

Sunday Homily Fourth Sunday Ordinary Time A
February 3, 2008
Matthew 5:1-12a

By Deacon Jeff Claar

Humble, Lowly, Weak, Foolish, Meek, Persecuted; but also Righteous, Clean of Heart, Peacemaker; the Scriptures today call us to be all of these things for the sake of the Kingdom of God. But if this is how God wants us to be, how come it is so easy for us to be exactly the opposite?

In fact, our society encourages us to be:

Proud, not Humble
Exalted, not Lowly
Strong, not Weak
Wise, not Foolish
Outgoing, not Meek the
Aggressor, not the Persecuted

And to be Righteous, Clean of Heart, and a Peacemaker is for wimps. We are taught that looking out for number one and doing what feels good is how you can fulfill all your desires.

Now, if we are in search of the Truth, and the truth by definition can only be one thing, which of these two paths should we choose? Because we must choose one, and the opposite of the truth is a lie.

Today, the Church celebrates Marriage Sunday, where we pause to celebrate the good and the truth that flows from this Sacrament, not only for us as individuals and couples, but for us as a society. Why then, does the Church give us these particular readings from Scripture as we honor Marriage? Because when we look at what God wants for us through His sacrament of Marriage, we can begin to understand who we must become in order to live out this Sacrament.

You see, God, who is complete Love, is the author and creator of Marriage. It is His, and only His to define, and it can only be accomplished its true purpose when lived as He created it. And how did God create marriage?

God's plan from the beginning of creation was that one man, and one woman would join themselves to each other truly as one body, to the exclusion of all others, so that as husband and wife, we can experience a foretaste of the unity of the Trinity. Marriage then is a foreshadowing of the ultimate union we seek with God in Heaven for all eternity.

The intimacy of the marital union reflects the intimacy of Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, and His love for His bride, the Catholic Church. Just as Christ gave up His body for His bride, so too are we called to give of ourselves fully, and completely so that we together might become one flesh in Him.

A sacramental marriage as God created it has these four characteristics. They are:

Free – I lay down my life freely and without reservation for you

Total – Unconditional love

Faithful – I will be with you until the end

Life giving – Fruitful and open to new life.

This is what Christ calls us to by His example of love for His Church. For all of us married here today, this is what we are called to live out by nature of the vows we professed on our wedding day.

For those young people searching for what is right and true when it comes to knowing how to be happy in a relationship, I can only point you to the truth of these four marks of a good relationship. Any relationship that does not progress toward being free, total, faithful and life giving is a relationship against what God wants for you and can only end in heartache.

Those of us who are married can hold the mirror of our own relationship up to the reflection of these four marks to see where we are doing well, and where we can improve. And how do we improve? Well, let's recall today's Scripture: is a good spouse Humble, Lowly, Weak, Foolish, Meek, Persecuted; but also Righteous, Clean of Heart, Peacemaker? Or is a good spouse more likely to be Proud, Exalted, and Aggressive?

As your pastoral staff, we know that marriage is too big a topic for just one homily, so we would like to invite all married couples to take with them today a free CD titled "Marriage and the Eucharist" by Christopher West. These can be found in the vestibule and Commons after Mass. This one-hour CD will go into more depth about the beauty of the Sacrament of Marriage and how we are to live it in relationship with our God.

We will also offer a dinner and discussion on the topic of marriage on Valentine's Day for those couples who are interested. Please see the bulletin for details.

May God continue to bless all couples living well, and especially those struggling with the Sacrament of Marriage.