

The Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 31, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #42)

Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:18-24; Tobit 8:4-8; Proverbs 31:10-13; Sirach 26:1-4;
Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; John 15:12-16
Romans 8:31; I Corinthians 13:4-13; Ephesians 5:21-33; I Peter 3:1-2;
Revelations 19:9

In our reflection last week, we closed out with a brief discussion on the necessity for Jesus to be part of this Sacred Covenant of Matrimony. We will resume this line of thought as we continue our reflection on Matrimony this week. At the top of this handout, I have provided the references from Sacred Scripture I mentioned last week. Let's take a brief look at these as we continue.

Last week, we reflected on the details regarding the Creation story and God's gift of Matrimony in the beginning. Moving on, the book of Tobit tells us that Tobias and Sarah rose from their bed and prayed together on their wedding night that God would *allow[them] to live together to a happy old age*. This may seem to be self-serving. Recall with me the rest of the story. Sarah had been married seven times before Tobias and each of her husbands died on the very night of their wedding. And so, their prayer was for the protection and mercy of God. Prayer is an essential aspect of any marriage—this same prayer for protection and mercy—calling for God to be an integral part of the lives of the two who are now one.

Proverbs and Sirach both discuss a wife who fears the Lord and the perfection of the marriage covenant found in a virtuous wife. A good spouse—husband or wife—is a source of grace in both good times and bad. This grace flows from Jesus as a part of both of their lives.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus calls us to be salt and light. Salt flavors and preserves; light illumines and reveals. Couples, by the love between themselves and for others, can add flavor, preserve, illuminate and reveal the love of Christ to all they encounter.

St. Paul, throughout his writings, has a lot to say about husbands and wives. In Romans, he asks the questions *What will separate us from the love of Christ?* There will be pain—there will be sorrow—there will be crosses to bear; with Christ as the center of your lives—the center of your marriage—there will be light, even in the darkest times.

We come to St. Paul's writings to the Christians at Corinth. St. Paul speaks of love: *Love is patient; love is kind*—lovers can be terribly impatient; lovers can be frightfully unkind; they must strive to maintain this patience and kindness; it is not automatic. *Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude*—jealousy and envy can creep, silently, into the relationship. They must remember the old adage “Familiarity breeds contempt”, working always to restore that newness, that mystery that they had in the beginning. *It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth*”, this truth cannot be found in a book or on the internet—it comes from holiness, from Christ as part of the covenant. *It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*—lovers do doubt, lovers fall into despair, lovers can lose hope, lovers do find it difficult to endure. Once again, with a Christ-centered relationship, these frailties can be overcome—love can bear all, can believe, can hope for all things and will endure.

This love, from Christ, through Christ, with Christ, is a gift. You may not demand it; you may not have an overwhelming desire for it and you certainly can't buy it at Walmart or Target. But God, in his mercy and goodness, freely gives it. It is this gift by which you will—together—bear, believe, hope and endure

St Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus words that are often misunderstood and rejected. He calls for wives to be *subject to your husbands*. There is a part that is often overlooked, *as you are to the Lord*. These words do not mean that a wife is to be any less of a partner. Paul is simply calling for respect—not just from the wife—from wives AND husbands. St. Paul also demands—six times—*husbands love your wives*, not just with human love, but with the same love Christ has for his bride, the Church. With this same love, husbands should be ready to bear the sacrifice of Calvary.

I could go on for a while discussing the passages from Sacred Scripture, but time limits this. The references at the top of this handout are provided for your reflection. Turn to these when the darkness comes. Turn to these when time and trouble seem to be overcoming. Turn to these, even in times of joy to find the peace that only comes from Christ as completion of the Sacred Covenant of the Sacrament of Matrimony.