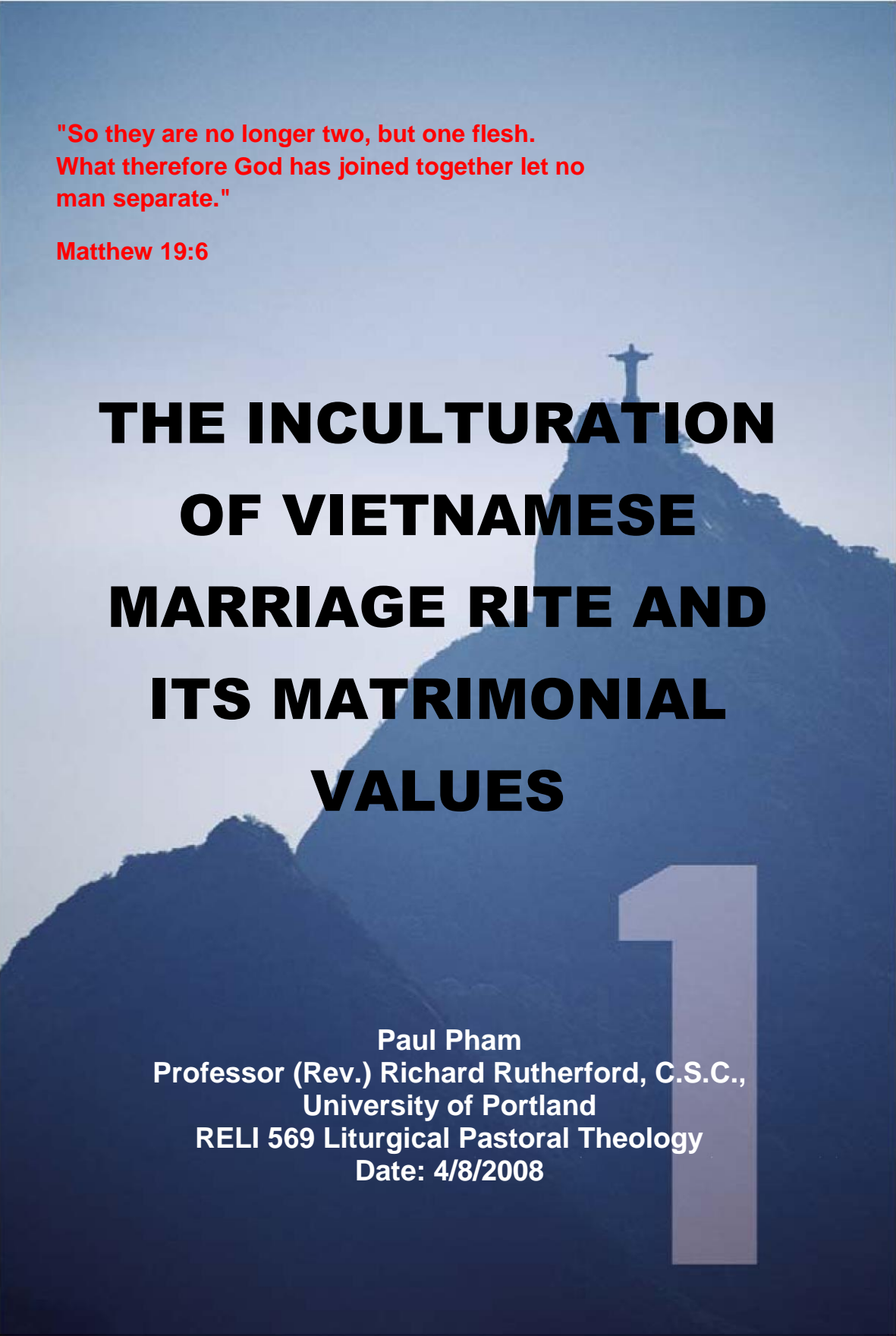


**"So they are no longer two, but one flesh.
What therefore God has joined together let no
man separate."**

Matthew 19:6



THE INCULTURATION OF VIETNAMESE MARRIAGE RITE AND ITS MATRIMONIAL VALUES

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I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a major ritual marking a crucial transition in human life. At least one of the partners leaves his or her old situation to embark on a new one. This change can have a tremendous impact. Marriage as we know it in traditional Vietnamese culture may be regarded as a stage in a long-term, cultural historical development.

Before the bloody downfall of South Vietnam into the hands of Communism on April 30, 1975, most people still lived in extended families comprising two or more generations. "They jointly earned a livelihood, so marriage involved all members of the family, the Church"¹ and even the whole village.

Upon the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Vietnam War ended with the various waves of immigration to the United States, some including my younger brother, sister and myself known as "boat people." This exile was a traumatic disaster for the Vietnamese refugees, many of whom were pillaged and raped by pirates; others lost their lives to the sea. Tragedy, however, can give birth to blessings. After three decades in the Diaspora, Vietnamese expatriates can look back with gratitude the opportunities God have given them in the United States.² The task of becoming fully American, fully Vietnamese, and fully Catholic may be called inculturation. Vietnamese-American Catholics belong to both the American Church and the Vietnamese Church. Vietnamese-American Catholics live a Catholic life in a distinctly American Catholic culture that they have absorbed through sheer contiguity and symbiosis with the American society and Church. According to Rev. Peter Phan, a theologian at Georgetown University, the predicament of Vietnamese-American Catholics are neither completely outside the American Catholic Church and their native Vietnamese Church nor completely inside them; they belong to both but not completely, because they are beyond both. In other words, they live and move and have their being in the interstice between the American culture and their own, between the American Church and their Vietnamese Church. As the results, Vietnamese-American Catholics can be the bridge between East and West, between the Church of Vietnam and the Church of North America.³

As an attempt to understand the theology of matrimony values and the inculturation of Vietnamese marriage, this paper presents the empirical study of three matrimony values including marriage as 1) a contract, 2) to have children, and 3) love in the rite of Vietnamese Catholic marriage and its liturgical actions. In the study,

¹ Remco Robinson and Hans Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. Johannes A. van der Ven and Hans Schilderman, (NV, Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2007), 169.

² Peter C. Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2005), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 133.

we explore to what extent these three matrimonial values are still endorsed by contemporary Vietnamese American and traditional Vietnamese couples? The empirical, hermeneutical and critical methods⁴ will be employed to illustrate both its strengths and weaknesses. The study will also discuss how marriage is viewed from the Christian perspective.

II. EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

To obtain the three matrimonial values empirically, we used the participant observation method to examine a set of five church wedding videos at several Vietnamese Catholic parishes in Oregon. Also a questionnaire was given to a total of 69 couples married in the Roman Catholic Church across the Vietnamese parishes in Oregon, California, New Orleans, Florida and Vietnam. I wish to acknowledge a number of Vietnamese Pastors and Catechists in the United States and in Vietnam (no specific names mentioned here due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of this study). These Pastors have provided me with tremendous supports to the groundwork and implementation of the research as well as in the usage of the results of the study that make it possible for me to carry out this pastoral liturgical analysis.⁵ The couples were married in parishes drawn randomly from a list of Vietnamese Catholic parishes. In the period of five weeks from Oct. 2008 to Nov. 2008, the questionnaires were completed separately by both spouses who have their church wedding at the parish in the last 12 months or so but not to exceed two years.

1. MARRIAGE RITE OF VIETNAMESE CATHOLICS – LITURGICAL ACTION

Vietnamese Catholic wedding is usually conducted by a Priest. The couple must attend marriage preparation class for six months or so. They must submit documents necessary in accordance with Church's sacramental law. By and large, the wedding Mass is celebrated according to the Church's tradition except for some cultural elements that will be discussed in details under hermeneutical session. At the beginning of the Rite of Marriage, the main celebrant addresses the bride and groom as well as the congregation: "you have come together in

⁴ Rev. Richard Rutherford, CSC., *Funeral Liturgy—Why Bother? A Practical Theology of Death and Bereavement in the Rites of Death and Dying*, ed., Anthony F. Sherman, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 67-101.

Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy and Hermeneutics*, (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 23-99.

⁵ *Ibid.* 68.

front of God and the congregation so that God may seal (covenant with God – first value, religious dimension) protect and strengthen your love (third value) in the presence of the Church’s representative and the community (social dimension). Christ blesses your love bountifully. He consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by the sacrament of matrimony so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. Therefore, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions” (Rite of Catholic Marriage in Vietnamese).

The priest then asks the bride and groom about their freedom of choice, faithfulness to each other, and their willingness to have children (second value): “Nghia and Hang, have you come here freely and unconditionally to give yourselves to each other in marriage? The groom and bride say: Yes. Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife until your death? The groom and bride say: Yes. Are you willing to accept children (second value) lovingly from God, and raise them according to the God’s law and the Church” (Rite of Catholic Marriage in Vietnamese)?

The priest invites the bride and groom to announce their consent (first value): “Because it is your free will to enter into marriage, join your hands, and pronounce your consent before God and the Church (religious dimension). The couple joins hands. The groom says: I, Nghia, take you, Hang, to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love (third value) you and honor you all the days of my life. The bride says: I, Hang, take you, Nghia, to be my husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life. In receiving their consent, the priest says: You have declared your consent before the Church (Ecclesial judicial dimension). May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with his blessings. What God has joined, men must not divide. The couple says: Amen (Rite of Catholic Marriage in Vietnamese).

In blessing of the wedding rings, the priest says: May the Lord bless these rings which you give to each other as the sign of your love (third value) and fidelity. The couple says: Amen. The groom puts his wife's ring on her ring finger. He says: Hang, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The bride places her husband's ring on his ring finger and state her fidelity in the

same manner. Click here for pictorial demonstration ->



[exchangeRing.jpg](#)

Unity Candle – Even though, this is not a part of the Roman Catholic Marriage Rite, but part of the Vietnamese liturgical inculturation, the unity candle is incorporated right after the blessing of wedding rings.



Click here for pictorial demonstration -> [UnityCandle.jpg](#)

Nuptial Blessing - After the Lord's Prayer, the priest faces the bride and groom and says: My dear community (social/ecclesial dimension), let us turn to the Lord and pray that God will bless with his grace Hang now married in Christ to Nghia and through the sacrament of the Eucharist, God will unite in love (third value) the couple he has joined in this holy bond (first value). All pray in silent. Then the priest extends his hands and continues: ...Father, by your plan man and woman are united, and married life has been established as the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in the flood. Look with love upon Hang, your daughter, now joined to her husband Nghia in marriage. She asks your blessing. Give her the grace of love (third value) and peace. May she always follow the example of the holy women whose praises are sung in the scriptures. May her husband Nghia put his trust in her and recognize that she is his equal and the heir with him to the life of grace. May he always honor her and love her (third value) as Christ loves his bride, the Church. Father, keep them always true to your commandments. Keep them faithful and fidelity in marriage and let them be living examples of Christian life. Give them the strength which comes from the gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others. Bless them with children (second value) and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their grand children. And, after a happy old age, grant them fullness of life with the saints in the kingdom of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen (Rite of Catholic Marriage in Vietnamese).

At the conclusion of the wedding mass, the couple is devoted to the Virgin Mary – Our Lady of Lavang. This is again not a part of the Roman Catholic Marriage Rite, but it is a piety devotion that is incorporated into the tradition of Vietnamese Catholic weddings.

As soon as the couple returns home from the wedding at Church, the bride and groom as well as the two extended families are to perform the ceremony of ancestor veneration in front of the ancestral altar. They hold several burning joss sticks with both hands, and bows to the ancestors in prayerful silence. These rituals



are to express gratitude toward the ancestors. Click here for pictorial demonstration -> [ANCESTOR.jpg](#)

2. CONTRACT (FIRST MATRIMONIAL VALUE)

As indicated in our empirical study of the Vietnamese Catholic matrimonial rite and its liturgical action, marriage is a covenant between two people, and involves commitment by both husband and wife; the matrimonial value is their faithfulness to the marriage contract. Hence we expect that “the contractual value can be approached in terms of personal, civil judicial, religious, social and ecclesiastic judicial.”⁶

To measure attitudes towards the contractual matrimonial value we formulated five items, which were included in the questionnaire. Respondents answered on a 5-point scale, indicating the extent of their agreement. Below we present each dimension with illustrative examples.⁷

DIMENSION	EXAMPLE
1. Personal	Marriage is primarily a contract between two people excluded the traditional extended families, community or village.
2. Civil judicial	Marriage is a contract that is done in the registry/state office.
3. Religious	In the first place, marriage is a contract before God.
4. Social	Marriage is to show your community/village that you belong together.
5. Ecclesiastic judicial	You are not really married until after the church wedding.

