

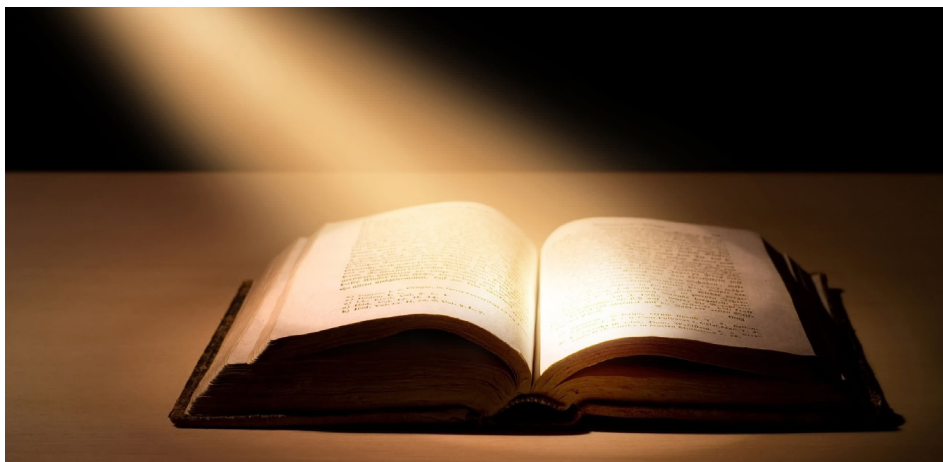
**Bible Month Dedicated in Memory of the  
25th Anniversary of the Beatification of Blessed Peter ToRot**

A portrait of Blessed Peter ToRot, a young man with dark skin and short, dark hair, looking directly at the viewer. He is wearing a white garment with a large, dark cross visible at the neckline. The background is a soft, warm yellow and orange gradient.

**«WHAT THEREFORE GOD  
HAS JOINED TOGETHER,  
LET NOT MAN SEPARATE»**

**Index:**

- 1) The sacrament of Matrimony
  - a) Biblical roots of the sacrament of Matrimony
  - b) Some texts to memorize and think about
  - c) The sacrament of Matrimony in the teachings of the Church
- 2) The example of Blessed Peter ToRot
  - a) His life
  - b) Saint John Paull II on Blessed Peter ToRot



## Introduction

**This year we are celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beatification of Blessed Peter ToRot.** All of us know that Peter ToRot lost his life and died as a martyr in defense of the sacrament of Matrimony, and for this reason, we thought that it would be a good idea to dedicate this Bible Month to think about these two things: the sacrament of Matrimony and the example that Blessed Peter ToRot still gives us.

We Catholics know very well that the sacrament of Matrimony is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ himself, but many times we ignore the biblical foundation of it, so

a lot of questions can arise, such as: is the sacrament of Matrimony in the Bible? Was it instituted by Christ, or did it already exist before Him? Does this sacrament last until death? Does the Bible condemn polygamy, for which Peter ToRot died? Does the Bible give any advice for those who are married? These questions are some examples of many other questions that can come to our mind when we think about this sacrament!

For all these reasons, we will divide this bulletin in two parts:

- 1) The Sacrament of Matrimony**
- 2) The example of Blessed Peter ToRot**

# 1) The sacrament of Matrimony

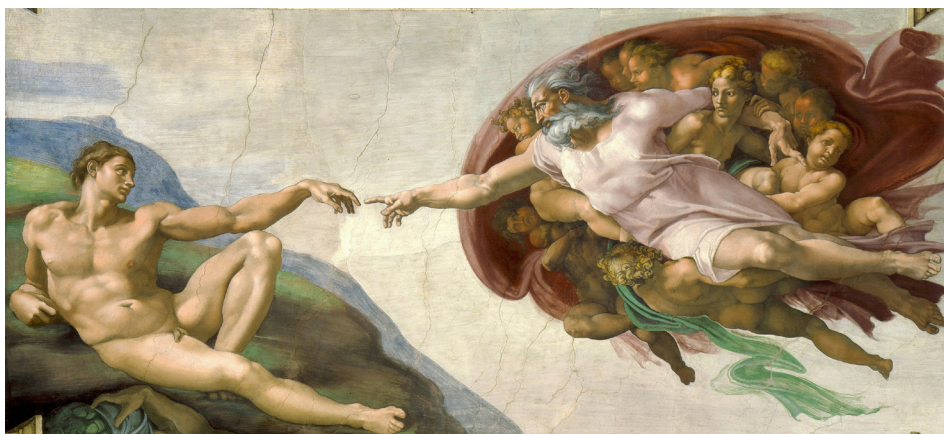
## a) Biblical roots of the sacrament of Matrimony

