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Enhancing Catholic Youth's Understanding of the Sacrament of Matrimony through Catechesis at the St. Michael Community of Saint Francis Xavier Parish, Wini

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Abstract

This study aims to enhance Catholic youths' knowledge and understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage, prepare them to comprehend the commitments and responsibilities inherent in marriage, and strengthen their faith and spirituality as future married couples. The study examines efforts to improve the understanding of Catholic Youth regarding the Sacrament of Marriage through catechesis in the St. Michael Community of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Wini. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that catechesis, recollections, and retreats are among the efforts undertaken to enhance Catholic Youth's understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage. Catechesis serves as a medium for teaching, faith formation, and deepening of faith that is adapted to the life context of Catholic youth. The catechetical model implemented is the community catechesis model using the AMOS method, which emphasizes the analysis of social issues based on life realities and Church teachings. Factors such as participants' commitment, the quality of catechists, varied learning methods, environmental support, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure influence the effectiveness of catechesis. This study concludes that catechesis has significant implications for improving Catholic youths' understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage by establishing a strong foundation of faith, guiding spiritual growth, and preparing them to become future leaders of the Church.

Keywords: Understanding, Catholic Youth, Sacrament of Marriage, Catechesis.

Introduction

The Sacrament of Marriage is an important sacrament in the Catholic Church, serving as a sign of Christ's love and presence among His people. Marriage is not merely a sacred union between a man and a woman, but also a means of sanctification and a path toward a deeper knowledge of, faith in, and love for God. Catholic Youth, as members of the Church, play an important role and need to be adequately prepared to enter family life. The Church actively contributes through formation programs, accompaniment, recollections, retreats, and catechesis to instill an understanding of true love in Christ and the importance of Christian family life. However, Catholic youth today face various challenges, such as individualism, materialism, increasing divorce rates, social pressures, and

inadequate premarital preparation. Many marital failures occur due to the lack of comprehensive formation. As the People of God, the Church bears the responsibility of forming young people through proclamation, both through preaching and catechesis. Structured, scheduled, and contextually relevant catechesis is expected to equip Catholic youth with a solid understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage, enabling them to live family life responsibly and minimize various marital problems (Yesepa et al., 2020).

Catholic Youth are at a crucial stage in the formation of their identity, psychologically, morally, and religiously. Psychologically, they experience a search for identity, rational and emotional development, and a desire for independence. Morally, they are called to live according to Christian norms and ethics as a response to God's love. Religiously, their faith develops from dependence on their parents toward personal awareness and responsibility for their faith. According to Fowler, the stages of faith development among Catholic youth encompass six stages, ranging from intuitive faith in childhood to conjunctive faith in adulthood. Most young people are in the synthetic-conventional stage (early adolescence) and the individuative-reflective stage (late adolescence/early adulthood), in which they begin to integrate faith consciously and responsibly. Catholic youth are expected to live positive Christian lives, strengthen fraternity and spirituality, reduce interreligious marriages, and form a generation of young people who are faithful, virtuous, and beneficial to both the Church and society.

Furthermore, the role of Catholic youth includes active involvement in all Church activities in accordance with the Church's vision and mission. Despite facing personal and social challenges, Catholic youth are still called to bear witness to their faith through participation in prayer, liturgy, ministry, and social activities. The Sacrament of Marriage is a sacred covenant between a baptized man and woman who commit themselves to living together for life in love and fidelity, thereby forming a Christian family. In the Catholic Church, marriage is not merely a social contract or human agreement, but a divine vocation that reflects God's faithful, total, and life-giving love. In this sacrament, husband and wife themselves become signs and instruments of God's presence to one another, making their family life a tangible manifestation of God's love.

The essence of marriage is a monogamous, indissoluble, and permanent bond. This union is directed toward the well-being of the spouses as well as the procreation and education of children as the fruit of their love. Thus, marriage is oriented not only toward personal happiness but also toward the responsibility of building a family that becomes a "domestic Church" and a place for the growth

of faith (Metom, 2021, p. 102). According to Saint Augustine, whose teaching was later enriched by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, the purposes of marriage comprise four principal elements: *bonum coniugum* (the good of the spouses), *bonum prolis* (the procreation and education of children), *bonum fidei* (the fidelity of the spouses), and *bonum sacramentum* (the sign of the union between Christ and the Church). These four purposes affirm that Catholic marriage possesses profound personal, social, and sacramental dimensions. Therefore, the Sacrament of Marriage is monogamous, indissoluble, integral, permanent, and characterized by full responsibility, reflecting God's faithful covenant of love with His people.