Table 1

Table 2 compares the responses by the modern Vietnamese-American in the United States with the responses by the Vietnamese in Vietnam as well as my own experience.

DIMENSION	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN IN U.S.	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM	SELF – EXPERIENCE
1. Personal	4.1	1.9	1.0
2. Civil judicial	3.9	4.0	5.0
3. Religious	3.9	4.9	5.0
4. Social	2.5	4.0	5.0
5. Ecclesiastic judicial	3.1	4.8	5.0

Table 2

Ranging from 1, totally disagree to 5, totally agree, table 2 shows that the Vietnamese-American couples consider the individual contract between the two of them is most important; scale of agreement is at 82%. While the traditional Vietnamese couples are at the ratio of 38% and their ecclesiastic judicial is at 96% scale. My wife

⁶ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. A. van der Ven and Schilderman, 174.

⁷ Ibid.

and I are on the extreme at %100 agreement of civil judicial, religious, social and ecclesiastic judicial dimensions. We are conservative Catholics.

3. HAVING CHILDREN (SECOND MATRIMONIAL VALUE)

Since 1975, the situation in Vietnam has changed greatly; marriages are under influence of Marxist especially for non-Christian. Nowadays contraception means that having children is an option, not an obligation. Advances in medical science also mean that many forms of infertility can be remedied. Besides, having children is not exclusively confined to wedlock, so the link between the two is no longer taken for granted. But couples in traditional Vietnamese family may still feel socially pressurized to have children, because their parents, friends or neighbors of their own age expect their offspring. Nonreligious Vietnamese, too, may experience this kind of pressure. In that case having children is seen as a social expectation. Hence we expect that the value of “having children” should be approached in terms of two dimensions: having children as a religious obligation according to our study of the Vietnamese Catholic matrimonial rite and its liturgical action, and as a social expectation. To determine to what extent the couples' response patterns reflect the matrimonial value of “having children,”⁸ the following table depicts the two values mentioned above:

DIMENSION	EXAMPLE
1. Religious duty	As married couple, God and the Church desire you to seek to have children.
2. Social duty	Your extended families, your village - the people around you expect you to have children when you married.

Table 3

Table 4 compares the responses by the modern Vietnamese-American in the United States with the responses by the Vietnamese in Vietnam as well as my own experience.

DIMENSION	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN IN U.S.	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM	SELF – EXPERIENCE
1. Religious duty	2.4	4.8	5.0
3. Social duty	2.5	4.3	4.0

Table 4

⁸ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. van der Ven and Schilderman, 175.

Ranging from 1, totally disagree to 5, totally agree, our empirical study, table 4, indicates that the Vietnamese-American couples regard both religious obligation and social expectation to have children only to a scale of approximately 48% agreement. While the traditional Vietnamese couples are at the ratio of 96%. My wife and I have three children. We believe we have fulfilled both religious and social duty.

4. LOVE (THIRD MATRIMONIAL VALUE)

Our study of the rite of Vietnamese Catholic wedding leads to the third value of marriage “love.” The love value may be approached in terms of four dimensions: Agape, love for the other with total disregard of self; Eros, longing for union with the other (either sexual or spiritual); Philia, mutual love between equals; and finally, Storge, caring love in a (partly) dependent relationship.⁹ To measure the love value, response categories on the basis of the four dimensions were the same as for the other matrimonial values.

DIMENSION	EXAMPLE
1. Agape	If you truly love someone, you efface yourself completely.
2. Eros	If you truly love a person, you want to be one with him or her.
3. Philia	True love is only possible in a relationship with an equal partner.
4. Storge	True love is above all caring for the other.

Table 7

Table 7 compares the responses by the modern Vietnamese-American in the United States with the responses by the Vietnamese in Vietnam as well as my own experience.

DIMENSION	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN IN U.S.	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM	SELF – EXPERIENCE
1. Agape	2.6	3.1	4.0
2. Eros	4.1	4.0	4.5
3. Philia	3.9	4.0	4.0
4. Storge	3.4	3.3	4.5

Table 8

Our empirical responses, except for Agape table 8 shows small discrepancy among Vietnamese Catholic couples on either side of the Pacific Ocean. Our own experience is that these four dimensions of love should be in balance.

⁹ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. van der Ven and Schilderman, 183.

III. HERMENEUTICAL MUSINGS

1. TRADITION

i. LITURGICAL STUDIES

According to our empirical study on the liturgical action of the wedding rite and contractual value of marriage, the religious dimension is foremost important. In other words, our participant-observance suggests that Catholic marriage before God and the Church are a most significant aspect of their life. The bridal couple makes their vows before God and the Church; they rely on God for protection and strengthening their love. They exchange the blessed ring as the sign of love and fidelity. They promise to accept children as God's gift, and raise them according to Christ's law and His Church's. They light the unity candle trusting that the light of Christ they received at baptism will continue to burn intensely in their marriage. Our empirical results, however, illustrates that the Vietnamese-American couples consider the individual contract between the two of them most important; that is far exceeded the religious dimension. In contrast, the traditional Vietnamese couples are 96% agreement with the notion "you are not really married until after the church wedding." It seems the individualistic culture has influenced the Vietnamese immigrants' culture significantly.

ii. MAGISTERIUM

Apart from the contractual aspects, procreation is an important factor in matrimonial theology as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) stated: "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (CCC 1601). Early theologians (e.g. Clement of Alexandria and Augustine) called procreation the primary purpose of marriage. This view was adopted by all theologians until the pontificate of Pius XI and his *Casti Conubii* (1930). This pope considered interpersonal love and intimacy the heart of marriage. That brings us to the third matrimonial value "love". This new trend had an impact on the way Vatican II defined marriage: The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the jugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. (*Gaudium et Spes* No. 48). It is a covenant that creates an intimate relationship of life and matrimonial love. Firstly, it is aimed at the well-being of the spouses. Secondly, it is aimed at procreation, and thirdly, at society (*Gaudium et Spes* No. 50). Following earlier matrimonial theologies, the three matrimonial values we have mentioned are discernible in the Vatican II definition of marriage. Marriage is, first of all, a contract. It is a special contract: a

covenant of love between two people aimed at their well-being. This special contract regulates the interaction between the spouses, obliging them to help and care for each other. The second value we call having children: marriage is aimed at having children and caring for them. Being a covenant, it creates a secure environment to do so. The third focal matrimonial value is love. Marriage is a contract may be described more specifically as an alliance of love.¹⁰

