

# BLACKFRIARS

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## CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

THE importance of the Christian family as the corner-stone of any social rebuilding in the future is recognised by all; and BLACKFRIARS cannot hope to do more than produce a few pointers to some of the more significant elements in its constitution. Thus we may note the vocation of marriage. For Christian marriage, no less than the religious life or the priesthood, is a 'calling,' a divine calling to specific functions, responsibilities and joys. Indeed, it involves the spirit of a religious vocation, since it involves the spirit of the three vows of religion. Married life usually implies a greater degree of actual poverty than living single, and must always mean a certain detachment from wealth and possessions. In this it stands out against the standards of those whose ideal of conjugal happiness is summed up in a service flat and a car. Married life demands a chastity that is constantly selfless in face of the selfish way out by birth prevention. It requires obedience, without which the family collapses in a chaotic group of warring relatives. All this necessarily implies sacrifice. The poverty, chastity and obedience of marriage are consecrated in a special way by the sacrament, which links them with Calvary: every sacrament represents the Passion of Christ. By his analogy between the union of the Church with Christ and that of husband with wife St. Paul shows how central this sacrificial element must be, for Christ was wedded to his Church on Calvary. In these days it might perhaps prove more helpful to insist on this aspect of married life rather than on the union of married love or the importance of children as its primary end. These latter are the natural elements of the marriage bond, whereas the sacrificial, and sometimes heroic, element should be essentially supernatural. The ideal to set before the newly married should be higher than that provided by nature, and it should be realisable through the ordinary spiritual means offered by the Church. All the other sacraments are ordered and subordinate to the Blessed Sacrament; and the sacrament of matrimony should enable husband and wife to find their inspiration and daily support at the altar of sacrifice, where every day the Victim of Calvary is offered and given to them as their food. It is thus that this sacrament makes married life an act of worship and the bedrock of unity.