

## DEATH, LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

At the time of Jesus there were many people who did not believe that there was an afterlife. Many believed that death was final and when you died you were done. One such group when Jesus lived were the Sadducees. Ironically, the Pharisees did believe in an afterlife and spirits and angels. The question that the Sadducees put to Jesus is to challenge him precisely because he taught the resurrection from the dead. The question is about marriage, specifically marriage in the afterlife.

This is a very important point. Jesus not only taught that there was a kingdom of God, created by his Father, but that the kingdom was created for us, and God wants all of us to live with him forever. In his kingdom. So, then what will life be like in the Kingdom? And how does it compare with the life we know here and now? Jesus answers with this sentence: “But to those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.”

Marriage is for life on earth. Marriage is not for the eternal kingdom of God in heaven. Thus says Jesus. Why is that? Why would Our Lord say that? First of all, because He knows it to be true and because He is the Truth. He conveys that Truth to us. Also, He knows that we do not know about such things as “no marriage in the kingdom of heaven” because we have never been there and unless it is revealed to us, we can only guess at what marriage would be like, what it would include and not include.

Marriage, for us here on earth, is a relationship of intimacy, commitment, generativity and love. It is designed for life here on earth. It is designed to continue and perpetuate life here on earth. It is designed for the sanctification of spouses and children, and for the renewal of the human community on earth. It is designed for the triumph of entering into the kingdom of heaven, by the grace of God. Of course, we do not think in such lofty terms most of our lives. Life is difficult and it takes a lot of concentration, effort, patience, dedication, and determination. It takes prayer and discipline and self-sacrifice to get through any given day. But there is a goal that God has in mind when he bestows marriage upon the human race.

In heaven, we no longer need to propagate the human race. In heaven, we are already in our final home and all the people are accounted for. There is love there, however. It will not be sexual love as it exists here. It will be the deepest kind of intimate love of which we are capable. There are so many different ways that we are able to express our love as human beings. But one certain thing is that our love must involve our hearts. In our sexual encounters with our spouses, it is part of God's design that we give of our hearts to the other in and through this sexual expression. If we enter into sexual relations but hold back this significant part of ourselves, we may think that everything is okay. But everything is not okay.

We can give our hearts to the other in friendship, in parental love for our children. In children's love for their parents. In love for our neighbors, our co-workers. For our closest friends. For our other family members and loved ones. In love, the heart is to be given to the other. I have given my sexuality to the Lord, not because I do not value my sexuality. I treasure it as something very dear and significant to me. That is why I give this most prized dimension of my life to Him. I live it by giving my heart in service to you. And if you think about it, while living this kind of celibate life is not very typical it does point us to what life in the kingdom will be like. I am in no way diminished or lacking in love because I dedicate my sexuality to God. In the kingdom we will have a body but it will not function in exactly the same way as our bodies function here. These will be glorified bodies. They will transmit and receive that love in a transformed way. What exactly that is we do not yet know. But we trust Our Lord. He is the One who told us about the Father creating a Kingdom for us and wanting each of us and all of us to live there with him. We really should spend some time in our imaginative minds considering what the kingdom of heaven is to be like. And we should begin by thinking about the very best relationship we presently have or have ever had. Start there and then realize that heaven is about the very best relationship we can possibly have—with God. Jesus invites us here, to Eucharist, so that he may connect with us and enter into communion with us, and we with him. He gives his heart to us again and again in Mass. He asks us to make the same gift of our own hearts to Him in turn. Let us do so this very day.

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