Church's teaching on the sacrament of matrimony can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: the Celebration of Marriage (CCC 1621- 1624), Matrimonial Consent (CCC 1625 - 1630), the Effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony (CCC 1638 - 1642), the Goods and Requirements of Conjugal Love (CCC 1643 - 1654) and the Domestic Church (CCC 1655 - 1658). Doctrines on the Sacrament of Matrimony are rooted from the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Council of Trent, 1545-1563 as well as the Canons on the Sacrament of Matrimony and Decree on the Reformation of Marriage. On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (*Familiaris Consortio*), Pope John Paul II's 1981 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation contains an excellent, clear explanation of the Church's teachings on marriage and the family. A collection of Pope John Paul II's annual addresses to the Church's top "marriage court" provides excellent and developing insight into the Church's belief in the sanctity of marriage and the issue of "annulments." Other Papal encyclicals include: On the Regulation of Human Birth (*Humanae Vitae*), Pope Paul VI's landmark 1968 Encyclical Letter, his discussion of "God's Loving Design for Marriage"; On Christian Marriage (*Casti Connubii*), Pope Pius XI's 1930 Encyclical Letter; On Christian Marriage (*Arcanum*), Pope Leo XIII's 1893 Encyclical Letter. On Marriage Impediments and Dispensations (*Magna Nobis*), Pope Benedict XIV's 1748 Encyclical Letter and so on.¹¹

iii. HISTORICAL STUDIES

1. MARRIAGE IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CENTURIES

In the early centuries, the way Christians contracted marriage differed slightly from the way non-Christians got married, through the customary domestic rites of betrothal, the handing-over of the bride, and the celebration of cohabitation, as these were done in different societies. It did not exclude marriage by cohabitation alone, where this was a socially acceptable way of marrying as, for example, among the lower classes. Nor did it fear to recognize marriages which the state would not recognize, as when the Roman Church recognized as marriage

¹⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹¹ St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, "*Holy Matrimony and Family Life - Catholic Rites and Teachings*," <http://archive.salvationhistory.com/library/liturgy/theology/marriage.cfm> (March 3, 2016).

the permanent relationship between a free woman and a slave. The arranging, celebrating and consummating of these marriages were matters, usually, for the families concerned, though it appears that, in the East, the local bishop did on occasion take an active role in finding suitable spouses for orphaned or abandoned children. Marriage was a domestic matter in all societies, being arranged by the two families and celebrated in the two households. Christians seem to have taken this entirely for granted although, as was only to be expected, their faith prompted them, on the one hand to suppress or adapt the religious (i.e. "pagan") dimensions of the inherited customs, and on the other to invite the bishop or priest, as leader of the faith community, to pronounce a blessing on the couple as they began their life together.¹²

In the East, however, in the fourth to seventh centuries, matters took a different direction, and the clergy become closely involved in both the rites of betrothal and in the rites associated with the beginning of married life. This seems to have happened in part because the need for the Church to regulate marriages seems to have asserted itself rather earlier in the East than in the West, and in part because of a rather vivid sense of the identity of the Church itself as the Bride of Christ. Whatever the reasons, beginning in Armenia in the late fourth century and spreading to the rest of the Eastern empire in the centuries following, that the priest or bishop is coming to assume a central role in the conduct of the marriage ceremonies. Central to these ceremonies from ancient times were the rites of the joining of the couple's hands, the handing over of the bride to her husband, and the crowning of the couple with garlands. It was not until the late ninth century that Constantinople ruled that this marriage liturgy, conducted by the clergy, would henceforth become the only way of marrying recognized by the Church as valid.¹³

2. MARRIAGE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Middle Ages begin when the Roman Empire is replaced in the West by a new civilization bringing together the old Roman peoples in Italy and Spain with the new peoples who had migrated West in waves from Eastern Europe, the steppes of central Asia and ultimately from Mongolia. They came to settle in what is now Western Europe, bringing with them their own languages, their own laws, and their own customs. In what concerned marriage these Germanic peoples shared one thing in common that differentiated them from their new Roman neighbors: for them marriage rested not upon consent of the couple, but upon cohabitation. The bride was treated pretty much as a family asset, which might be lost to another family, but, was preferably transferred in

¹² Mark Searle & Kenneth Stevenson, *Documents of the marriage liturgy*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 253

¹³ *Ibid.*, 254

orderly fashion and to the satisfaction of both families by purchase agreement. This agreement involved drawing up a contract between the heads of the respective families which stipulated the dowry the girl might bring to the marriage and the compensation to be given the girl's family for the loss of her. This agreement constituted a betrothal, and penalties were reckoned if one of the families reneged on the agreement and failed to go through with the marriage. Sometime after this betrothal, at a time and place stipulated in the agreement, the girl would be handed over to the authority of her husband's family and the couple would then be married. A tension thus arose between Roman practice based on consent and Germanic practice based on the bride price and cohabitation, between negative patristic views of sexuality and Germanic understandings of marriage which defined it almost exclusively in terms of sexual relations. From this tension arose juridical conflicts which were not resolved for several centuries, while from the unsettled social conditions of the so-called "Dark Ages" sprang the problems of widespread infidelity, divorce, abuse of women, disinheritance of lawful heirs, and so on, that so taxed serious-minded churchmen of the time.¹⁴

From the eleventh century, the Church began to assert its juridical authority over marriage in a series of reforming synods. From these synods emerged legislation affecting the public nature of marriage and intended to curb the worst abuses of clandestine marriages. But these synods, in attempting to reform marriage, also contributed to the denigration of marriage by imposing celibacy upon the higher clergy. Thus the reform movement perpetuated the negative attitudes towards sexuality found in Jerome and Augustine, suggesting that it was incompatible with service at the altar.¹⁵

iv. THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

In *Casti Conubii* Pius XI specified that interpersonal love is the crux of marriage. Love is multi-dimensional. A well-known author on the subject is C. S. Lewis. As mentioned in our empirical study and in *The Four Loves* (1960), C. S. Lewis distinguishes between four types of love based on the Christian tradition: Agape (selfless love), Eros (passionate desire for union with the beloved), Philia (reciprocal friendly love between equals) and Storge (caring love, especially parental love). Although Lewis does not substantiate his categorization, theology and the Bible do offer grounds for it. The Bible mentions three of the four types of love: Agape (e.g. 2 Sam 13:15, Ecc 9:1, Lk 11:42, Jn 5:42 and Rom 5:8); Eros (Pr 7:18 and 30:16); and Philia (e.g. 1 Mac 8:1, 10:23, 12:1, 2 Mac 6:22, Pr 15:17 and Sir 6:17). The fourth type of love, Storge, can be reconstructed from various biblical

¹⁴ Ibid., 258

¹⁵ Ibid., 259

passages. There are many stories dealing with parental love for their children, such as the story of Moses' birth and upbringing (Ex 2), Hannah's care for Samuel (1 Sam 1), Hosea 11 and the Christmas story (Matt 2, Lk 2). Theological ethics refers to *sexus*, *eros* and *agape*. *Sexus* is passionate love stemming from sexuality; *eros* is inner longing for wholeness and happiness by having the other augment one's own limitations; and *agape* is selfless affirmation of the other. Sometimes this scheme is supplemented with a fourth type of love, *philia*, being caring, benevolent, reciprocal love based on sympathy.

