
NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD



In my three previous messages on Christian marriage I emphasised the greatness of human love, the important mission given by the Church to Christian couples, and the celebration of this great sacrament. Today I would like to mention a few possible obstacles to married life.

COMMUNICATION

Communication in a couple's life is one of the vital elements to their growth in love. It is like the ABC of all relationships. If in our milieus we have succeeded in setting up wonderful and enviable communication networks - the press, the telephone and television, the internet, videoconferencing, etc. - it is all the more indispensable that couples have simple, open, and meaningful communications. Even silence can become a rich and intense form of communication. But there are also silences that hurt, like sulking and pouting which go on for a day, a week or even a month; these can have disastrous consequences. Non-verbal communication can often speak louder than a torrent of words: a flower, a kiss, loving attention to the other can express beautiful feelings of true love. It is not all that easy to develop good communication skills. I know some people who have never learned to say as much as "Good morning" to those around them. Here we are talking about more than just social graces: we are talking about attention to others. Then there are all those marks of respect that we must learn and develop. These, too, are part of the ABC of a loving relationship.

WORK

If work is a basic element of life, it is all the more so in a couple's life. It is through work that the human being can develop and grow. A permanent job contributes to couple growth, but when short-term or long-term unemployment affects one member of the couple, this can quickly develop into a nearly-insurmountable ordeal, as the unemployed person shows the other his or her inability to find or keep a lasting, paying job. Poverty can gradually set in, and when unemployment breeds a multitude of unpaid bills, it can lead to a breakdown in the couple's dream of peace and harmony. The same can happen when work makes it nearly impossible for a couple to have a life together, when work schedules are different, when jobs are too overwhelming; these situations have repercussions in a couple's life. Hence the need to remain alert to the often determining factor that is work.

FIDELITY

If at first sight society seems to be more tolerant in matters sexual, this should not be the daily attitude of a loving couple who have vowed fidelity to one another. If some television programmes seem to advocate threesomes and more, this must not be espoused by a couple who wish to grow in love. Daily vigilance is called for, to protect and nourish life as a couple. Infidelity is not something that usually occurs overnight; there are practices and behaviours which lead very subtly in that direction. If vigilance is necessary, it is not to over-protect the couple's life but to give the man and woman the opportunity to develop in the lifestyle they have chosen. It is not for nothing that Christ mentioned that lusting for another is to commit adultery in the heart. Magazines, films and shows can be enemies to those couples who are striving to live a life-long love project.

PRAYER

I do not want to bring this series of articles to a close without speaking of the need for prayer in a couple's life. Jesus' presence at Cana was a figure of his presence at the heart of every Christian marriage. Most Christian couples invite "Jesus and his mother" to their festivities, as they were, once, invited as guests. And we all know about the beautiful things that happened because of their presence, with miraculous transformations following. It would be a sad situation if newly-married and long-married couples no longer felt a need to pray to the Lord, to invite him once again; if the need was no longer felt to pray to him either as individuals or as a couple. Without this intimate, deep, and frequent relationship with the Lord, a Christian couple all but withers away. A prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer of admiration, a prayer of petition can make all the difference. Knowing that Jesus is with us all the days of our lives, there are countless prayers we can address him. When I tell the Father, "Father, I am your child," there are so many things I can say, so many things that a couple can tell Him. Just as it is important to schedule work, rest, and intimacy, in one's day, it could also be a prime necessity to set aside quality time for prayer, contemplation, wonder, petition, and thanksgiving.

"WHO WILL SEPARATE US..."

Saint Paul made an extraordinary profession of love in his hymn to the love of God; the words are found in his letter to the Romans: *"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (8:35,38-39). If such a love is destined not only for life but also for all eternity, may nothing in the world tarnish or diminish a couple's love for one another. At marriage preparation sessions, there should be a careful study of anything that could be an obstacle to human love: Why not give your love a chance to grow and develop? My wish for you is for beautiful days filled with loved!

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