

**FR. JOHN'S HOMILY**  
**Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 3, 2021**

God has wedded Himself to us, His people, from the beginning of Creation. Ultimately, He showed this union through His Son Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation. For us to understand this, and for all those who live in the Sacrament of Marriage in celebrating this Holy bond of union, it is good to recall a little of Salvation History by reminding us of God's Covenant of Love. This truth that is so beautifully planned by God has been the source of so much brokenness, hurt, sadness, and confusion these days. Covenant means the coming together. God coming together with us, His people, and God is always faithful to His covenant.

Adam and Eve lived in a covenant relationship with God when they were in harmony with one another - God, Adam and Eve. They violated this covenant with God through their disobedience. The next example of a God's covenant relationship is established through Noah. The sign of the covenant is the Rainbow; God's promise to the Earth and Humanity.

God's covenant with Abraham is when God says to Abram, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great." God says, "I will establish my covenant between you and your descendants after you." God makes this covenant, and Abraham chose to obey. We saw he would trust God completely in his willingness to even offer up his only son, Isaac.

Through Abraham's descendants come Jacob, known as Israel. His son, Joseph, would save his people from famine. After a period of time once the Chosen People fell into bondage in Egypt, God calls Moses. I AM WHO AM. God reveals Himself to Moses in the burning bush.

Then comes the Passover event that frees God's people. The meal the Jews prepared in haste to ready themselves to flee Egypt. Lambs blood marked the doorposts, and the Chosen People were spared. Then the miraculous parting of the Red Sea illustrated God's salvation and protection for his people. God's covenant with Moses and the Hebrew people required their faith in God and in obedience to His words. The Ten Commandments were to be the norm of faithfulness or unfaithfulness. In their unfaithfulness which would be a constant theme though Israel history, God would call them back to the Covenant with Him through his prophets. God is always faithful to His covenant.

For Christians, God's liberation of the Jewish people from captivity in Egypt is a great symbol and foreshadowing of God's liberation of humanity from the spiritual captivity of sin and death, accomplished through the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Jesus at the night of the Last Supper, celebrating Passover, says "Take and eat, take and drink, this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." For us in our faith, this is the union of all unions, the wedding of all weddings, the coming together of God and His people forever. This is the New Covenant, and it is the ultimate goal of love, a union with God and others. As we grow in greater love for God, we grow in greater love of all God's creations. Knowing this is God's ultimate call of love, reflect now on our readings.

In Genesis: It is not good for Man to be alone, I will make a suitable partner for him. So the Lord God formed, out of the ground, various creatures, then from the rib, this one is last bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, this one is called woman, for out of her man this one has been taken. The call of love and union with God is established in the beauty of creation and in His original plan and design of love.

The author wants us to know that men and women come from the same creation, a close relationship between man and woman. There are no inferior or superior creations here. No, the

intent is to show that they are both from God, created out of love to grow into greater union. Covenant is the coming together.

In today's Gospel, Jesus returns to Judea, Jewish territory, and resumes his public ministry. The Pharisees approach Jesus to test him, the test is on Marriage and Divorce.

The Pharisees question Jesus about the lawfulness of divorce. Under specific conditions, divorce was an accepted practice among the Jewish people during the time of Jesus. It was given as a law by Moses, as found in Deuteronomy 24:1-5. This law only permits that a husband may divorce his wife if he finds her to be indecent. In Matthew, you may divorce for Lewd Conduct. (Doesn't explain what this means). This is the justification that the Pharisees use when Jesus inquires about the commandment of Moses. In reply, Jesus brings them back to the Book of Genesis and counters that God's original intention was that men and women would become one flesh in marriage. Jesus describes the teaching of Moses as a concession made to God's original intention because of human stubbornness.

Jesus even goes further in his teaching from the cultural norms of his time by applying his words equally to men and women. Jewish culture permitted only that a husband may divorce his wife. Wives were not permitted to divorce their husband for any reason, including adultery.

For Jesus, marriage is clearly a gift from God. A Sacrament is a Marriage between a man and a woman. Marriage is also about being open to children. Marriage is a celebration of creation and of God's love.

In much of our modern culture, this teaching is no longer accepted as the norm. For various reasons, people believe that marriage is just any two people making a commitment to one another. Many today do not want to have children in a marriage, because it complicates the marriage. However, to God this was never the case, especially the way He sees children. Children are always a blessing. The world sees it one way, our Faith another, and as a sacrament, sacred, holy, a beautiful mystery of God's love.

We have an enormous evangelization to do in our modern world. Even simply to state the truth about how our Holy Scriptures and our Catholic tradition see marriage seems to offend many people. Like you, I have family members that have a hard time accepting these truths. Today I am reminding us of the truth of God's Covenant of Love. We are all called to live this truth in Love. There is no judgement or condemnation here, just reminding us all to live the teachings of Jesus and the Church. To live God's Covenant of Love in whatever state in life we find ourselves: Single, Consecrated life and in Marriage.

These passages present a strong picture of Jesus' emphasis on the importance of family. God intended for women and men to be joined together in marriage. Among the purposes of marriage is the raising of children. By welcoming children and fostering their relationship with God, parents and families bear witness to the Kingdom of God.

*"Marriage is a symbol of life, real life: it is not "fiction"! It is the Sacrament of the love of Christ and the Church, a love which finds its proof and guarantee in the Cross. My desire for you is that you have a good journey, a fruitful one, growing in love. I wish you happiness. There will be crosses! But the Lord is always there to help us move forward. May the Lord bless you!"*  
Pope Francis.