

Review of *Marriage Works in Christ*

Marriage Works in Christ is the foundational program of a new marriage enrichment outreach by the Alexander House.^{1[1]} It is intended “for all couples in all stages of marriage who want an overview of those foundational areas of marriage that need special attention in order for a marriage to succeed in Christ” (Preface).

After reflecting briefly on their own experience as a married couple with children, the authors lay out, in three sessions, the fundamentals of God’s Plan for Marriage. This unifying vision comes from Scripture and the Documents of the Church, from *Gaudium et Spes* to *Familiaris Consortio* and other documents to date, as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It is deeply rooted in Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body.

The remaining eight sessions take up some of the key elements in this overarching vision. Four sessions deal with the sacramentality of marriage and its principal consequences (indissolubility or permanence, unity or fidelity, and fertility or fruitfulness). The other four deal with key ingredients to successful marriage in Christ (dating, communication, forgiveness, priorities).

This 12-part study program reflects both faith and experience. The authors have been married for twenty years. They speak from a profoundly lived experience of sacramental marriage and family life. They also speak from a well-informed Catholic faith, which illuminates and shapes every facet of experience.

The result is an excellent blend of church teaching and practical living. It is a brief but comprehensive introduction to Catholic marriage, by married people, for married people, or those intending to marry. This gives it the character of a peer-to-peer ministry. What makes it particularly commendable is its complete fidelity to the Church, and its readiness to be guided by the shepherds of the Church.

I am astonished to see how comprehensively, yet simply and practically, the Alexanders have elucidated the main points in the Church’s teaching on the Sacrament of Marriage. Academic theology would be seriously incomplete without such informed testimonies “from within.”

Not only do I find nothing contrary to faith or morals in this program, but it seems to me to meet a crying need for an ongoing formation of married couples in our parishes, especially in the current secular climate of our society (see annotations).

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Annotations

1. *Marriage Works in Christ* is entirely faithful to the teaching of Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.
2. It is gently counter-cultural. It squarely faces the problems arising from our secular culture, so often hostile to God’s plan for marriage. It is neither accommodating to the culture, nor judgmental about the crisis in it, but quietly constructive.
3. It fulfils the mandate from Vatican II to all married couples who wish to live out their vocation in the world: to leaven and illuminate the secular reality of marriage “from within” (LG 31, AA 7, GS 48).

^{1[1]} “The Alexander House, a not for profit apostolate devoted to preserving Christian marriage and families” (p.1).