

Homily: 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Cycle B: 2024: Gen 2: 18-24; Ps. 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10: 2-16

***“What Marriage is supposed to be in God’s Plan of Salvation”***

Christ’s vision of marriage is **radical**. It only makes sense in light of what he tells us our mission in life is to be: to be holy as our Heavenly Father is holy. Since most of the human race is called to the vocation of marriage, it is important to reflect on what Jesus calls the married life to be in terms of holiness. Subjectively each marriage is unique based on the unique man and woman in it, but objectively there is **a divine blueprint** of holiness for marriage shining for all through the Scriptures and the Catholic faith.

1. **The Sacrament of Marriage:** What is the key difference between getting married before God’s holy altar in the Catholic Church vs. getting married at the JP, or just living together? – (a **pastoral note:** *the latter 2 options are both objectively mortal sins, so one needs to refrain from receiving Holy Communion until that union is blessed in the Catholic Church*). **The difference** is God is being asked at the holy Altar to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> party in the unique relationship. **Catholic marriage is an irrevocable covenant between the man, the woman, and the Blessed Trinity.** After all, as St Paul so beautifully points out in his letter to the Ephesians, *Christian marriage is to be a reflection of the inner life and love of the Blessed Trinity and the love of Christ for the Church.* **The social statistics bear this out.** Catholics who get married outside the Church basically have a **50%** divorce rate, with a few variables - like the rest of US society – and it is even higher if you live together before marriage. However, if people marry within the Catholic Church the divorce rate drops to **33%**. A **17%** drop is significant. **It is truly a covenant of 3 parties.** God’s way is the better way, as will be shown in some other statistics as we move through this homily. Social statistics are a good measuring tool into what is going on in society because it’s not based on opinion but upon observable facts. Another positive stat is in general the divorce rate has fallen in the US **by 18%** in the last 15 years for ppl under 40. That is a good fruit of younger ppl being more careful in whom they marry, often because they have seen the sad effects of so many divorces among their elders as they grew up – becoming wise, rather than bitter, through hard life experience is always good.

2. Jesus tells us today in the Gospel that, “*From the beginning of creation God made us male and female. And for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and **the two shall become one flesh**. So, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.* A Catholic marriage is to be a covenant of love and life. There are two **inseparable dimensions** to that covenant. The **unitive** dimension is that the two become one flesh in marriage, both in conjugal union and in all aspects of life together. To do this well both partners need to pray for the gift of kindness, patience and charity. Focus on complementing each other instead of criticizing and nagging - which causes the heart of the other to grow cold over time. To focus on the good instead of the negative. The other dimension of the two becoming one flesh is the **procreative** dimension (also why “gay marriage” can’t be a Sacramental reality). To be generous with God and accept all the children He wants to bless the married couple with. If Catholics do their best to follow the radical yet liberating teachings of the Catholic Church in regards to marriage and sexuality it also makes a huge difference in the divorce rate. *Couples who contracept or are sterilized have a 55% divorce rate which drops to an amazing 3.5% - if they instead use natural family planning which is permitted by the Church - if a couple needs to space out their children for serious economic, physical, emotional, or spiritual reasons. **God’s way is obviously the better way**, and secular social scientists are showing us this through their statistical analysis of contemporary marital life – e.g., see the U of Rutgers ongoing study of marriage. A married couple is called to share in Christ’s self-gift to die to self for the good of the marital union and the family, as priests are to help save souls.*
3. **Finally the sacrament of marriage is to be the path to Heaven for the married couple.** If you are married, the question must be asked: what am I doing right now to help my spouse & children get to Heaven? If a married couple also goes to **Mass together** as a couple on a weekly basis in addition to practicing NFP it drops to **2%**, and then in addition to those things if they **pray together daily** as a couple it drops to **.9%! Yes, God’s way is truly the better way.** God bless you. †