]Ibid., 1654

[59]Ibid., 1654 .

[60]Pope John Paul II, General Audience (14 January 14 1981), in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 9: 5, 339.

[61]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) 9.

[62]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 11.

[63]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 84.

[64] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* , 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 2366.

[65]Ibid., 1604

[66]Ibid., 2399.

[67]Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans., endnotes, and forward by Grzegorz Ignatik (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 139.

[68]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 81.

[69]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 14.

[70]Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution of on the Church in the Modern World , *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City, Rome, December 7, 1965), n. 48

[71]Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love* (New Hope: Kentucky: New Hope Publications, 2003), 84.

[72]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “ Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” *A Pastoral Letter of the USCCB*, November 17, 2009, 15.

[73]Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company) , 90.

[74]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,)

[75]Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company) , 91.

[76]Ibid., 90.

[77]John Paul II, Pope. Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1989,) 8

[78]John Paul II, Pope. Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem, On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* On the Occasion (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1988,) 8

[79]Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company) , 91.

[80]Dietrich von Hilderbrand, *Man and Woman love and the Meaning of Intimacy* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1996), 86.

[81]Paul VI, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Humana Vitae*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1968,) §9.

[82]Ibid., 230-231