As for the matrimonial value of “having children”, the primary goal of marriage in matrimonial theological discourse is procreation and in so doing seek to perpetuate themselves in another iteration of humanity who we hope will grow to live and love in turn. In Vietnamese society, marriage centered on having children until the fall of Saigon in 1975 to the hands of Communism, most couples had several children. The Church teaches God gave married couples an obligation to have children, which is traceable to the Bible and theology. Genesis 1:28 commands humans to be “fruitful and multiply”. A child, moreover, is a gift of God and a sign of his blessing. So much so that “barren” women were scorned, and their family understood to be cursed. The Bible contains many examples of parents (especially mothers) who are afflicted with barrenness until God unexpectedly grants them children. Examples include Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21), Hannah (1 Sam 1) and Elizabeth and Zechariah (Lk 1). In theology procreation was an explicit goal of marriage, for instance in the views of Clement of Alexandria, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. People marry in order to have children.¹⁶ From the Catholic perspective based on our study of the liturgical actions above, having children is God's commission to married people. Unfortunately, our empirical study reveals that the modern Vietnamese couples reject having children as both a religious obligation and a social expectation. It appears having children is experienced as a “pro-choice” rather than as an obligation of a couple in holy matrimony or expectation of the extended families.

v. SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDIES

In our empirical study of the matrimonial value as a contract, we defined personal dimension as “marriage is primarily a contract between two people excluded the traditional extended families, community, or village.” The personal dimension contradicts the Vietnamese tradition as extended family concept is a preeminent constituent in Vietnamese culture. The family in Vietnam is more than a couple or a nuclear family; traditionally, a Vietnamese home is an extended multi-generational model. It includes generations: great grandparents,

¹⁶ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. A. van der Ven and Schilderman, 175.

grandparents, parents, married sons with wives and children, and unmarried children. They reside in the same household for as long as they desire even when they are married. Cousins, uncles, aunts, and so on, if not residing in the same household, live together in the same village for generations.

Traditional Vietnamese couples are quite concerned with what their parents may think or what the local pastor thinks about their fiancé or their spouse. Their marriage is more than the bonding of two socially isolated or isolatable individuals. Traditional Vietnamese custom defined marriage as the marriage of two families in space and time. Two families exchanged vows, not just two individuals. Included in the notion of marriage was respect for and reverence of the ancestors, the dead, thus explaining the reference to time.¹⁷ Both of the extended families are involved in their engagement and wedding. Indeed, the marriage rituals, as pointed out in our empirical study under the wedding rite after church, make it clear that “the bride and groom do not just marry each other, but in a real sense, each marries the other person's whole family, both the living and the dead!”¹⁸

The modern Vietnamese American, however, is self-expressive individualism - their own happiness should be their sole concern. The social change proceeded apace. Numerous social movements (communist occupation of Vietnam, immigration to the United States and other countries) shook the foundation of the extended family. It became clear that marriage and the extended family were not necessarily the ideal societal form. In fact, one might say that the individualization process that started during the Communist revolution with the break-up of the extended family into nuclear units had gone further during the waves of immigration to the United States. Whereas the basic societal unit used to be the family, it has now become the individual.¹⁹ As illustrated in the empirical results, table 2, there is a significant gap (2 full point discrepancies) between traditional Vietnamese couples in Vietnam and couples in the United States. This proves that the individualistic culture plays a main role in the matrimonial values.

As for the civil judicial dimension of the covenantal value of marriage, our empirical study shows that the civil authority supervises the substance and observance of the contract. Marriage became a state affair. An observation of civil judicial dimension responses from table 2 reveals negligible discrepancy between Vietnamese couples in Vietnam and couples in the United States. They appear to take seriously Matthew 22:21 and Romans 13 (Submission to the Authorities) by obeying civil authority.

¹⁷Jesse W. Nash, *Vietnamese Catholicism*, (Harvey, Louisiana: Art Review Press, 2005), 124.

¹⁸ Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, 58.

¹⁹ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. A. van der Ven and Schilderman, 170.

Marriage is to show your community/village that you belong to each other. We take this to be the social dimension of the contractual value. It was made clear to the community what agreements are made regarding the lives of two people. As the couple marries in front of the Church, they also get married before the people in the village. As mention in our study of the liturgical action, the traditional part of the wedding ritual takes place at home right after the Church, is “sealing”²⁰ the marriage as a contract with both the living and the death. Our understanding of the social dimension in the context of Vietnamese culture and the empirical study lead to the conclusion that the cultural factors play a significant role on both modern and traditional Vietnamese. The Vietnamese-American couples regard the social dimension as the least significance while their counterparts in Vietnam consider it rather important.

As far as “love” being a matrimonial value, in the context of Vietnamese culture, the couple in love are not in isolation from their extended family and their village; their relationship is therefore not exclusively their own. They are son and daughter, brother or sister, parishioners, neighbors. They have friends, are part of a community of faith, are children of God and disciples of Christ. They have past experiences from which they have benefited and from which they bear scars. They have a present in which they function with varying degrees of success and satisfaction and a future whose foundation is now being laid. Although each person decides in each situation what to do, the situation is not simply the fact that two people are in love. It includes the fact that each comes from Vietnamese background, lives within a broad community, and has a future. To consider other relationships requires them to recognize that their lives and the lives of other people are profoundly affected²¹ by how they love others in term of selfless love (Agape), reciprocal friendly love between equals (Philia) and caring love, especially parental love (Storge). Our empirical responses show that the couples subscribed most strongly to Eros, Philia, Storge in descending order. Agape is least important. Again, this could indicate individualism, in the sense that the individual may be there for the other but should never be totally self-effacing. The discrepancies between modern and traditional responses are not significant.²²

²⁰ Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, 59.

