
CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (3)



One of the wedding prayers [In the French Ritual] says: «Our friends come before you with hearts already filled with love for each other, O Lord, but they seek your protection and ask you to consecrate this love. Be the source of the words they are about to speak in your presence and which they are to keep throughout their lives. Give them some of your fidelity: may it always strengthen their union. Give them of your own love: may it always renew their love for one another.»

HEART SURGERY

«Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is strong as Death, jealousy as dangerous as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of the Lord himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrent drown.» [Song of Songs 8:6b-7a] Marvellous words! I am certain that the beloved's name is carved forever in the heart of her lover and that the lover's name is forever in his beloved's heart. I am also sure that no flood will ever quench their love for each other. This is my deepest wish to for all lovers and couples getting married, that their mutual love grow ever stronger, and that each day they grow in their love for one another.

OPEN HEART

Last year at the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress we had a [French] "Session for Lovers" during which the session facilitators had us attend an "open heart surgery". I believe that every wedding celebration could be an opportunity to undergo such a "surgery". What do we find in a loving heart?

COMMUNICATION

We could find their a telephone or a modem as symbols of communication which is necessary to invent a love story and harmony in life as a couple. Without communication there can be no love. Marital communication is different from that communication which exists between neighbours, in the work force, even between friends. In marital communication, there is sharing of feelings regarding events lived together; bonds of intimacy are created, closeness fosters the growth of love, and each one feels listened to and understood by the other. Despite the fact that we often hear that problems between a couple are often of a sexual or financial nature, it is mostly because of a lack of honest communication that most problems arise. Verbal communication is important, it resists useless rancour and is conducive to simple and honest dialogue. Nevertheless, there is also written communication which helps one completely develop one's thought. It allows one to express feelings that are at times difficult to name.

OPENNESS

What do we find in a loving heart? There is mutual communication, but there is also the possibility of opening and closing oneself to the other. The key symbolizes the possibility of opening and closing oneself: the symbol of choosing. The couple is called not to folding in on itself, from shutting out others, but to openness to them. Openness of heart and mind, openness to one's spouse, to what the spouse feels and experiences. Such

openness requires sharing and negotiating; it is important for the couple to share ideas and opinions. It is also important to share tasks so as to alleviate the work load. The key is important in misunderstandings, dead-ends, and conflicts when they arise. Negotiating is necessary to a couple's survival: with it, each one feels listened to and understood as to how he or she feels. Each one has the opportunity to offer some element of solution and thus reach a compromise. It is not helpful to live as a couple where one always feels like the loser. One must feel part of the same team as the other, and in playing on the same team, the couple win together. One must never pit oneself against the other.

TENDERNESS

What do we find in a loving heart? Communication, openness, sharing, negotiation... and tenderness, and lots of it! A flower can symbolize this major element in a couple's life. Tenderness is a form of communication, a word or gesture which shows the other the depth of one's feelings. Besides, tenderness – friendship, respect, intimacy – is always in season, especially in difficult moments.

FORGIVENESS

What do we find in a loving heart? We also find forgiveness. The symbol of an eraser expresses this critical element of all love. There can be no love without forgiveness, although forgiving is difficult. The grace of forgiving comes with the sacrament of marriage, and it is through prayer and faith that one can succeed in forgiving, even when it is difficult. To forgive is to erase the mistake and give back love and trust in the other. There are two aspects to consider, in forgiveness, the one who forgives and the one who commits to loving even more because of the forgiveness granted and received.

FAITH

What do we find in a loving heart? We also find faith. The symbol of the cross reminds us of this faith which is necessary for the couple to truly live the sacrament of matrimony. When a couple realises that God is present in their lives, when they realise that God is love, it is then that they start loving as Christ loved. In this way the couple welcome the gift of God in their life. God is master of the impossible, that is to say that with faith in God and trust in him, everything is possible if the two want to work at making their marriage succeed. This certainty of faith, though, must be nourished by prayer and reception of the sacraments of the Church. To every couple the Lord says, « If you live in me, and my words live in you, you may ask what you will - it will be done for you ». [John 15;7]

MISSION

Dear engaged couples, you are given an important mission on your wedding day, a mission very much like the bishop's: to show through your love the love of God for all His children. The more you love each other the more you will witness to the world that God is love, that He infinitely loves each one individually. Don't be afraid to love one another too much! Don't forget the telephone, the modem: communicate often. Don't forget the key: open up to one another. Don't forget the flower: follow the path of tenderness. Don't forget the eraser: learn to forgive 77 times seven times! Don't forget the cross: follow the path of faith and solidarity with Jesus. May your love for each other bring you much joy. This is my dearest wish, and the wish of Jesus himself who said, « I have come that they may have life, and life to the full ». [John 10;10]

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