LIBBY: What you watching?

KAI: Marriage hacks for the lazy and self-absorbed.

LIBBY: As if we could learn anything about marriage from a four -minute video.

KAI: Seriously, I mean covering the complex issues of a major lifetime commitment like marriage, shouldn't it be at least five minutes?

LIBBY: Six to get to the Catholic stuff.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

KAI: Hi. Welcome to Catholic Central. She's Libby.

LIBBY: And he's Kai. Today we're talking about the sacrament of marriage.

KAI: Marriage. One of the most common institutions across every time and culture.

LIBBY: And across those times and cultures, it has had totally different meanings.

KAI ELVIS: I'm ordained by the religion of love, baby, and legally by the state of Nevada.

LIBBY: So what do Catholics mean by marriage?

KAI: For starters, it's one of the seven sacraments.

LIBBY: A sacrament is a visible sign instituted by Christ to give grace. So, for Catholics, the sacrament of marriage means that the couple themselves are a sign of God's love.

KAI: Catholics believe marriage is a vocation or a call from God to love, honor and live in union with one person for life.

LIBBY: Just as God calls some to the priesthood for a religious life, he calls couples to follow Christ through marriage.

KAI: That means Jesus is invited to both the wedding and the marriage.

LIBBY: That also means that since their marriage represents Christ's love for the Church, the ordinary, day-to-day life of a couple points to a great reality where Christ is present.

KAI: But not in, like, a creepy way.

LIBBY: Right. He leads them to greater unity and love.

KAI: To put it mildly, this is not exactly the meaning marriage has always had around the world, nor how everyone sees it today. Civil marriages are performed by government officials and recognized by the government as a legally binding union, but what marriage means varies from couple to couple.

LIBBY: They can be part of a traditional religion or not. So, while all civil marriages are recognized as legal, and Catholics believe that God can be present in all circumstances, for a marriage to be considered valid in the Catholic Church, it must have particular qualities.

CHURCH

LADY LIBBY: Ephesians 5:22, “Here Comes the Bride” on the organ, and wine at the reception.

KAI: Nope. But wine is a popular choice.

LIBBY: Catholic marriage must have the following four elements.

KAI: One, one man and one woman must enter into the marriage freely. The spouses must be free to marry. There can be no conditions that would get in the way of this freedom.

LIBBY: For example, you cannot be closely related to your fiance and you cannot marry if you are already married or bound by other vows. So, a priest can *marry* you, but he can't marry *you*.

KAI: Two, they freely exchange their consent. They must be not only free from other vows or ties, but also choose each other on their own, without pressure from anyone else. Mother.

V/O: Uh-oh.

LIBBY: Three, consent to live out what the church means by marriage, namely a covenant.

KAI: Which means to marry for life, by faithful to one another and be open to children.

LIBBY: Marriage is a lifelong commitment. Couples pledge to go through hard times and good times together, to do the work of growing with and toward each other as they age. The family forms the basic unit of nurture, education and care. Being open to having children means a marriage serves future generations, not just one another.

KAI: OK, four. The last element is the exchange of vows that takes place publicly before a Church minister, usually in a church.

LIBBY: This is because Catholic marriage is not just for the couple, but is a continuing sign of God's love for the community and the world.

KAI: While the sacrament of marriage is witnessed by a priest, the ritual itself takes place between the man and the woman. Their vows are made publicly as a sign to one another and the whole Church community.

LIBBY: So you can't just make promises in private that you later deny in public, Kevin.

V/O: Uh-oh.

KAI: Now, some of you might be thinking, that sounds highly idealistic if not impossible.

LIBBY: Catholics know the bar is set high.

KAI: It's no simple calling to live out ordinary daily life in such a way as to be a sign of Christ's love for each other and for the world, and unfortunately it's not the kind of thing you could hack.

LIBBY: But the requirements are not there to be a burden. While not everyone lives them out perfectly, they're there to ensure freedom and happiness for the spouses and their families.

KAI: They're why the Catholic ideal of marriage often stands in contrast to the cultural norms around them. While empires rise and fall and cultures tend to change, the Church's teachings strive to stay in line with the teachings of Christ and the early Church.

LIBBY: However, Catholics know relationships can be complicated, and it's important to treat those who have experienced serious difficulties in marriage with kindness and a good heart. You know, like Jesus would.

KAI: Sadly, divorce is a common reality for our culture. With hope, the Church holds up the ideal and strives to serve those who have experienced divorce with love and compassion.

LIBBY: Because a Catholic marriage is bound until the death of a spouse, a Catholic marriage doesn't end with a civil divorce. However, it may be eligible for an annulment under certain circumstances.

KAI: An annulment is an official declaration of nullity in the Church tribunal, meaning that the marriage never truly existed in the first place.

LIBBY: At least in the Catholic sense. So, you could have had a wedding, had kids, a house and a dog together, and even shared a toothbrush, but one of the four essential elements was missing when you made your vows – even though you might not have known it at the time.

KAI: Which is sad, but also points to how important those elements are in making Catholic marriage a beautiful thing. It means saying yes to both loving God and loving your spouse with your whole heart, mind, body and soul.

LIBBY: It means being a witness to fidelity, openness to life and God's call to love and honor one special, lifelong partner in the way God intends for them to be loved.

KAI: On that note, Libby, do you want this episode to be over for as long as we both shall live?

LIBBY: I do. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai. Thanks for watching Catholic Central.

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