

HOLDING HANDS AND PLEDGING LOVE

How would you describe a good marriage? When is marriage at its best? A very legitimate question for any age. And just what does Jesus add to any couple's marriage? What difference does He make? The answer, to me, may well be found in the vows each man and woman speak to each other. One part of the Sacrament of Matrimony is a special moment of hand-holding. Each one takes their beloved's hands in their own hands. They each look into the eyes of their beloved. Each says something that will change their lives forever. "I choose you to be my spouse. I promise to be faithful to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you, all the days of my life."

But these words are not simply the vows exchanged by bride and groom. At the Last Supper of Jesus and his apostles, are to be found the words which are repeated in each celebration of the Eucharist. This is what Jesus said: "This is my body—for you." "This is the cup of my lifeblood—poured out for you. Remember what I have done. Don't ever forget." For you. He lived not for himself but for us; for you—and me. Spouses imitate the promises of Jesus too. In their marriage. I will no longer live for myself, my dear, I will now live for you. Today. Each day.

Something we do think about with regard to marriage is that God sets the bar very high. Faithful. Exclusive relationship. Caring and loving. Day in; day out. Reliable. Living for the other. Accepting the gift of children and all that entails. The bar has been set very high indeed. But is that the only way to think about marriage? How difficult it really is? Is there another way? God offers his divine assistance in and through Jesus Christ, in and through the Holy Spirit. It is up to us to believe that this kind of help and assistance really has been given, really is available to us each day.

Think of this. God wants the very best for us. God believes that we can be faithful, especially with his help. God believes we can be caring and selfless and mindful of the other. God believes we can—with his help. But he believes we can. Do we? Do we believe we can live up to what we have promised? Yes. We actually can. We can keep our promises. We can keep our word. We can be reliable and loving to the end. With God's help. Which God has offered and promised and made available in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But we have to accept the gift. We have to take advantage of the gift. We have to ask for the help. Each day. Every day.

My friends, we find in Jesus the grace to be faithful, loving and true. We can make sacrifices without counting the cost. We are capable of an authentically loving heart towards our spouse, our children, our family. And if we fall short; if we lose our way or our temper, if we act selfishly, then we can still go to Him, ask forgiveness and begin again—with his help. It is the best way we human beings can live. It is by God's design but it is for our benefit, our life and our salvation. The Pharisees asked Jesus about the legitimacy of divorce. Jesus responds by speaking of God's original design of this most intimate, difficult and rewarding of relationships. Marriage. God still wants the best for us. God has already sent his best—to help.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.