

## Homily - 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year (Catechetical Sunday 2010) – Preached Version

We celebrate with the Church in America this 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year, the Catechetical Sunday. The theme is Matrimony: Sacrament of Enduring love. The love in marriage is love that should never have an end. Through the Sacrament of Matrimony, our God blesses the couples with the gift of love that endures. The couple should not lose this gift through carelessness and unnecessary conflicts.

Today's message is important because marriage has suffered many attacks recently more than before. The rate of **divorce** is very alarming. Many states in here America and around the world make laws that promote divorce. They call it "No Fault Divorce". What a shame! Last year, an all female law firm in Chicago erected a billboard advertising divorce with the message, "*Life is Short; Get a Divorce.*" How terrible! Then, there's the problem of **cohabitation**, especially from people who are afraid of making a commitment. They live together and begin to have children but do not want to make any sacramental commitment through Church wedding. This is an abuse of marriage. The Word of God says a woman is "free to be married to ... [a man] she wishes, only in the Lord" (1Cor 7:39). Marriage in the Lord is Christian Marriage; done by the Church, not by the court or notary.

Besides, many liberal tendencies of "language game" minimize the dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony, calling it "white wedding". What a subtle and misleading attack! Thus, some young people come and say, "We don't want anything big; we don't want White Wedding". Please, the Catholic Church has nothing like "White Wedding". We have the Sacrament of matrimony which Jesus instituted. That is marriage in the Lord. You can wear any color of dress; the color of dress does not matter. Another is the problem of **infidelity** in marriage. This is a sin against the love that should never end, promised on the day of marriage. And of course, the problems of the "culture of death" through abortions, contraception and artificial birth controls. God commanded, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:22; 9:1). Couples should be open to the gift of life in a responsible way.

Dear friends, today more than ever, couples need to build their marriages on the Rock of Christ, the Lord. For the Scripture says, "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever" (Ps 125:1). And Lord Jesus declares,

"Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it" (Matt 7:24-27).

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus asked, "Who do men [people of the world] say that the Son of man is?" (Matt 16:13); and "Who do you [Christians, my people] say that I am?" (Matt 16:15). The people of the world can call him anything they like and do whatever they like. We cannot be like them. They can cheat as in the First Reading (Amos 8:4-7): "When will the new moon be over... and the Sabbath, that we may display the wheat? We will ... fix our scales for cheating!" Also, as in the Gospel passage (Lk 16:1-13) about a steward cheating his master who evidently cheated to his own master in the past.

Truly, “Birds of the same feathers flock together.” Brothers and sisters, we cannot be like them; we are the children of light.

Who do you say Jesus is? If we say He is like any other human being, then his words are mere opinions. But if we call Him our Master, Lord and God, then when he says one must marry in the Church, we have no option but to obey. When he says marriage is for life, then his teaching stands as truth. We should not allow the opinions of the world to make us reject Jesus’ teaching. Remember, “No servant can serve two masters...” Jesus enjoins us, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). God is the God of covenant. Matrimony is a covenant union which is unbreakable. It is not a contract. Jesus says, “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.

Brothers and sisters, I’ve many close friends, couples, whom I visit from time to time, in Orlando, Palm Bay and St. Cloud. From my experience with them and others, I can tell that marriage is not easy; but that is precisely what true love means. Matrimony is never intended to be a marriage of convenience since it mirrors Christ’s love for his Church - love even unto death. When we sinned, God did not divorce us; instead, He paid the price for our salvation. Marriage is designed for “love until death”.

We know that there are certain situations where a person becomes impossible to live with. It could be through drunkenness and drug addiction, domestic violence, incessant quarrels and conflicts, unrestrained marital infidelity, etc. Nevertheless, you do not take matters into your hands and begin to look for a lawyer to begin a divorce process. Not at all! Try what Jesus commanded first of all: that “If your ... [*husband*] sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your ... [*husband*]. But if he does not listen [*Don’t stop there!*], take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them [*Don’t give up!*], tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt 18:15-17). Isn’t Jesus fair enough? Can you see that if you use this method, it will be clear to everybody that you have done your best? Nobody will say it is your fault? Above all, you would have obeyed Jesus, your real Master.

On the whole, the vow of marriage is, “I, N, take you, N, to be my lawful wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death.” This vow includes conjugal relationship until death. One partner is not free to withdraw the consent after some years. No! It’s too late; you already promised until death in the presence of God and his Church. And we clapped for you. How then can tell your spouse you don’t want anymore. If you are sick, it is a different thing. Otherwise, it is “a partial divorce”, that is, “divorce from bed.” Such a person endangers his spouse who may begin to look elsewhere for sexual gratification, thereby committing sins. That is why Jesus says, “every one who divorces his wife... makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matt 5:32).

Finally, we pray that each couple may daily advance in their prayer life, have proper communication, practice marital fidelity and love each other until the end, through Christ our Lord, Amen.