

Homily - 25th Sunday of the Year C (Catechetical Sunday)

Beloved, we celebrate Catechetical Sunday **2010**. The theme is, “Matrimony: Sacrament of Enduring Love”. In this respect, we gather around the table of the Lord, around Jesus himself. He is the altar; he is “the stone rejected by the builders” that has become “the key stone.” We gather around him to draw graces from him, to draw strength from him. Today, more than ever, couples need to build their marriages upon the Rock of Christ that they may enjoy enduring and unbreakable bond of love. So, the focus for all marriages “must be directed to the love that never ends....” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 25).

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus raised two important questions, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” (Matt 16:13); “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15). These questions are very important to us here and now. Jesus was not so much interested in the first question. The people of the world can call him anything they like. After all, we know there is so much insincerity and dishonesty out there. The First Reading (Amos 8:4-7) depicts the mindset of the world: “When will the new moon be over... and the Sabbath, that we may display the wheat? We will ... fix our scales for cheating! We will buy the lowly for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals; even the refuse of the wheat we will sell!” The Gospel passage (Lk 16:1-13) relates a particular case of dishonesty: a steward cheating his master who evidently cheated to his own master in the past. Hence, “the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. ‘For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light’”. As the saying goes, “Birds of the same feather flock together.”

The second question, “Who do you say that I am?” was and still remains Christ’s main concern. The way we respond to it shows our level of commitment to God. If we consider Jesus like any other human being, then his words are reduced to mere opinions. But if we acknowledge Christ as our Master, Lord and God, then when he says one must marry in the Church and that marriage is for life, then his teaching stands as truth. We stand with him because “No servant can serve two masters....” Jesus enjoins us, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). In this respect, let us state clearly that it is the Church that Christ placed to witness to and regulate Christian marriages in his name; not the politicians, presidents, judges, lawyers, etc. There were secular leaders in his day but he placed the apostles in charge: “He who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16).

Beloved, God is the God of covenant. He made cove-

nants with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, etc; Jesus fulfilled all these covenants in himself through the Sacrifice of the Mass: “‘This is my body which is given for you’ ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19-20). So, we gather around God’s throne to share in this covenant. Matrimony, flowing from it, is a covenant union which is unbreakable. It is not a contract. Jesus says, “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. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt 19:5-6). Let not the society’s promotion of “no fault divorce” mislead anyone.

True freedom and love is what authentic marriages enjoy. I’ve many close friends, couples, whom I visit from time to time. I can tell that marriage is not easy; but that is what true love means. The Sacrament of Matrimony is never a marriage of convenience. Pope Benedict XVI declares in his Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), “God’s way of loving becomes the measure of human love” (DCE, 11). Marriage mirrors Christ’s love for us even unto death. When we sinned, God did not divorce us; instead, He paid the price in order to keep the relationship going. Marriage is designed for “love until death”. That is the gospel Jesus proclaimed through his Cross. Hence, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that, “[The Church’s] structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members. And holiness is measured according to the ‘great mystery’ in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom” (CCC 773).

On the whole, some problems militate against authentic marriages today: Divorce and Broken homes which bring untold hardship to children; Cohabitation especially by people afraid of making a covenantal commitment; and human sins of selfishness and infidelity. Also, many liberal tendencies of “language game” minimize the dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony, reducing it to merely “white wedding”. What a subtle and misleading attack! Thus we find some prospective couples declining from the Sacrament, saying, “We don’t want a ‘white wedding’”. Also, against the “culture of death”, married couples need to be responsibly open to life: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:22; 9:1). Finally, we pray that prospective and already wedded couples may daily advance in proper marital love communications, practice marital chastity and grow in their prayer life in order to recognize that “Love never ends” (1Cor 13:8), through Christ our Lord, Amen.