

Faithfulness: A Key to a Happy Marriage

There is, in all of Scripture, a unique theme that runs through the books of the Bible, from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. It is the theme of nuptials, the marriage of God and mankind. The Bible, then, is a love story between God and mankind. God enters into a marriage covenant with His people. The Biblical writers set out to tell this story of love between God and His people. It is a story of Divine revelation. God, in the process of this love, exposes Himself, and makes Himself known to mankind. At first, He appoints a messenger to convey His marriage proposal to His people. “What shall I say to them?” Moses asked, “if they should ask, “What is His name?” “I AM WHO I AM” God replied. [God is HE WHO IS] “This is my name forever, and my title for all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15). Go to my people, speak to them about my love for them, about my desire for their freedom, and their sanctification. And, the day that God took His people out of slavery, that day, was a day to remember. A lamb was to be sacrificed every year in memory of that day. God led His people to a place of solitude and silence, in the desert of Mountain Sinai, a place far away from the troubles and anxieties of human labor, a place conducive to intimate prayer. Then came the time for nuptials, the marriage of God and His people. The people gave their free consent, “Everything that the Lord has spoken, we will do and obey” (Exodus 19:8). Then, the people washed and consecrated themselves and made ready, (Exodus 19:10). Then, God, in a solemn way, gave them the Ten Commandments. They were to be His people, and He was to be their God. A marriage covenant was made. God became the husband of His chosen people.

But, soon after, the people turned away from God, they took interest in other gods, they broke the marriage covenant. But even after that betrayal, God did not give up on His spouse. God is always faithful to His promises. On many occasions, God sent reminders to His spouse through the Prophets but in vain. Until God Himself decided to come, one more time, to reclaim His spouse and join her to Himself once for all. Thus, when Christ came, He spoke of Himself as the Bridegroom (Mark 9:15). And as St. Augustine so beautifully put it, in one of his sermons, “Like a bridegroom, Christ went forth from his chamber.... He came to the marriage-bed of the cross, and there in mounting it, he consummated his marriage. And when he perceived the sighs of the creature, he lovingly gave himself up to the torment in place of his bride and joined himself to [her] forever” (*Sermo Suppositus* 120). Therefore, the crucifixion, for us, was the consummation of a marriage. The Crucified, hanging on the tree of the Cross, in that scorching heat of midday,

and the pain of His failing body, looks upon His beloved spouse, and as a lover like no other, He absorbs all her sins, washes her in His blood and water coming out of His pierced side, and then joins her to Himself forever. He says, “Take and Eat, this is my Body, Take and Drink, this is my Blood.” He gave Himself completely to Her. The Divine to the human, perfectly joined.

He promised to take her to His Father’s house, for, “there are many dwelling places.” (John 14:1-3). And “if He goes and prepares a place for her, He comes back and takes her to Himself.” This spouse, then, the people of God, the Church, must remain faithful to this promise, and to the marriage covenant. She must be watchful and vigilant, waiting for that day when Christ shall return and take her to Himself. The people of God wait while in prayer, “Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face, and we shall be saved.” Day and night, in the Psalms, the Church sings her song of love, to the memory of her Divine lover. “Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul longs for you, my God.” (Psalm 42.) In exchange, the bridegroom nourishes her, and preserves her holiness through the sacraments. She must keep the faith and the love of her husband. She must keep in memory the love of her Divine Spouse and refresh it daily at Mass. She must stay awake; she must be patient. She must take care not to be deceived by other voices and allurements of the evil one.

Surrounded by too much worldly noise, the Church must, even more, seek the solitude and the silence of the house of prayer. There, in the presence of her Divine Spouse, she listens carefully to His voice. Accustomed to His voice, the Church then can confidently go forth to make known to all creation, this love beyond all telling. She must be virtuous, and above all, she must desire to meet her divine spouse once again without fear or shame, but with a renewed confidence and joy.

The season of Advent presents a great opportunity for the Church to seek the solitude and the silence of the house of prayer. There, she can listen more attentively to the voice of her Divine spouse. There, in the solitude and silence of prayer, the Church looks into herself, she examines her life, she prepares herself for the coming of her bridegroom, lest He should come at an hour unknown to her, and finds her unclean, sinful, with her wedding garment stained with evil.

Let us then, devote ourselves to prayer, almsgiving, and penance. Let us seek to make peace with God and with our neighbor. Let us root out all evil from our lives, let us joyfully look forward to the second coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. **Amen.**