

Homily100718

## A MAN LEAVES HIS PARENTS AND CLINGS TO HIS WIFE

God's plan for the first creation and for the re-creation is the same.

Ask yourself this question. Is Marriage something that we humans created and gave meaning to or is it something which is God-given and which God has given the meaning to. If Marriage is something that God created as part of his dream for all things human, then one thing is for certain: The meaning of marriage has not changed, not from the original pairing in Eden until this Sunday in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of the third Christian millennium.

I am not the only person to make this following point: It was not just man and woman that God made as male and female. God made everything in creation male and female. It is everywhere in creation. Everywhere in nature. It is only the male/female dynamic that perpetuates all the different species there are on earth. Male/female is the fundamental design of all living and created things, including human beings. God created all things this way—and not in another way. God could have but God didn't.

From the beginning we humans have struggled to accept what God established. We have not always been content. Even in the garden our first parents who had all they needed including access to the fruit of the tree of life--reached out, took and ate of the fruit forbidden. They did not trust God and what God had established for them. They thought they knew better. They reached out and took what had not been given. It continues in the world to this day. Don't you see all the taking that goes on? And the disastrous results to relationships and life that follow soon after?

Marriage as part of God's design is for one man and one woman to enter into a relationship that lasts until death.

It is a relationship that is exclusive in its intimacy.

It is designed to bring about new life to perpetuate the human race.

It is also designed to give life to the spouses.

It is also designed to help both man and woman to enter into God's kingdom of heaven.

The love of this man and this woman is to mirror the love that Jesus has for his People, whom we call the Church. Remember the words of consecration from the Mass today. They are Jesus' words from the Last Supper but they are his vows to us. "This is my body—for you." "This is my blood poured out—for you."

When Jesus quotes the Book of Genesis to the Pharisees today he draws his quote from the section before the fall of man and woman. But what is novel is that Jesus holds the people of his own day, and the people of this day, to a very high standard when it comes to marriage and sexual morality even though He knows we have sinned. And when given the opportunity to back away from his teaching, to soften his teaching, to change his teaching He does none of those things. He doubles down on his teaching about marriage. He goes so far as to point out that divorcing and remarrying another is adultery. Hard words. Adultery is unfaithfulness. It is the breaking of my word, my vow. We do this sometimes as persons but it is not of God. Adultery has no place in God or God's kingdom. On the other hand, adultery is not an

unforgiveable sin. Not on God's part and not on our part either. Faithful heterosexual marriage is the only truly life-giving and interpersonal union—from God's perspective.

Sometimes I am asked why the Catholic Church is so strong on marriage and the sacrament of marriage. Why so strong on indissolubility? Why so strong on marriage for life? Why so strong on one man and one woman? Why, when Moses let the Israelites get divorced? But Jesus answers that Moses did not command divorce. He allowed it. But it was never of God; never was divorce what God wanted. We don't want it either. For marriage is to be lived in as faithful a manner as God is faithful to his people. And Moses made the man provide a bill of divorce thus enabling the woman to enter into another marriage if she wanted, like the man was going to do. Up until Moses there were no protections for the woman. Sent out of the marriage by her husband, she had no way to live. No hope.

We must remember that marriage as designed by God is exactly what is needed to establish, maintain and nourish a family. The family is the fundamental building block of society. The family is the nuclear cell of the Body of Christ. It is the family that mirrors the very interior life of God—the Trinity, a community of persons bound together by love. And each person brings something indispensable. The word of love given by the man and the woman becomes flesh in their child. In that moment the two who were one in their marriage vows become three. But those three are one—a community of persons bound together by love. The domestic Trinity is the male/female designed human family.

But we live in a culture that is so fractious and fragmentary and so many Catholics get caught up in taking the better offer when it comes along or choosing the greener grass in a different pasture. Because Christ was merciful and compassionate, His Church must be merciful and compassionate too. The Church must teach the truth about marriage but deal with those broken by marriages gone bad with a great deal of kindness and encouragement and support. Jesus does not shy away from holding his followers to a higher standard of behavior—in the realm of our sexuality or our intimate relationships. He promises us his assistance and his support even as He challenges us to be our best.