The sacrament of Matrimony is present in the Bible since the very beginning. If we pay attention to the Bible, we will realize that Matrimony is present at the very beginning and at the very end!

**The Bible begins in the book of Genesis with the creation of the first man and woman in the image and likeness of God, and it finishes in the book of Revelation with the wedding feast of the Lamb, which is Jesus Himself.** At the very beginning the Bible says: *"And God created man to his own image; in the*

*image of God he created him; male and female, he created them. And God blessed them, and he said, 'Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it'" (Gen 1:27-28). And at the very end, it says: "For the marriage feast of the Lamb has arrived, and his wife has prepared herself... Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7-9).*

So important is Matrimony in the eyes of God that in numerous opportunities He himself used the figure of man that loves his wife as







an image of the love that He has for us. For example, He says in the book of the prophet Hosea: *"And it will be in that day," says the Lord, "that she will call me, "My Husband"... And I will betroth you to me forever, and I will betroth you to me in justice and judgment, and in mercy and compassion"* (2:16-19). There are a lot of passages in which God calls himself "husband" of the people He loves, and He promises to make an eternal covenant with them, similar to the covenant that exists between a man and a woman who decided to live together.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says: "Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and

its 'mystery', its institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, its various realizations throughout the history of salvation, the difficulties arising from sin and its renewal «in the Lord» in the New Covenant of Christ and the Church» (1603).

The Bible shows us that God Himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures, and spiritual attitudes.

God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is Himself love. Since God created man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation.

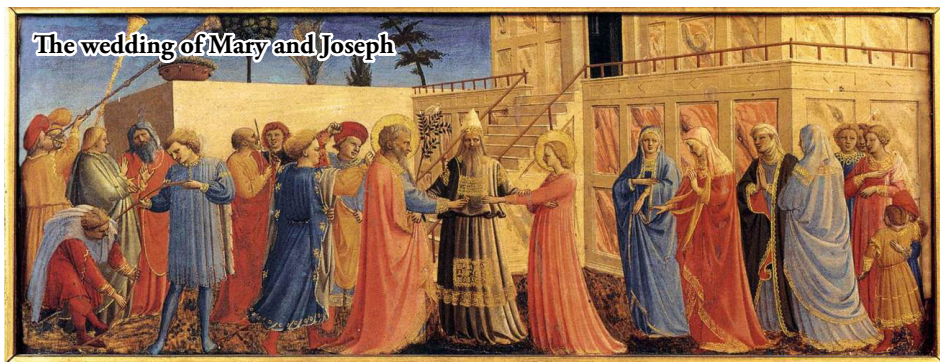
So important is Matrimony in the eyes of Jesus, that "on the threshold

of his public life Jesus performs his first sign - at his mother's request - during a wedding feast. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence" (CCC 1613).

In his preaching, Jesus unequivocally taught the original meaning of the union of man and woman as the Creator willed it from the beginning. Permission given by Moses to divorce one's wife was a concession to the



The wedding of Mary and Joseph



hardness of hearts. The matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble: God Himself has determined it *"what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder."* (Mt 19:6).

Once and again the Church teaches: "This unequivocal insistence on the indissolubility of the marriage bond may have left some perplexed and could seem to be a demand impossible to realize. However, Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy - heavier than the Law of Moses. By

coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, **He Himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God.** It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life." (CCC 1615).



## b) Some texts to memorize and think about

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are full of beautiful texts regarding Matrimony, but it's impossible to quote them all. So let's take a look at some texts of the Bible that can help us to realize how important this sacrament is, and what our responsibilities are towards it.

