

The Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 7, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #43)

So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord . . . (Malachi 2:15-16).

Over the last two Sundays, we have reflected on the Sacrament of Matrimony. Two weeks ago, we saw that a Christ-centered foundation is a must in this sacred bond. Last week, we looked at St. Paul's definition of love and reflected on how this definition was in the hands of the lovers to bear all, believe all, hope and endure. We then looked at St. Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians for wives to respect their husbands and husbands to love their wives with the same love Christ displayed on Calvary's cross. Today, as promised, let us look at what happens if either of the couple loses their desire or commitment to bear, believe, hope and endure.

In the course of life on this earth, each of us will come face-to-face with both triumph and tragedy. We make many choices in our lives, hoping and praying that they will turn out to be right and good—for ourselves and for those closest to us. Sadly, this is not always the case; such as the tragedy of a couple deciding that their marriage is falling apart. It is an unfortunate and depressing statistic in today's world, that fifty-percent of all marriages end in divorce.

Divorce touches more than just the husband and wife; of course, it divides families, it can also affect friendships and it most often leaves pain and suffering in its wake. Husband and wife question themselves, wondering where did they go wrong. They can become bitter and despondent, each blaming the other. There rises within each a myriad of emotions—anger, frustration, disappointment, fear, bitterness—to name a few. And still, it is sometimes the only option left.

It was in these moments of brokenness, as I walked this dark path of separation, facing the inevitable, that I needed to hear three words only—I love you—we love you. Yes, for those of you who do not know, I have walked down this road. The expressions of sympathy, of understanding, were all good, were well intentioned. Yet, they brought no solace, no relief from the pain, no cure for the anger and disappointment and total loss that coursed through my mind and my heart. Recall the words of St. Paul, *If I speak in tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol.*

And so, today, if any of you find yourselves in this place, do not doubt that we, this Church, love you; know that I love you; remember most of all that God loves you. This is unchanging; this is constant; this is light in the darkness.