

INTAMS Colloquium 2007

Why Marry At All? Motives and Obstacles for Lifelong Marital Commitment

On 9 and 10 March 2007, the INTAMS Chair for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality at the Theology Faculty of the Catholic University of Leuven organised a colloquium under the title "Why Marry At All? Motives and Obstacles for Lifelong Marital Commitment". The colloquium was composed of two parts: (a) a public lecture by Prof. Norbert Schneider on Friday, and (b) an international colloquium with the INTAMS members and a group of experts of the Leuven University on Saturday.

Theme

The marriage rate in most Western societies has continuously decreased over the last decades. Still today, however, an overwhelming majority of people, ranging from 70 to 90% in some countries, have either been married once in their lifetime or plan to get married some day. Likewise, recent surveys unanimously confirm that marriage is still very highly valued by a great majority, but at the same time an increasing number of the population finds cohabiting with a partner an attractive alternative to formal marriage.

What makes people opt for a civil or religious wedding celebration while alternative forms of living together have been socially accepted and the century-old institution of marriage appears to be subject to a process of ever growing decomposition? Affectionate love has become an indispensable condition for partners to get married, but is obviously not sufficient in itself.

The colloquium aims at looking into some empirical evidence in order to uncover current motives for a couple's decision to marry. It will subsequently examine whether or not these findings are congruent with the image that the Christian churches (and some civil initiatives) draw of marriage as a meaningful and unparalleled form of commitment that makes a difference for the spouses and broader society alike.

The contributions are published in Vol. 13/1 (Spring 2007).