The term *catechesis* derives from the Greek word *katechein*, meaning "to echo" or "to sound forth." In a deeper sense, catechesis is understood as a dynamic, purposeful, and continuous process of faith formation aimed at helping believers to know, understand, and live out the teachings of Christ in their daily lives. Catechesis is not merely the transmission of doctrine or theoretical religious knowledge; rather, it is a process of faith transformation that occurs through communication, dialogue, and the sharing of faith experiences within the Church community. Through catechesis, the faith that has been received is continually deepened, strengthened, and expressed in concrete actions (Kartosiswoyo, 1991).

The purpose of catechesis is to help believers understand their life experiences in the light of the Gospel, so that every life event is interpreted as part of God's saving work. Catechesis also encourages conversion and awareness of God's presence in daily life, while fostering steadfast Christian hope and love. Moreover, catechesis strengthens the Church through the active participation of the faithful in ecclesial life and forms mature Christians who are firm in faith and capable of bearing witness to Christ in society (M. Elbertus et al., 2021).

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at understanding social reality from the participants' perspectives through data in the form of words, behaviors, and descriptions rather than statistical figures. Research data were obtained through observations, interviews, field notes, and relevant documentation. The study was conducted in the St. Michael Community of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Wini, over a period of approximately three months, from April to June 2025.

The data sources consisted of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from Catholic Youth through observations and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were obtained from the Head of the Community, Catholic Youth mentors, members of the surrounding community, as well as various literature sources, including books, journal articles, and

internet sources relevant to the research topic.

Data collection procedures were carried out through participant observation during catechetical activities with Catholic Youth and through in-depth interviews to explore the informants' understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage. The collected data were then systematically analyzed through three stages: data reduction by selecting and simplifying relevant data, data display by organizing the data in a structured manner to identify patterns and relationships, and conclusion drawing, which was conducted gradually based on verified findings. To ensure the validity of the research data, data triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from interviews, documentation, and observations.

Results and Discussion

The interview results showed that prior to participating in catechesis, most Catholic youth understood marriage merely as a union between a man and a woman, without recognizing its sacred meaning as a sacrament and an indissoluble covenant of love before God. Their knowledge was largely acquired from their social environment and the media rather than through in-depth faith formation. After participating in the catechesis, a significant change in perspective was observed. The Catholic youth began to understand that Catholic marriage is a vocation that requires spiritual readiness, commitment to fidelity, and openness to life. The use of Sacred Scripture, Church documents, and group discussion methods helped them perceive the relevance of Church teachings in real-life situations. They also became aware of the importance of thorough preparation before entering into marriage.

Based on the presentation of the interview findings, several themes emerged that explain Catholic youths' understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage, namely:

First, Understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage among Catholic Youth.

Catholic youth understand marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman, solemnized before God and His people, characterized by monogamy, sacredness, and indissolubility. This sacrament is regarded as a sign of God's love that reflects Christ's love for the Church and is strengthened through the celebration of the Eucharist. This understanding affirms that marriage is not merely a social bond but a spiritual vocation to build a harmonious family in accordance with God's will.

Second, Definition of the Sacrament of Marriage According to Catholic Youth.

Catholic youth define the Sacrament of Marriage as a visible sign of God's love that unites a man and a woman in a sacred and lifelong covenant. This sacrament serves as a means of God's presence

and reflects Christ's love for the Church. Such an understanding emphasizes the importance of faith, fidelity, commitment, and openness to new life in building a Christian family.

Third, The Meaning and Importance of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Teachings of the Catholic Church.

In the teachings of the Catholic Church, marriage is a lifelong union ordered toward the well-being of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. Marriage possesses profound significance because Christ is present within it. Fidelity, love, and openness to children constitute the foundation of a Christian family. The Church also establishes norms to preserve the sanctity of marriage, such as prohibitions against marriage within certain degrees of kinship or while still bound by a valid marital bond.

Fourth, The Impact of Understanding the Sacrament of Marriage.

A proper understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage contributes to the creation of harmonious family life through mutual love, respect, and support. Conversely, a lack of understanding may lead to conflict, domestic violence, divorce, and family disharmony.

Fifth, Positive Impacts of Understanding the Sacrament of Marriage.

A profound understanding encourages couples to live in fidelity, responsibility, and commitment based on free consent. Couples who understand the meaning of the sacrament are better able to resolve conflicts maturely, forgive one another, and build harmonious families that reflect Christ's love.

Sixth, Negative Impacts of Inadequate Understanding.

An inadequate understanding may lead individuals to regard marriage merely as a social formality. This can result in marital conflict, domestic violence, divorce, and fragile relationships. Therefore, comprehensive catechesis is essential to help Catholic youth understand marriage as a sacred vocation that requires commitment and ever-growing love.

Seventh, The Role of Catechesis in Enhancing Catholic Youths' Understanding.

