In many Spanish and Hispanic weddings, there is a moment that often goes almost unnoticed by many guests. After the exchange of rings, the groom gives the bride several coins—traditionally thirteen—placed in a small tray or box.

The priest pronounces a blessing and speaks about prosperity, shared goods, and a common life.

This gesture is called **the giving of the arras**.

What many people do not realize is that this is **not simply a cultural tradition**. The wedding arras have a millennia-old history, a profound theological meaning, and a spiritual richness that connects directly with the Christian vision of marriage.

In fact, this small rite speaks about **providence, fidelity, responsibility, trust, and family mission**.

Understanding it well can transform the way we see Christian marriage.

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1. What are the wedding arras really?

The **arras** are **coins that the husband gives to the wife during the celebration of the marriage**, as a sign of:

- commitment to share goods
- responsibility to provide and manage together
- mutual trust
- God’s blessing upon family life

Traditionally there are **thirteen coins**, although the number is not strictly obligatory.

During the rite, the husband usually says:

> *“Receive these arras as a pledge of God’s blessing and a sign of the goods that we will share.”*

Then the wife responds by accepting them.

This gesture expresses a profound truth: **marriage is not only an emotional union, but also a communion of life**.

Love, work, sacrifices, finances, projects, and the future become a **shared reality**.

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2. A surprisingly ancient origin

The arras did not originate in the Middle Ages nor in Spain.

Their origin is **much older**.

They come from a legal practice in the Roman world called **“arra sponsalicia.”**

In Roman law, **arras** were a material sign confirming a pact or contract. They served as a guarantee that what had been promised would be fulfilled.

When Christianity began to evangelize the Roman world, many customs were purified and integrated into Christian life.

This is what happened with the arras.

The Church did not understand them as a **purchase of the bride**, but as a **symbolic sign of responsibility and provision for family life**.

Over the centuries, especially in the Hispanic tradition, this gesture became incorporated into the marriage rite.

Spain and the territories evangelized by her spread this tradition throughout the Hispanic world.

Today the arras are common in:

- Spain
- Mexico
- the Philippines

- much of Latin America

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3. Why are there thirteen coins?

The number thirteen has received several spiritual interpretations.

The most common are the following:

1. Christ and the twelve apostles

Twelve coins represent the apostles and the remaining coin represents Christ.

This reminds us that Christian marriage **does not walk alone: Christ is at the center**.

As the Lord said:

> *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*
> *(Matthew 18:20)*

Christian marriage is not simply a human alliance.

It is **a covenant blessed by God**.

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2. The twelve months of the year

Another interpretation sees the twelve coins as the **twelve months of the year**, and the additional coin as an **offering for the poor**.

This reminds us of something essential:

Christian marriage should not live only for itself.

The family is called to be **generous, supportive, and open to others**.

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4. The deep theological meaning of the arras

At a superficial level, the arras may seem to refer simply to money.

But their real meaning is far deeper.

In reality, they speak about **the economy of Christian love**.

Marriage involves sharing:

- goods
- work
- difficulties
- projects
- responsibilities

The arras remind us that **material life is also part of the path to holiness**.

Money, work, and family finances are not matters unrelated to faith.

They can become a **path to sanctification**.

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5. A symbol of providence

When the husband gives the arras, he is saying something very important:

“You will not walk alone.”

He promises to work, strive, and care for the well-being of the family.

But at the same time, the arras remind us of something fundamental: **true providence**

comes from God.

Sacred Scripture states this clearly:

> *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."*
> *(Matthew 6:33)*

The arras are not a promise of wealth.

They are a sign of trust that **God will care for the family**.

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6. A gesture of shared responsibility

In the past, it was often interpreted that the husband provided the goods and the wife administered them.

Today pastoral theology emphasizes something more balanced:

The arras symbolize **the shared stewardship of family life**.

Christian marriage is a **communion of persons**.

For that reason, important decisions must be lived in:

- dialogue
- unity
- shared responsibility

In this way, the family becomes **a small community of love and responsibility**.

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7. The arras as a prophecy of faithful love

The arras also contain a very beautiful spiritual dimension.

They are **a pledge of the future**.

In the Bible, the word “arras” also appears with a spiritual meaning.

Saint Paul uses this word to speak about the Holy Spirit:

> *“God has given us the Spirit as a pledge in our hearts.”*
> *(2 Corinthians 1:22)*

The arras are **an anticipation of something greater that will come**.

Something similar happens in marriage.

Marital love is **an anticipation of the eternal love to which God calls us**.

Christian marriage is an image of the love between Christ and His Church.

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8. The spiritual dimension that has been forgotten today

In many modern weddings, the arras have become **simple decoration**.

Beautiful coins are purchased, photos are taken… and little more.

But if we lose the deep meaning, the gesture becomes empty.

The arras remind us that marriage involves:

- sacrifice
- responsibility
- daily self-giving
- trust in God

Romanticism alone is not enough.

Marriage requires **virtue, patience, and faith**.

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9. How to live the spirit of the arras in everyday life

The true value of this rite appears **after the wedding**.

The arras are lived every day when the couple:

1. Shares goods with generosity

Not from selfishness, but from the pursuit of the common good.

2. Practices mutual trust

Financial transparency is a concrete form of fidelity.

3. Lives Christian providence

Working responsibly, but trusting in God.

4. Learns to manage together

Dialogue about material goods strengthens love.

5. Remembers that everything is a gift from God

Prosperity and poverty can both become paths to holiness.

10. Christian marriage: a total covenant

The arras remind us of something the modern world has forgotten:

Marriage is not only about feelings.

It is **a total covenant**.

It involves sharing:

- body
- soul
- goods
- destiny

Everything becomes common.

For this reason, Christian marriage is not simply a contract.

It is a **sacrament**, that is, a visible sign of the grace of God.

11. A tradition worth rediscovering

In a society where marriage is weakening and commitment is feared, rediscovering the meaning of the arras can be very valuable.

This small gesture teaches great truths:

- true love is responsible
- the family is a mission
- God’s providence sustains the home
- sharing goods strengthens communion

The arras are a silent catechesis.

They speak about trust.

They speak about covenant.

They speak about fidelity.

Conclusion: thirteen coins that speak of eternity

It may seem surprising, but **thirteen small coins can contain a great spiritual lesson**.

The arras remind us that Christian marriage is not based only on emotions.

It is based on **concrete promises, shared life, and trust in God**.

Each coin says something:

“Mine is yours.”
“Your life is my responsibility.”
“We will walk together.”

And above all, it proclaims a truth that runs throughout the entire history of salvation:

True love **always expresses itself in self-giving**.

Because in the end, Christian marriage is a reflection of the love of God.

A love that holds nothing back.

A love that gives everything.

A love that, like the arras, **is a promise of fidelity that seeks to last forever**.