

Homily

27th Sunday in OT

October 3, 2021

Who has ever seen *The Prince Bride*? Remember ‘The Impressive Clergyman?’ For the purposes of this homily, I propose Peter Cook has the best line in the movie. If you have another ‘best’ line, please save it for after Mass. I won’t try to imitate his voice; he says, “Marriage is what brings us together today.”

Marriage is just that; the bringing together of a man and a woman in the Sacrament of Matrimony, witnessed by all those present. It is a covenant that binds two people so tightly that they become, sacramentally, one body, a new creation that cannot be divided. It is not a contract that can be broken or negotiated or altered.

Marriage is a foreshadowing of the eternal binding of the Body of Christ, the Bride, to Christ, the Bridegroom. We, together, form a single body and are joined to Christ in eternal bliss. We celebrate that union in the Eucharist when we take Him in, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, becoming one with Him – and each other.

In the Garden, as we heard in today’s first reading, God forms Adam and then forms Eve to be Adam’s partner, his mate, his spouse. Spouse comes from the Latin meaning “betrothed.” This means pledged to wed another and united in marriage. Adam says that Eve is, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” He takes care of her as he would his own body, (this is, before the apple), just as Christ has promised to do for us. Christ died for us and we husbands are willing to die for our wives.

It doesn’t mean we are to be crucified like Jesus, but it does mean that we must die to self; we become selfless; we stop doing and saying those things that hurt our relationship with our wife. We strive to be better. We have a serious responsibility to lead this relationship. And this responsibility is not to be taken lightly.

We must lead, not dominate; provide, not dictate; protect, not control. We have the perfect example in Christ as Bridegroom. We also have the perfect earthly example in St. Joseph, Mary’s husband. Little is said of St. Joseph in scripture, and understandably so, considering Mary and Jesus. Still, we can learn a lot from the man, the husband and father who loved his wife and raised Jesus from infancy into adulthood, who taught Him His faith.

We can learn how to protect, as Joseph led Mary and Jesus away from Herod’s evil, anger, and jealousy. We can learn how to provide as Joseph fed, clothed, and housed Mary and Jesus. And, especially in the absence of his words, we can learn humility as Joseph always put Mary and Jesus first. And wives can learn from Mary, the mother of our Lord and Savior, and the perfect wife to Joseph. She depended on Joseph; she didn’t nag. She relied on Joseph; she didn’t try to lead. She loved Joseph; he wasn’t just her caretaker, they were married; they loved each other. We often, sadly, forget that Mary, while the perfect mother, was also the perfect wife.

The Holy Family; the perfect family. The perfect guide for each of us in our role, whether husband, wife, son, daughter, priest or consecrated.

Marriage is not a 50/50 relationship where each person comes halfway and expects the other to meet in the middle. What if one comes halfway and the other only comes 49% of the way; what then? Who fills the gap?

Marriage is a 100/100% bond of giving fully of yourself to the other, without counting the cost, without expecting anything in return. The reality is none of us can give 100%; we are failed creatures, but we try. We try because we belong to each other. She is mine and I am hers. Whatever is happening in our lives, she gives me as much of herself as she can, and I do the same for her.

Neither of us are perfect, but that's what we strive for. We ask forgiveness, we listen to the other, we empathize with the other, we forgive each other. We remember the example of Mary and Joseph and try again.

I love doing baptisms. When I minister a baptism, I always tell the parents to be sure to bring God along in the journey of raising a child; that it will make the journey infinitely easier. And I believe this applies to the married couple. This means asking God to enter into the relationship; He's already there – we just need to invite Him in. And we pray together, and we pray often. Every day we need to praise God for His wonderful creation, especially the creation of woman – I am very blessed with the woman God chose for me!

We need to thank God for His many blessings. As challenging as life is, we have much more to be thankful for than disappointed in. Whether we are financially well off or not, we have everything we need to survive and thrive. As I get older, I could find plenty to complain about, so I look for those things I am grateful for; I get out of bed in the morning and thank God for another day.

We need to ask Him for what we need. Not more money, but more patience and a more grateful heart and a better awareness of the needs of those around us. I need to be more aware of my wife and her needs. I need to be more grateful for everything my wife does for me (I am so very spoiled). I need to be more patient with my wife; just because she spoils me doesn't mean I should expect more. We need to bring God along in our everyday moments, praying unceasingly, praying joyfully, praying confidently. This just means being aware of God's presence in everything around us. And this is a good thing; this is what God wants. We can be grateful for His ever-present Spirit. We can be grateful for His ever-present Son in the Sacrament and in each other. And we can talk to Him as we go about our daily lives.

It is alleged that St. Teresa of Avila, while traveling a treacherous path between convents, stumbled and fell off the path into the water and was nearly carried away when she exclaimed to Jesus, "Please stop putting obstacles in our path." She reported that Jesus said in a loving and pastoral tone, "This is how I treat my friends." To which she tallied, "This is why You have so few friends."

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have that close a relationship with our Lord? If only we could stay in constant communication with Him, and all the angels and saints, as we go about our oh-so-busy lives?

Whether we are called to the married life, the consecrated life, or the priesthood, we each embrace a marital relationship with our Lord here on earth in the Eucharist and eventually in the bountiful feast in heaven. And we all can be grateful for the wonderful examples of the perfect couple, Mary and Joseph, to share ourselves, truly share ourselves, with those entrusted to us.

Husbands, tell your wives, "I love you, like Joseph loved Mary."

Wives, tell your husbands, "I love you, like Mary loved Joseph."