Changes in Catholic Youths' Perspectives after Catechesis:

Catechesis brought significant changes in the perspectives of Catholic youth. They began to understand marriage as a sacred and lifelong union as well as a vocation from God, rather than merely an emotional relationship. Their awareness of responsibility, commitment, and the importance of building a harmonious family increased substantially.

Application of Understanding in Personal Life:

Catholic youth began to apply values such as trust, mutual respect, fidelity, and responsibility in their personal lives. This understanding serves as mental and spiritual preparation for building strong and harmonious families in the future.

Eighth, Efforts and Suggestions to Improve the Effectiveness of Catechesis.

Efforts Undertaken:

Efforts to enhance understanding were carried out through exemplifying Church teachings, presenting contextual materials, and employing interactive methods such as discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and the sharing of experiences by Catholic couples. This approach helps Catholic youth understand the sacrament comprehensively and practically.

Suggestions from Catholic Youth:

Catholic youth suggested that the materials should be presented in a simpler and less theoretical manner, supplemented by real-life stories and case studies. The sharing of experiences by Catholic married couples was considered effective in deepening understanding and making catechesis more engaging.

Catholic youths' understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage demonstrates positive development. They perceive marriage as a sacred bond that reflects Christ's love for the Church and serves as the foundation for establishing the family as a domestic Church. This understanding contributes to their readiness to build harmonious family lives. Catechesis has proven effective in deepening the spiritual, social, and practical dimensions of marriage.

The Influence of Catechesis on Catholic Youths' Understanding:

Catechesis has a significant influence on shaping the spiritual awareness, sense of responsibility, and practical readiness of Catholic youth. Their understanding has developed from merely theoretical concepts into a genuine awareness of living out the values of fidelity, commitment, and responsibility in daily life. Catholic youth also suggested that catechetical materials should be made more interactive and should maintain a balance between theory and practice.

The Influence of the Implementation of Catechesis on Catholic Youths' Understanding:

The implementation of contextual and interactive catechesis has been shown to enhance Catholic youths' understanding comprehensively. Catholic youth not only understand the theological meaning

of the Sacrament of Marriage but are also prepared to internalize its values in their personal lives. Therefore, catechesis plays an important role in shaping the character, attitudes, and readiness of Catholic youth to embrace the vocation of family life in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study is limited in its ability to provide an in-depth explanation of Catholic youth's understanding of the Sacrament of Matrimony through catechesis. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ a phenomenological approach in order to gain deeper insights into their understanding and perceptions, as well as to examine the use of more creative catechetical methods.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study on efforts to enhance Catholic youth's understanding of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Catechesis successfully transformed Catholic youth's understanding from merely viewing marriage as a social or emotional bond to recognizing that the Sacrament of Matrimony is a sacred covenant and a vocation from God. Catholic youth began to understand the importance of fidelity, love, commitment, and spiritual responsibility in building a harmonious family life, while emphasizing the spiritual dimension of marriage as a reflection of Christ's love for the Church.

Catechesis also influenced the practical preparedness of Catholic youth for family life. Values such as trust, mutual respect, reciprocal support, and the upbringing of children in the Catholic faith became guiding principles that could be internalized. This demonstrates that the theoretical understanding acquired through catechesis was connected to practical applications relevant to everyday life.

The responses of Catholic youth highlighted the importance of delivering catechetical materials in a contextual, interactive, and applicable manner. The inclusion of stories, case studies, and the sharing of real-life experiences by Catholic married couples was believed to strengthen understanding, increase participants' interest, and facilitate the internalization of sacramental values. Conversely, materials that are overly theoretical or presented in complex language should be minimized to ensure greater comprehensibility.

Overall, catechesis not only enhanced Catholic youth's knowledge of the Sacrament of Matrimony but also shaped their attitudes, character, and spiritual awareness. Through relevant and practical

approaches, Catholic youth are better prepared to embrace their vocation to family life in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, build harmonious Christian families, and consistently internalize sacramental values in their daily lives

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Based on the findings from Cycle I through Cycle III, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Think, Write, and Talk learning method successfully improved students' learning interest. Students' learning interest increased progressively across the three cycles. In Cycle I, students' learning interest was categorized as fair. In Cycle II, it improved to the good category, although it had not yet reached the predetermined minimum learning achievement standard. In Cycle III, students' learning interest reached the very good category and successfully met the required standard. Therefore, the Think, Write, and Talk learning method can be considered highly effective in enhancing the learning interest of students who initially demonstrated low motivation and engagement in classroom learning activities. This conclusion is supported by the research findings, which indicate that the implementation of the Think, Write, and Talk learning method significantly improved students' learning interest in Catholic Religious Education among fifth-grade students at SDK Peboko.

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