²¹ Crook, “*An Introduction to Christian Ethics*,” 125.

²² Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. van der Ven and Schilderman, 184.

2. CULTURE²³

i. TRANSCULTURAL ELEMENTS

Most of the liturgical actions in our empirical observation of the Vietnamese Catholic wedding rite is *transcultural*, as the same actions are performed in Catholic matrimonial rite universally. This includes Entrance Rite, Liturgy of The Word (God's Word is proclaimed and responded to in reading and preaching), Rite of Marriage (Consent, Blessing of Rings and Nuptial Blessing), Eucharistic meal and the Concluding Rites.

Transculture factor can be seen in the Byzantine Rite of Marriage, in taking the rings, the priest blesses the bridal couple, making the sign of the cross with the ring of the bride over the groom, and with that of the groom over the bride...²⁴

Contemporary Jewish wedding rites, though differing substantially from Catholic marriage rite, transcultural elements can be found after the groom pronounces his intention, the bride exchanges the ring just as Catholics do. Their view of marriage as "a covenant between husband and wife which is entered into and lived out within the larger covenantal relationship of God and Israel"²⁵ is another example of transculture.

ii. CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS

In the Vietnamese marriage rite, after the Nuptial Blessing, the married couple exchanges the Sign of Peace by the use of a profound bow as a gesture of loving and respect and that is parallel to the use of a handshake in the West cultures as a way of extending the greeting of peace.

iii. CROSS-CULTURAL ELEMENTS

As mention in our empirical study of the wedding rite, unity candle is not a part of the Roman Catholic Matrimony Rite because it appears to be a replication of the core liturgical action of the consent by the couple and the blessing of rings. This action, however, is practiced by various cultures including Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino. One could interpret this action as the light of Christ that the bride and groom received at baptism, and it remains to burn brilliantly in their marriage.

Additionally, at the conclusion of the marriage rite as seen in our empirical observation, the bridal couple is devoted to the Blessed Mary – Our Lady of Lavang. Even though this is not part of the Catholic Marriage Rite,

²³ *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, ed. S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996), 23-28.

²⁴ Searle & Stevenson, *Documents of the marriage liturgy*, 57

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 253

It is a popular piety devotion that has been incorporated into Catholic wedding ceremony for years. This is an opportunity for the newlywed couple to pray for Our Mother's protection of their marriage.

Traditionally, when the bride appears for her wedding, she dresses with the "veiling of virgins." Click



here for pictorial demonstration -> [Veil.jpg](#) . It is called "the nuptial veiling"; or "the veiling of brides."²⁶ This tradition has been incorporated in many cultures including both the West and East for many centuries.

3. EXPERIENCE

I joined Our Lady of Lavang Parish in 1982, signed up to be a catechist. That was how I met my wife as she was also a catechist there; we both have been teaching the children at our Sunday school since then. Our marriage preparation class was conducted by our pastor for six months prior to our wedding. We got married at Our Lady of Lavang in 1985. We are grateful to have two Holy Cross priests from India to concelebrate our wedding mass.



Click here for pictorial demonstration -> [WeddingMass.jpg](#) . For the most part, our wedding Mass was celebrated according to the Roman Catholic tradition except for some cultural elements such as my farther-in-law did not have to hand over his daughter to my family during Mass. As mention, part of Vietnamese liturgical inculturation, we lighted the unity candle right after the blessing of rings in our wedding. Also, at the end of the ceremony, we prayed to the Virgin Mary – Our Lady of Lavang for her protection of our marriage.

Thanks God for protecting our marriage in the last 23 years. His graces are abundantly in our daily life. God has consecrated and strengthened our love in the sacrament of matrimony. We have three children. Our parenthood responsibility toward our children has been a privilege. We strive to raise them to be good Catholic with respect for life. We teach our children the relationship to their forebears with honor, affection, and gratitude toward parent, grand-parent, elders, ancestors and God is the ultimate. We teach them the duties to the church and the duty of citizens to the country and ultimately citizens of God's kingdom.

As part of our marriage covenant (first value) and love (third value), we provide our children (second value) a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule (CCC 2223). We create the family with affections and respect for one another. We provide them foundations for

²⁶ Ibid., 26.

security, moral values, honor God, and make the right choice of their free wills. We provide them education and spiritual formation. Most of all, we try to set examples to them.

IV. CRITICAL IMPLICATIONS

As far as the contractual value of matrimony, marriage is not only a private vow; it is a public act in front of the church as we see in the study of the wedding rite; it is an act in front of the village according to traditional Vietnamese custom; it is more than a contract, taken in front of God and in full public view, enforceable by law and in the equally powerful court of public opinion. Their love is their own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal; it is a status, an office and most importantly a sacrament. Just as it is the crown, and not merely the will to rule, that makes the king, so it is marriage, and not merely a contract of their love for each other, but it joins the couple together in the sight of God and man. As our empirical study indicated the modern Vietnamese-American couples consider the individual contract between the two of them most strongly endorsed. The religious and social dimensions are less important. "How strikingly modern it sounds! In a world that extols the autonomy of the self as the highest possible value."²⁷

As far as "having children" concerned, marriage has a higher dignity and power than a legal contract, for it is God's holy ordinance, through which He wills to perpetuate the human race until the end of time. Marriage is not only the two selves in the world, but it is a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to his glory, and calls into his kingdom. Marriage is not only the heaven of the couple own happiness, but in marriage the couple is placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind.²⁸ The primary functions of Christian marriage stated in Biblical ways, is to provide a supportive structure for the birth and nurture of children as repeated numerous times in our empirical study of the wedding rite. In other words, marriage is regarded as the best setting for parenthood. Unfortunately, our study indicates that most of the modern Vietnamese couples reject their vocation as parenthood both a religiously and socially.

