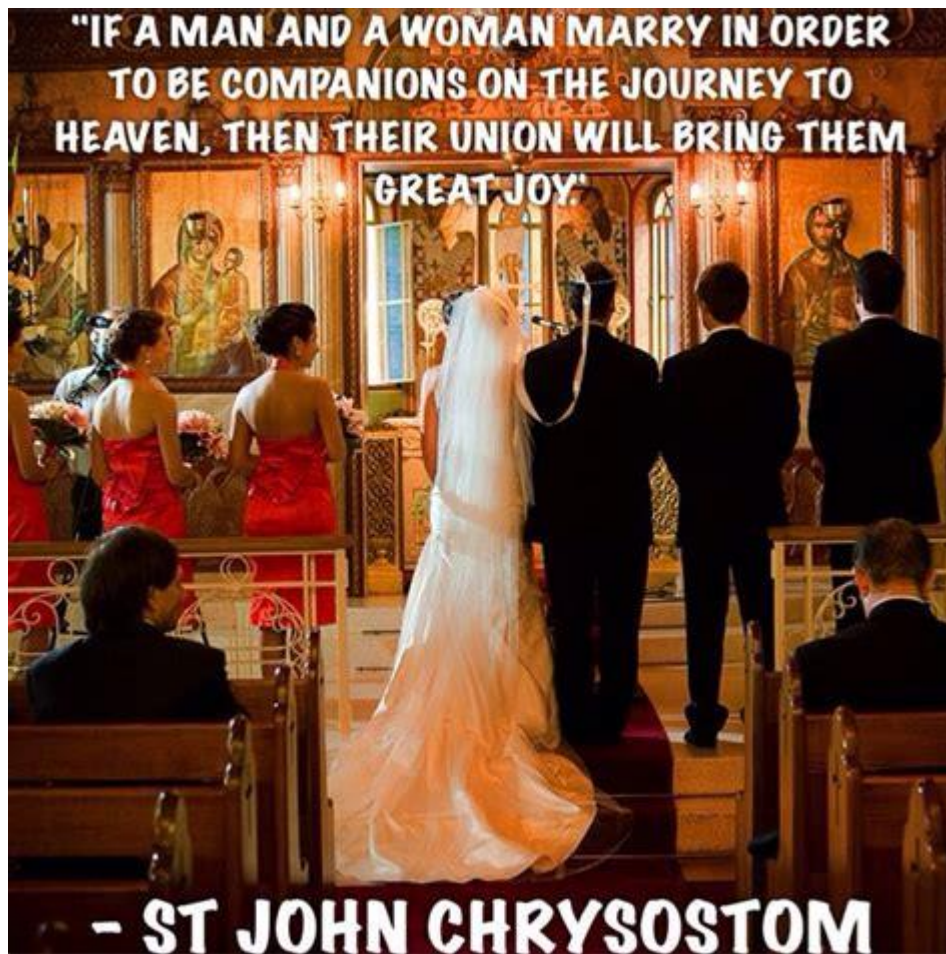


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, for to you I call all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you. Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading. All the nations you have made shall come and worship you, O Lord, and glorify your name. For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds; you alone are God."* ~ Psalm 86

Lord, you are merciful and gracious!!!



Marriage is an institution that existed long before our modern state existed and long before the existence even of the Church. It is a gift from God that was given to humankind in the creation. It was not lost in the fall of Adam and Eve nor was it lost in the Great Flood. Our Lord Jesus Christ sanctified it and made marriage a

sacrament of the Church in which the Holy Spirit is present in the relationship of husband and wife.

Marriage is the foundation of family life and it is the foundation of our society. It is a gift from God that comes with a particular structure and with specific purposes that are meant as a grace and benefit for the married couple and their children. It is the exclusive commitment of a lifetime of love between a man and a woman. It is the exclusive union of one man with one woman in an intimate relation of love and life that forms a small community we call “family.”

In the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, a man and a woman stand before God, before the Church, before their family and friends and pledge themselves to each other for the duration of their lifetime together. They accept the responsibility of fidelity. They accept the responsibility of, God willing, bringing children into the world, passing our faith to the children and loving, nurturing and caring for the children.

The scripture readings this past Sunday focused on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. I thought I would share a link to those readings and then share with you my homily from Sunday’s mass.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/100321.cfm>

Homily:

As we all know, Sacred Scripture reveals so much about God to us. But Sacred Scripture often times also reveals to us things about humanity, about the human condition, about our own lives. I think that happens today in our scripture readings; namely that we are being given an important revelation about our human condition.

Sometimes when we look at a scripture story in Genesis, like the creation story that we hear today, we sometimes think the story is simple. Sometimes, we even think the story is kind of childlike, but it’s not. It really gives us an occasion to meditate on the great revelation that this scripture gives us.