**Mark 10:6-9:** *"But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

**Luke 16:18:** *"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."*

**1 Peter 3:7:** *"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."*





**Hebrews 13:4:** *"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."*

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8:** *"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all*



**Saint Paul**

*things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away."*

**Ephesians 5:25-33:** *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and handed himself over for her, so that he might sanctify her, washing her clean by water and the Word of life, so that he might offer her to himself as a glorious Church, not having any spot or wrinkle or any such thing, so that she would be holy and immaculate. So, too, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man has ever hated his own flesh, but instead he nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ also does to the Church. For we are a part of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. 'For this reason, a man shall leave behind his father and mother, and he shall cling to his wife; and the two shall be as one flesh.' This is a great Sacrament. And I am speaking in Christ and in the Church. Yet truly, each and every one of you should love his wife as himself. And a wife should fear her husband."*



## c) The sacrament of Matrimony in the teachings of the Church

Since the very beginning, the Catholic Church acknowledged the sacrament of Matrimony as a figure of the deep union and perpetual covenant between Jesus and the Church.

**Compendium of the CCC 337. What is the plan of God regarding man and woman?** God, who is love

and who created man and woman for love, has called them to love. By creating man and woman, he called them to an intimate communion of life and of love in marriage:

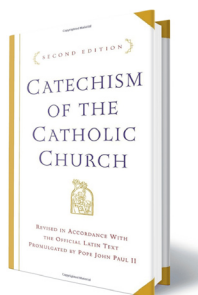
*"So that they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). God said to them in blessing "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28).*

**Compendium of the CCC 341. What new element did Christ give to Matrimony?** Christ not only restored the original order of matrimony but raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, giving spouses a special grace to live out their marriage as a symbol of

Christ's love for his bride the Church: *"Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church" (Ephesians 5:25).*

**Compendium of the CCC 346. What are the effects of the sacrament of Matrimony?** The

sacrament of Matrimony establishes a perpetual and exclusive bond between the spouses. God himself seals the consent of the spouses. Therefore, a marriage which is ratified and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. Furthermore, this sacrament bestows upon the spouses the grace necessary to attain holiness in their married life and to accept responsibly the gift of children and provide for their education.



## Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*

**AL 72:** "The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. **The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church.**

**Marriage is a vocation, inasmuch as it is a response to a specific call to experience conjugal love as an imperfect sign of the love between Christ and the Church."**



**AL 73:** "In accepting each other, and with Christ's grace, the engaged couple promise each other **total self-giving, faithfulness and openness to new life.** The couple recognizes these elements as constitutive of marriage, gifts offered to them by God, and take seriously their mutual commitment, in God's name and in the presence of the Church. Faith thus makes it possible for them to assume the goods of marriage as commitments that can be better kept through the help of the grace of the sacrament. Consequently, the Church looks to married couples as the heart of the entire family, which, in turn, looks to Jesus.

The sacrament is not a "thing" or a "power", for in it Christ himself now encounters Christian spouses. **He dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens."**

## 2) The example of Blessed Peter ToRot

### a) His life

#### **Education and marriage**

Peter ToRot was born on March 5, 1912 in Rakunai as the third of six children to Angelo Tu Puia and Maria Ia Tumul, who had both converted to Roman Catholicism in 1898.

His father taught him the basics of catechism and sent him to the local mission school in 1919, despite the fact that education was not an obligation at the time. In 1930, the parish priest of Rakunai - Father Laufer - asked his father if he would allow

ToRot to start his studies for the priesthood. His father said that the time was not right for that, but it would be more than appropriate if his son studied to become a catechist. In

1930, he began his studies in Taliligap, after which he was commissioned as a catechist for the parish of Rakunai in 1933 when the local bishop gave him the catechist's cross.

On November 11, 1936, he married Paula Ia Varpit, and the couple went

on to have three children; one died as an infant and another died soon after the war. His final child lived into old age but was born after ToRot's death.