As for the matrimonial value of love, in contemporary society, "eros, reduced to pure 'sex,' has become a commodity, a mere 'thing' to be bought and sold, or, rather, man himself becomes a commodity." Backfiring, "the apparent exaltation of the body can quickly turn into a hatred of bodiliness." For the Christian faith, the human being is "a unity in duality, a reality in which spirit and matter co-penetrate, and in which each is brought to new nobility." Precisely as tending to "lead us beyond ourselves," indeed "towards the Divine," "eros ... calls

²⁷ Gary A. Anderson, "A marriage in full," *First Things*, no 183 My 2008, p 31-34 (2008): 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification, and healing". And there with the "descending" movement of "agape" begins, involving "a real discovery of the other, moving beyond the selfish character that prevailed earlier": "Love now becomes concern and care for the other.... It seeks the good of the beloved; it becomes renunciation, and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice."²⁹ Unfortunately, in our empirical study, they regard agape and eros as completely separate entity and agape is considered the least value. Thus, in our contemporary society, eros is the most intimate way for a couple to express their love for each other. Does this mean that love should always involve a sexual relationship? In modern mythology of romance, people have tied sex to love, assuming that coition is thereby justified. Does the fact that two people are in love justify a sexual relationship whether they are married or not? Circumstances may prohibit a couple from marrying. They may still be in school, they may not be financially able to establish their own home, or their parents may object especially in the case of traditional Vietnamese. One or the other may be married to someone else or may have financial, emotional, or legal obligations that at the moment make marriage impossible. Should they express their love in a sexual relationship? This question is not easily answered, and several factors should be considered. First, love is not easily identified; that is, the distinction between being in love and not being in love is not a clear one. People do not really "fall" in love, or at least most people do not. They are often suddenly attracted to other people, who sometimes respond to them and sometimes do not. Sometimes they are quickly excited by a new relationship or by the possibility of one. Such attraction may result in a deep attachment or it may not. But love is not created instantaneously; it is developed over a period of time. Another consideration is the fact that love does not always lead to marriage. Some people are in love with several different persons before they marry. Approximately, half the engagements entered into in the United States are broken because people who had believed that they were in love decided that they were not, or that in spite of their love their planned marriage could not succeed, or that they were not ready to marry at that particular time, or that other circumstances made marriage impossible. Being in love, therefore, is a tenuous basis on which to decide something as important as whether to engage in a sexual relationship.³⁰

In traditional Christian thought, sexual intercourse is to be reserved for marriage. This ideal is usually stated as "chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage." Christians generally have affirmed this ideal even

²⁹ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Reflections On Pope Benedict Xvi's First Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*," *Pro Ecclesia* Vol. XV, No. 3 (2008): 265.

³⁰ Crook, "*An Introduction to Christian Ethics*," 124.

when they have not adhered to it. They have affirmed it in the face of clear evidence of increasing premarital and extramarital sexual activity in today society. They have affirmed it in the face of challenges mounted by sociological and psychological studies that question whether such activity threatens family life and endangers personal happiness and their marriage. This traditional Christian view has strong scriptural support. In the Hebrew scripture, the Law speaks of intercourse as appropriate only within the context of marriage. Prostitution was prohibited for Hebrew women, and the men were warned against patronizing prostitutes. A man who had intercourse with an unmarried woman was required to marry her, and one who had intercourse with a married woman was to be executed. Jesus spoke on the subject; however, His approach was unusual. John 7:53-8:11 reports that He spoke forgivingly to a woman taken in adultery rather than agreeing to the punitive requirement of the Law. In His interpretation of the law against adultery He focused on the essential inwardness of morality by speaking of lust rather than of the overt act (Matthew 5:27-28). He did not reject the ideal to which He was an heir but reinterpreted it, focusing on redemption rather than punishment.³¹

Writing to churches located in the Gentile world, where the moral standards were quite different, St. Paul constantly dealt with sexual issues and urged believers to act in a Christian way. The members of the church at Corinth, for example, were at odds with one another over their allegiance to different leaders. They were going to court to settle issues between them. They were indifferent to a case of sexual immorality within their fellowship. St. Paul felt compelled to instruct them in the right way of dealing with these matters and to urge them to act properly.³² The sexual immorality of St. Paul's times remains a present day issue. In 2006, the USCCB released four documents - two on sexual issues, one on norms for Holy Communion, and one on the Iraq war. Due to the complexity and magnitude of the issue of sexuality, the two reports on sexuality were a combined ten times the length of the document on the Iraq War.

Our empirical study, table 6 (listed under Appendix A) has proven the urgency of teen catechesis and matrimonial preparation. The study indicates that modern Vietnamese-American couples seem to be in favor of premarital sex (%74 agreement) and only to a scale of 42% oppose premarital sex. This indicator also reveals the impact of the "culture of death" as Pope John Paul II, identified in *Evangelium vitae*, warned of a "culture of death" threatening the world. Sexual desire needs to be kept in harmony with God's intention of sexuality; just as there are good and legitimate means for satisfying the hunger for food, so are there good and legitimate means for satisfying sexual desire. As hunger can be satisfied in harm ways causing illness, so

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

sexual desire can be satisfied in ways that are damaging. "The fact is that sex is natural and God's gift to humankind. It does not imply that no limits are to be set on how we practice sex." ³³

The question comes down to our individual acts: do we express our sexual natures in accordance with the authentic purposes and natural methods laid down by God, or do we go our own way and try to determine for ourselves what constitutes sexual morality, thereby justifying our own deviations? After all, there are many who will claim that if it is possible to do, then it is perfectly natural. But in making that claim, they are relegating humans to an animal nature that need not and cannot be overcome; this becomes an important issue for today's society, because we have socially chosen to declare that everything is natural, and that condemnation of acts constitutes unjust condemnation of persons. Pope John Paul II has a great quote "Yes, but which man?" He asks if we are going to be just man the animal, slave to the base, or man redeemed by his use of his freedom to overcome sin, the man created for a destiny beyond anything this world has to offer (I probably heard this quote in listening to Catholic radio on the way to work).

In short, Christian ethics stress the importance of sex belonging only in marriage because God creates sex for new life, loving union of husband and wife, joy and pleasure within marriage. Scripture and Tradition teach that sexuality is God's gift to human kind. It is so great that the book of erotic love, Song of Solomon and two out of ten commandments (the sixth and the ninth) are devoted to remind us of God's gift and that misuse of it results in great harm. Sexual ethics requires that sexual activity must always be an act of total self-gift in the deep loving union of Christian marriage and open to procreation "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:27) or it tumbles into sin. Consequently, religious education, such as teen catechesis, matrimonial sacrament preparation, is indispensable to bring couples back with the Church tradition.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we derived the three matrimonial values (contract, having children and love) based on our empirical study of the Vietnamese Catholic wedding and its liturgical actions. We then report the extent to which modern-day Vietnamese couples subscribe to these matrimonial values. We compare the responses by the modern Vietnamese-American in the United States with the responses by the Vietnamese in Vietnam as well as

³³ Ibid.

self experience. We find indications that couples by and large distinguish between the three matrimonial values and subscribe to them up to a point.