So, let’s take a look at it. Let’s take a look at this reading from Genesis. The first thing we see is that man comes before all other things. Before everything else,

God creates man. Only after man is created by God, does God plant the garden and place the man in the sacred garden. Think about it, God places the man in paradise. And, then God gives man all the creatures of the world. Gives him everything in the world and allows the man to name them all. God does not name them, He gives them to the man and he names them. Man owns them. They are his.

Something dawned on me this week as I was praying over the scripture. It might have been because I was on the convocation with a bunch of priests, it might have been because I celebrated a wedding, but for the first time something came to me from this scripture passage.

God gave everything to the man. Absolutely everything in the whole created world, God gives to the man. And then you know what?

God decided it was not enough. He gave everything to the man, but it was not enough. The man was alone. He had no one to talk to. He had no one to love. He had no one to love him. He was alone in solitude. Even though he had everything at his feet; even though he was in paradise, it was not enough.

So, what did God do? God gave him a soulmate. From his very own flesh, God gave him the one that would be his soulmate, to spend his life with, to build a family with. God gave him woman. God put the two of them together, a perfectly matched pair.

The Scriptures say that God created them male and female. Neither one is above or below the other. He created them as co-equals, different, but a matching pair. Soulmates! He gave them this great gift of having a soul mate to spend their life with.

And this is a gift that God gave, Jesus says to us in scripture, from the beginning of creation. God gave us all this great gift. This great gift of the opportunity of having a soulmate, of sharing our lives with, of having children with, God gave us this great gift. A man and a woman together in sacred, holy matrimony.

And you see the Pharisees didn't get it. The Pharisees didn't understand this, they didn't have a clue, because in ancient Israel the law from Moses, that had come

down because of their hardened hearts, allowed them to divorce. In the ancient Jewish law, a man could divorce his wife because she ruined a meal, or she said something bad about her in-laws. Some rabbis taught he could divorce his wife because he saw someone who was prettier than her. He could divorce his, write a bill of divorce, kick her out of his house and then take a new wife.

That's not the gift that God gave us.

In ancient Jewish law, the woman had absolutely no provision to divorce her husband, but the husband could divorce his wife on a whim. Just write out a bill of divorce, give it to her, and kick her out of the house.

That's not what God intended. God created them male and female, created them equal, co-partners, soul mates, companions for life, to come together and share God's love. God gave them this great bond of love that joined them together.

When Jesus speaks in the gospel, and says, "no one must separate what God has joined together", he's going back to the original gift that we see in Genesis. He's telling the Pharisees that they're wrong. That marriage is a man and a woman living out a lifetime commitment of love that lasts for the rest of their lives.

It's a beautiful, beautiful thing when marriage works out this way and a couple is able to accept this great gift. A wonderful, beautiful thing happens. God gives this newly married couple this bond of love that joins them together and makes them one flesh, that joins them in perfect unity, even though they have their ups and downs, even though they have their arguments and disagreements, they're joined together.

And in this great bond of love an amazing, amazing thing happens. Through the grace of God and the love that God has given them, that bond of love, that gift of a soulmate actually becomes another person, that love become a child. The married couples love becomes a living, breathing human child!

You have father, mother, child. That bond of love between a man and a woman, joined together in holy matrimony, becoming a child, is a reflection of the internal love of the Holy Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Father, Mother, Child.

That family now reflects the interior love that God the Father has for God the Son, and that they both have for God, the Holy Spirit. The amazing thing is that the family becomes a reflection in society and the world that proclaims something about the inner life of God and the love that exists between the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

And, it's reflected to all the world through Father, Mother and Child, and I can prove to you this happens. It doesn't always happen, not every marriage works out, but it happens.

You know of a family out there that you look at and say, that's a good family. Look at them. I like the way that family is. I might even want to be more like them. That's a great family. You look at them, you hold them up, and they're an image, a reflection of God's love. Then, you look at another family and think not so much. We don't want to be like that. Somewhere, along the line, that bond failed. Something happened. The gift that God gives us in Holy Matrimony wasn't accepted as it should be from the beginning of the marriage

The grace in all this is that we all receive the gift that God gives man and woman when he brings them together as soulmates. We all receive it. Every single one of us, even me, the unmarried, celibate priest. I received this same gift, the gift that every married couple receives.

I received it because God gave my Dad a soulmate and He gave my Mom a soulmate, each other. My brothers and I come from that bond. This is the gift that God gives us in marriage and family life. This great gift of soulmates coming together in lifelong love.

And then their love becomes human persons. That's what's happened for each and every single one of us when we were conceived. That's what happens with those of us that are fortunate enough to find that soulmate and join together with that soulmate in holy matrimony.

That's the gift that God gives us in the Sacrament of Marriage. He gives it to each and every single one of us. In creating us, God gave us everything, but it wasn't enough. The God decided to give us the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony from the

very beginning of Creation, because he wanted us to have everything, and even more, than everything.

May God Bless You and all those who love the Lord.