#### **His work as catechist**

Once the Japanese forces occupied the nation in March 1942, their soldiers interned all of the foreign missionaries. The parish priest left ToRot in charge of his parish, and he became its active leader as a result





of this. In this role, he cared for those who were ill and poor while also aiming to better educate converts. Towards late 1943, the Japanese authorities restricted religious services and a few months later forbade them in full. However ToRot continued to hold them in secret and did not fear the implications on his own life, despite the fear of those around him. The destruction of the church a short while later led him to build a "bush church" outside the village to hold secret services; he kept records of baptisms and weddings there.

A man called Metepa was a married Christian and a policeman who worked for the Japanese. He lusted after a Protestant's wife named Ia

Mentil. ToRot and Mentil's father prevented Metepa from kidnapping Mentil as his second wife, and the furious officer reported him to his superior Kueka, who summoned ToRot. The Japanese authorities had legalised taking a second wife, but ToRot opposed this as being the opposite to doctrine. ToRot met Kueka who ordered that he cease his pastoral activities; meanwhile Metepa and another seized Mentil and beat up her husband. However ToRot and the village chief managed to find Mentil and get her back to Rakunai. One couple reported ToRot and the police arrested him after finding religious objects in a house search. He was planting vegetables to give to



the Japanese when he was arrested on Christmas Day 1944.

ToRot was taken to the police headquarters where the chief of the police, Meshida, asked if he was preaching, which the catechist affirmed. Meshida beat him on the face and the back of his neck and ordered him to be imprisoned. The Methodist chief of Navunaram and the Christian Rakunai chief failed to secure his release, even though he told them not to fret over it.

**He confided to his mother that he would die but assured her that he was more than prepared to die for Jesus Christ if that was the case.** He

was locked in a small and windowless cell. On one occasion, his wife and two children came to visit him, and she begged him to give up being a catechist so he would remain safe.

**ToRot was adamant, however, he would not relinquish his responsibilities to the people.** On the date of his death, he said to his mother, "The police told me that this evening a Japanese doctor will come to give me some medicine. Surprising since I'm not sick. I suspect this is a trick." He

told his wife to bring his cross and good clothes so he could go to God dressed in proper attire.

## **His death**

He was given lethal injection in 1945 and then given something to drink. The guards saw that the poison was slow, so they made him lie down while the doctor covered his mouth. He was stricken with convulsions and was held down. He died while being struck on the back of his neck with a beam. Upon his death, a policeman went to Rakunai and said: "Your catechist is dead." He was buried in Rakunai, where he remains ever now.



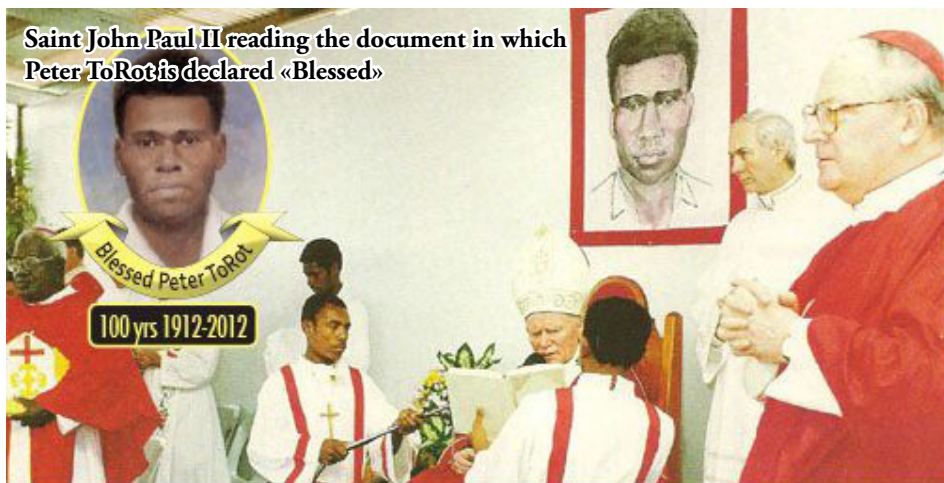
## b) Saint John Paul II on Blessed Peter ToRot

Among all the testimonies of those who knew him or came to know about him, we would like to give a special place to Saint John Paul II. We know very well that he was the Pope who beatified him in 1995, exactly 25 years ago, during a beautiful ceremony that took place in Port Moresby. In that occasion, he said:

*Blessed Peter understood the value of suffering. Inspired by his faith in Christ, he was a devoted husband, a loving father and a dedicated catechist known for his kindness, gentleness and compassion. Daily Mass, Holy Communion, and frequent visits to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament sustained him, gave him wisdom to counsel the disheartened, and courage to persevere until death...*

*When the village of Rakunai was occupied during the Second World War, and after the heroic missionary priests were imprisoned, he assumed responsibility for the spiritual life of the villagers. Not only did he continue to instruct the faithful and visit the sick, he also baptized, assisted at marriages and led people in prayer.*

*When the authorities legalized and encouraged polygamy, Blessed Peter*





**Saint John Paul II praying in front of the box that contains the bones of Blessed Peter ToRot, in Rakunai**

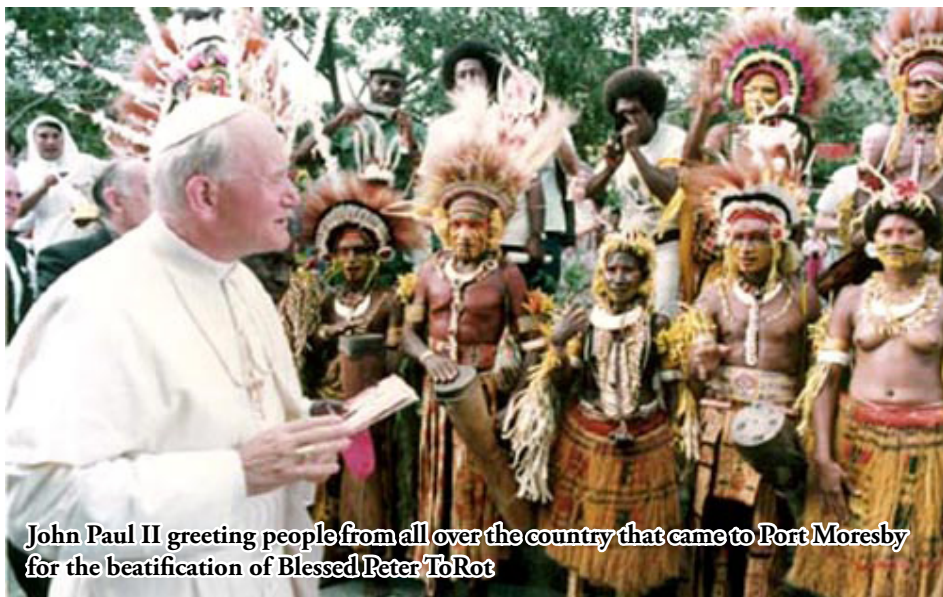


*knew it to be against Christian principles and firmly denounced this practice. Because the Spirit of God*

*dwelt in him, he fearlessly proclaimed the truth about the sanctity of marriage. He refused to take the “easy way” (Cf. *ibid.* 7: 13) of moral compromise. “I have to fulfil my duty as a Church witness to Jesus Christ”, he explained. Fear of suffering and death did not deter him. During his final imprisonment, Peter ToRot was*

*serene, even joyful. He told people that he was ready to die for the faith and for his people.*

*On the day of his death, Blessed Peter asked his wife to bring him his catechist’s crucifix. It accompanied him to the end. Condemned without trial, he suffered his martyrdom calmly. Following in the footsteps of his Master, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn.1: 29), he too was “led like a*



**John Paul II greeting people from all over the country that came to Port Moresby for the beatification of Blessed Peter ToRot**

*lamb to the slaughter” (Cf. Is. 53: 7). And yet this “grain of wheat” which fell silently into the earth (Cf. Jn. 12: 24) has produced a harvest of blessings for the Church in Papua New Guinea!*

***The Martyr’s example speaks also to married couples. Blessed Peter ToRot had the highest esteem for marriage, and even in the face of great personal danger and opposition,***

***he defended the Church’s teaching on the unity of marriage and the need for mutual fidelity. He treated his wife Paula with deep respect and prayed with her morning and evening. For his children he had the utmost affection and spent as much time with them as he could. If families are good, your villages will be peaceful and good. Hold on to the traditions that defend and strengthen family life!».***



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