

An old woman was sipping on a glass of wine while sitting on the patio with her husband and says, "I love you so much. I do not know how I could ever live without you." Her husband asks, "Is that you or the wine talking?" She replies, "It is me. . . . Talking to the wine." This is not how Jesus saw the relationship and love of marriage. Jesus was very emphatic about the importance of marriage and its true meaning. "What God has joined together, no human being must separate." But why? "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." Divorce was accepted within the Jewish community. Jesus condemned divorce because of the vulnerability of women. At the time of Jesus, divorce meant that women, who were dependent on men for their livelihood, would generally starve. Or even worse, were forced into a life of prostitution. Divorce may have been accepted because of the hardness of their hearts, but it was accepted. This would have been a very good reason for Jesus to emphasize the importance of marriage. But, perhaps Jesus was so very emphatic because marriage was and is really an illustration of the relationship of Christ with the Church. It is symbolic of Jesus' relationship with you and I. Let me share with you three important aspects of marriage and how they may illustrate the relationship of Christ to his Church.

When a young man asked his grandfather for some relationship advice, he said, "Honestly, the moment I stopped trying to find the right woman, and started trying to become the right man, your grandmother walked up to me and said, 'Hello.'" Good advice. In entering marriage each person needs to become the right man or the right woman. It is such truth and honesty which will sustain a marriage. Jesus was the right man, the Son of man. As the right man, one with the Father, Jesus often referred to himself as the bridegroom. As the right man Jesus drew people to him and his word. As the right man Jesus built the Church through the leadership of Peter and the apostles. As the bridegroom, the right man, Jesus established a Church which has lasted for over 2000 years. By being who he was Jesus attracted and found the goodness of people.

A dad handed his daughter a bottle of Windex and a roll of paper towels as they got into the car. He turned to her and said, "I just talked to your mom while she was on her lunch break. She mentioned her windshield got covered in bugs on the drive to work. Since we are going to drive right by her work anyway, I figured we would clean the bugs off for her. It's the little things, kiddo, which keeps love going." By chance, while her dad was cleaning the windshield, her mom came out of the classroom with her kids for recess. Her smile showed her daughter how in love her parents were. Jesus during his life on earth took every opportunity to do the little things. Jesus so loved the people that he blessed the children, washed the feet of the apostles, talked with the woman at the well, ate with sinners, consoled the women while carrying the cross. Jesus took every opportunity to teach and to show the love of God through little things. Jesus did perform miracles and could have done even greater things for his followers but he saved the greatest, the really very big thing, until his crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. Jesus took every opportunity to teach the love of neighbor, even if it was by doing the little things.

At the assisted living facility the nurse worked at, she watched an elderly couple eat together as they did every day. They had been married 63 years. She had a stroke and could not stand, eat, talk or do anything for herself. He did not need to live in a nursing home, but he did so just to be with her. Every day he ate his food, fed her, and sat next to her looking at her like he must have done the day they were married. His unconditional, undying love and loyalty are the true meaning of marital love. Jesus came to redeem mankind through his death and resurrection, his unconditional and undying love for us. In a sense, the Church and we the members of the Church, have experienced spiritual strokes or spiritual illnesses at times. Jesus has assured us that he is there for us each and every day. He does not need to love and care for the worldly nursing home of this earth that we live in, but he does, and he does so like he must have done the day he was crucified.

Why was Jesus so emphatic about the importance of marriage? Because Jesus, the bridegroom, is one with the Father, and one with the bride, his Church. Whatever Jesus found in his bride, the Church, whatever he saw in you and I, that was not pleasing to the Father, he took it and nailed it to his cross. He bore our sins and destroyed them on the tree. Jesus destroyed what was diabolical, took to himself what was human, and conferred on his Church what was divine. So all that belonged to the bride, the Church, to you and I, was shared in by Jesus, the bridegroom, and he who had done no wrong and on whose lips was found no deceit could say: Have pity on them. I love them.