In regard to the contractual value, the signs are that present-day couples agree mainly with the personal dimension. This could indicate an individualized conception of the contractual side of marriage: they get married privately between the two of them. As illustrated in the empirical results, table 2, there is a significant gap (2 full point discrepancies) between traditional Vietnamese couples in Vietnam and couples in the United States. Agreement with the religious dimension is far lower. Table 2 shows that the Vietnamese-American couples consider their marriage being witnessed at the Church is less important than the traditional Vietnamese couples do. The modern Vietnamese-American couples disagree more than they agree with the social, and secular judicial dimensions while their counterparts in Vietnam are at the ratio of %88 agreement. Table 4, indicates the Vietnamese-American couples disregard the notion that having children is either a religious or a social duty. Perhaps the culture described earlier has influenced couples' attitudes towards having children: it is a personal decision or a "pro choice". In contrast, their counterparts in Vietnam are at the ratio of 96% agreement to have children as both religious and social obligations. As for sexuality, though this value does not directly arise from the empirical study of the matrimony rite, our survey shows that the modern couples feel premarital sex is acceptable. The notion that "premarital is sex unacceptable" is not strongly endorsed by Vietnamese American; the discrepancy of the responses in table 6 (Appendix A) is at two points higher. Finally, when it comes to love, exotic love receives the strongest support, although there is some agreement with other dimensions such as relationship with an equal partner and caring love. There is far less support for self-effacing love. This, too, could point to individualization. Couples are not inclined to sacrifice their personal interests to the larger whole, the relationship.³⁴ Except for Agape, table 8 shows small discrepancy among Vietnamese Catholic couples on either side of the Pacific Oceans.

Marriage in our modern day is in great concern. A culture that once treasured the institution of marriage has been steadily displaced by a culture of divorce, unwed parenthood and even same sex marriage! In the past several decades the divorce rate has doubled and the percentage of unwed births has quintupled. Trends such as these have created tragic hardships for children, generated poverty within families, and burdened the society with unsupportable costs.³⁵ Consequently, we need to refocus on religious education, to teach the sacrament of

³⁴ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. van der Ven and Schilderman, 189.

³⁵ Crook, "An Introduction to Christian Ethics," 131.

matrimony and to educate for family values is a top-priority agenda. Theological schools need to stress these important marriage values in theology and ethics; seminary and religious studies programs especially for teens should mandate study of matrimonial values and sexual ethics. Churches must continuously develop leaders and nurture members, gain a voice in the media and a hearing with public officials, and challenge indifferent or hostile institutions to fight the web of pornography, abortion and same sex marriage that destroys marriages and families.

VI. APPENDIX A

1. SEXUALITY

There are few human experiences that carry as broad a range of meanings and values as sexuality. Sex can be ranging from an unethically monetary transaction, to a profound experience of loving union between husband and wife. In a moral way, sex can help a couple develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their spouse, and God. Sex is God's creative way for humans to procreate. One of the ways that sex may be understood is that it can symbolize a close relationship between people.³⁶ The Biblical term for the legitimate sexual relationship, "to know," is an experience of reality. To know someone is to be involved with that person at the deepest possible level.

Marriage in Catholic tradition is the framework in which sexuality may be expressed, partly as a means of procreating and partly to counteract lust. Today many churches hold that sexuality is only permissible within marriage. Although many theologians and churches value sexuality, they still feel that it needs to be regulated. Marriage is seen as a way to do so. In this view sexuality is associated exclusively with marriage.

In the context of modern Vietnamese American, it is not simple to determine the relation between sexuality and marriage because of their mix cultures. Although the media deal extensively with sexuality, it is usually extramarital sex in the sense of passion or escapades. There are hardly any commercial products that pay much attention to matrimonial value of sex. It is questionable, however, whether ordinary people's sex lives are as wild as the media would make us think. Whereas in practice the exclusive connection between marriage and sexuality is seen as severable, to most single people the ideal is still a stable relationship, in which sex plays a

³⁶ Lisa Fullam, "Sex in 3-D: A Telos for a Virtue Ethics of Sexuality," *The Society of Christian Ethics* (2007):151.

role. Some if not most couples, their first sexual experiences are premarital, even before cohabitation. People sleep together; go on holiday together, etc. Only then do they start living together and, possibly, get married. In this view, then, sex is not associated exclusively with marriage. Consequently we expected that the sexuality value should be approached in terms of three dimensions: premarital sex unacceptable, premarital sex acceptable, extramarital sex unacceptable.³⁷

a. EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

On the basis of our three dimensions, respondents were given the same response options as for the other matrimonial values.³⁸

DIMENSION	EXAMPLE
1. Premarital sex unacceptable	Sex with another person is only permitted once you are married to that person.
2. Premarital sex acceptable	You need not be married to a person to be allowed to have sex with him or her.
3. Extramarital sex unacceptable	You may only have sex with somebody if you are married to that person.

Table 5³⁹

Table 6 compares the responses by the modern Vietnamese-American in the United States with the responses by the Vietnamese in Vietnam as well as my own experience.

DIMENSION	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN IN U.S.	MEAN - BY VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM	SELF – EXPERIENCE
1. Premarital sex unacceptable	2.1	4.1	5.0
2. Premarital sex acceptable	3.7	2.5	1.0
3. Extramarital sex unacceptable	3.3	3.9	5.0

Table 6

Ranging from 1, totally disagree to 5, totally agree.

³⁷ Robinson and Schilderman, *Matrimony: Values and Ritual, in the Discourse in Ritual Studies*, eds. van der Ven and Schilderman, 179.

³⁸ Ibid., 180.

³⁹ Ibid., 181.

Our empirical study, table 6 indicates that the Vietnamese-American couples considered “premarital sex unacceptable” only to a scale of 42%, while as “premarital sex acceptable” is at %74 agreement and “extramarital sex unacceptable” is at the ratio of 66%. The traditional Vietnamese ratio of agreement is rather high, 82% agreement with “Premarital sex unacceptable” and 78% with “Extramarital sex unacceptable”. My wife and I are on the conservative side. We are 100% agreement with “Premarital sex unacceptable” and “Extramarital sex unacceptable”.

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