

## Homily

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT, October 7, 2018

My favorite joke about marriage is to say that my wife and I have been happily married for 15 years, but we were married 27 years ago. My wife doesn't think it's that funny, so I promised her I wouldn't use it in a homily.

Instead, I'll share this story:

There was a man and woman who had been married for many, many years. They shared everything. They talked about everything. And they kept no secrets from each other except that the woman had a shoebox she kept in her closet that she asked her husband never to open and never to ask her about.

And for all those years he respected her wishes; he never gave the box another thought, until one day, when they were getting ready to move into a retirement home, the man came across the old shoebox. He felt the urge to ask his wife about this mystery. She agreed that it was time he should know what was in the box.

She said to him, "When we were about to be married, my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily."

The man opened the box and was moved to tears. Only two doilies were in the box after all those years of living and loving.

He said to her with a smile, "Honey, I see only two doilies, but what about all of this money? There must be more than a hundred dollar bills."

"Oh," she said, "that was from selling all the doilies."

Marriage is hard. It takes work. Sometimes it seems like it won't work.

Yet the marriage bond is unbreakable. As Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, "So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

Jesus was explaining to the Pharisees what God proclaimed from the beginning about the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife. This is a covenantal bond, not a legal contract. The same covenantal bond God made several times with us, his chosen people, throughout salvation history. He has never broken this bond.

We, however, from our weak human nature, break this bond all the time. We separate ourselves from God when we sin and we separate ourselves from God when we separate from each other.

That is what the Pharisees did; they separated themselves from the people of God. The word "Pharisee" is taken from the Hebrew "Perisha" meaning "Separated one." In the time of Jesus, the Pharisees separated themselves from the ways of the common Jewish people in the land.

But God loves us; just as the marriage bond is unbreakable, His bond with us is also unbreakable, even if we try.

Jesus taught God's law with clarity and authority and the Pharisees didn't like that, having their own authority challenged.

Today is no different. The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is home. And we have the fortune of our local church, the diocese of Covington, in union with the Bishop of Rome. And here in this building, we have our family church, St. Paul's Parish of Florence, KY.

We are a family, a family bound to God and to each other through the Church, through His love, through His Covenant.

God chose to parallel the marital bond between a man and a woman to the divine bond between all of us, this family of faith, the Body of Christ and God.

We bring new members into our family of faith through baptism. One way is through infant baptism. Every Sunday after noon Mass, if we have a baby, we have a baptism. You should come and participate. It is a community affair.

Just imagine, as we welcome a new baby into our family (our own child, a grandchild, a niece or nephew), we welcome a new member into our faith family. And once that baptismal bond is made, it can never be broken, because God places an indelible mark on our soul, a mark that cannot be removed, opening us up to His many Graces. And try as we may, we can't separate ourselves from God, or the bond with the Family of God, the Body of Christ.

Sometimes an older person wants to join our family, someone who has not yet been baptized. He or she is invited to join our family through a process of evangelization, formation and catechesis. And we, as family, are eager to help, or we should be.

So how do we do that? How do we participate in the evangelization, formation and catechesis process?

Just like in our own immediate family; we spend time together. We eat together, play together, learn together, sometimes correcting each other, always loving each other.

At home, it's messy; we fight over which shows to watch on TV; we point fingers as to who's turn it is to clear the dinner table or wash the dishes; sometimes we might even argue or fight or yell at each other. Most of the time though, we enjoy each other's company.

That's how it is here; we spend time together at Mass or at any of the many functions we celebrate as a Parish or Diocese; we work hard and have fun at the summer social. We participate in various ministries to assist our fellow parishioners such as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

We also “be” together; we have greeters at the door, but we are all greeters. Yes, we say hi to those around us at the start of Mass, we share the sign of peace after the Eucharistic Prayer and we say goodbye to the priest or deacon as we leave.

But it is so much more than that; we are called to evangelize. That’s what it is to be a Christian. Evangelization begins with being a good Christian. We’ve all heard the question, “if Christianity were a crime, would we be guilty by our actions or what we say?”

As we take care of our own body – we wash our hair, we brush our teeth, we eat regularly – we must also take care of our Body the Church; if someone needs a seat, we scoot over to make room; if someone doesn’t know where to go, we offer directions.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the RCIA, is a process of introducing people not already members of our family to our way of life. Let us be Christ to the world. Let’s be active in our parish family life. Ultimately, it’s up to each of us to make all of us feel welcome everywhere we go.

And with any family, we sometimes don’t get along. It is messy; it’s not easy. But that is why we work hardest at being family. There is no separation. God made us that way.

So the next time we find ourselves at a crossroads, remember Jesus telling the Pharisees, “So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”

Maybe you’ve been wronged. Be like Jesus; love God and love one another. It doesn’t mean we will always get along, but we will always be one with one another. We will always be family.