

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Feb 28th 2014

“From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” Mark 10: 6-9

The sacrament of marriage is not a one-off event. It signifies an abiding grace at work in all the high points, low points, and routines of life—until “death do us part.” For every couple united in sacramental marriage, the ceremony itself takes place at a particular time and in a particular place, publicly, signifying in a way visually evident to the two receiving the sacrament and to all present, what is intended to be a relationship of love that will never end. The love formalized in the sacrament is meant by God, the Church, and the couple to be characterized by mutual loyalty, fidelity, and uncompromising commitment. Sacramental marriage bestows on the couple the abiding grace to live their lives in a relationship which is constant, unconditional, and unbreakable.

The Church holds on to the principle that Marriage is indissoluble because its ultimate meaning reflects, represents, and realizes in the flesh and in the spirit the indissolubility of God’s love for us all—a love which by its nature is constant, and unconditional. Throughout our lives and into eternity, the loyalty, fidelity, and uncompromising commitment of God’s love for us is everlasting. The ceremony of marriage gives us the occasion to affirm this publicly and in celebration. By living out the sacrament through their married life, the couple gives witness to the same everlasting love, no matter what the vagaries of life may serve up to them.

Theologian Ronald Rolheiser adds a wonderful thought to all this:

Beneath the sometimes chaotic divergences between male and female bodies, spirits, emotions, ways of thinking and of regarding themselves, beneath and entwined with all these dwells a sometimes quiet but always strong desire: to share a union with God, and in that, with others in the most complete, profound way possible. It is the urge to “be-with.” It is the hope for an openness to another person, to God, in peace.

The union in sacramental marriage, initiated with the couple’s marriage vows and lasting for a lifetime, is the paradigm of what Rolheiser observes. That is why in the Gospel Jesus puts such high stakes on it.