

Following the guidance of the suggested questions...

1) *How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?*

For me, the phrasing of this question states part the problem we face. Instead of 'receiving' the heritage of the Christian spirituality of marriage, we feel entitled to re-create it. It is not a question of how ...*I interpret what scripture says about marriage...* We are a catholic tradition which must put weight on how: a) the church catholic throughout the ages has read scripture; and b) on how the majority of catholic Christians in our current age read. Is it not odd that Canadian Anglicans think that we can arbitrarily re-define marriage, and 're-interpret' scriptures in a fashion that flies in the face of millions of our brothers and sisters throughout the Anglican communion itself, and in the face of other ecumenical partners?

That we are even talking about this demonstrates an incipient 'congregationalistic' ecclesiology—how ironic, when 'congregationalism' seems to be such an anathema in other parts of theological or ecclesiological discourse in our fellowship as Canadian Anglicans.

2) *How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?*

Again what I might think is not important. What is important is what I do with what Jesus draws our attention to in his language about associating the state of 'one flesh' with that of the union of 'man and woman'. Sexual differential seems integral to Jesus in the state of 'one flesh'. The language is not 'same flesh'.

Wherever the commission is led, you will have to write a satisfactory theological/spiritual commentary on 'one flesh', and its association with sexual differentiation. I do not think there is any way you can do this without doing violence to the language Jesus presents us with. Which then throws us right back to the much more elemental question: our communal disorder around the authority of scripture.

One other thing when we fail to take seriously sexual differentiation around 'one flesh': we will have to be prepared to re-define the very essence of body-life/ecclesiology. St. Paul (Ephesians 5), and the Apostolic tradition since, has predicated our understanding of the relationship with Christ and his Church on the one-flesh mystery of a man and a woman. If we presume to have the authority to change a definition of marriage, then we had best be prepared to re-write a new theology of the relationship of Christ and his Church.

3) *Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?*

Yes. Christian marriage is an act of the worship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose name we invoke, and under whose discipline we submit. The 'rules of engagement' for Christians undertaking marriage under God are totally different than for the general population. Christian marriage is more than itself. The principal

is well expressed in Gary Thomas' title of this book he wrote: Sacred Marriage: What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?

4) *What is the theological significance of:*

- *companionship in marriage*
- *bearing and raising children*
- *relationship between marriage and sexuality*

Sadly, the language in Canon 21, since its latest re-working, is very unhelpful, not at all based on any good theology and spirituality of Christian marriage. So the way the Canon stands, opened the specious door that has brought us to this juncture.

*Companionship in marriage* needs again to be looked at in the light of the mystery of 'one flesh', and through the lens of marriage being a 'little church'— *where two ...are gathered in my name, I will be with them*. However the Commission addresses the language of *companionship*, I hope they do so spiritually and theologically, in the light of a means in which to die to self, and grow in Christ in relation to spouse.

*Bearing and raising children*. Again, this 'purpose of marriage' needs to be dealt with, and understood according to the realm of spiritual theology rather than just social biology. It also needs to fit the logic of the sexual differential implicit in 'one flesh'.

*Relationship between marriage and sexuality*. A powerful act of worship is accepting the Father's (high) sexual discipline. Not just any sexual act or desire is automatically an act of worship, if it is outside the discipline revealed to us. The Christian act of worship in the one-flesh relationship calls me to submit my sexual expression and discipline it to the 'other' in marriage. I do not get to allow my personal sexual fulfillment to a) define who I am (My 'am-ness is because of who I am in Christ, not what my desires/fulfillments are); or b) have my desire/lack of desire, fulfillment/lack of fulfillment dominate the agenda of a marriage.

5) *What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship?*

Excellent question! I still don't know. Any distinction between the two was simply a language game invented to accommodate and legitimate a practice below the radar of the larger church, or an honest theological/spiritual process of discernment. Whatever the faults of the current motion from GS 2013, it at least has the virtue of bringing the discourse into the correct mode of discourse, putting an end to the silliness around an arbitrary distinction between 'blessing' and 'marriage'.

6) *How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?*

Why is the question even asked? Are we Anglicans or not? Anglicans made up their minds a long time ago about the question: marriage is not a sacrament. See Article XXV, page 707 ff. in the BCP (still the official formulary of doctrine for the Anglican Communion, yes?). So when we ask questions that again refuse the tradition handed down to us, we end up entering into debates and discourses that confuse and divide.