

## Marriage Weekend Homily-Reflection

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Year B  
June 9-10, 2018

Genesis 3:9-15  
2 Corinthians 4:13-5-1  
Mark 3:20-35

Sometimes, it is challenging to prepare a homily that incorporates the readings from the weekend along with a special occasion, such as Celebrate Marriage Weekend. Sometimes, however, God throws you a softball. What are the odds that Celebration of Marriage Weekend would coincide with the reading we just heard from Genesis about the fall of Adam and Eve, the first married couple? It just doesn't get any better than this.

I had a boss early in my career, who did not like to take responsibility when things went wrong. In fact, he was known for saying "Fix the Blame Fast". Well, that is exactly what happens in this story. Adam and Eve disobey God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The minute they tasted the fruit, they knew that they had sinned against God's command. So what do they do next, Adam and Eve hide themselves in the garden, like God really won't be able to find them. When God seeks them out, what do they do, instead of confessing their sin, they lie and refuse accountability. Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. They "fixed the blame fast". Instead of admitting their mistake, they cover it up and hope that God doesn't notice. For their failure to confess their sin, God punishes them, along with the serpent. That original sin and its effect still carries down to us and every successive generation.

The longer you have been married, the more wisdom you have to share. Of course, we always learn more from the times we have gotten it wrong, than when things are going well.

First, blessed is the couple who understands that marriage is a pathway to heaven. People live up to what is expected of them; which sadly can be much less than being the best-version-of-themselves. When two people marry, if they embrace the expectation of making their partner better and helping them get to heaven, the marriage will thrive. Even better, if they understand that God is at work making their souls great, they have a common goal, something to aim at. The couple knows where they are going: to heaven, and ultimately, to God. And that is the highest expectation of all. Know where you are going. *This is the Habit of Purpose.*

Marriage is a garden, it's not a fruit stand. You have to tend it. Marriage involves positive interactions that include simple things such as a smile, a touch on the arm, looking directly into your partner's eyes, paying attention to what they say, saying 'thank you', sharing a quick hug or a giggle. On the other hand, negative actions such as eye-rolling, turning a cold shoulder, a mocking chuckle, or failing to listen to or acknowledge what your spouse is saying; can do damage to your marriage. Remember, you build your marriage on positive interactions. Those positive interactions need to outnumber the negative ones by five to one. In your marriage, when you choose to make little sacrifices for the benefit of your spouse, your love will deepen, and your relationship will grow stronger. These little things can accomplish

miraculous results in your relationship. Your daily interactions will indicate how much you admire your spouse; how supportive you are and that can make a major difference in your relationship. As you smile, listen, touch, and appreciate your spouse in the small things, your love will deepen and last over time. Thriving marriages share a better style of conflict resolution. Conflicts also affect all marriages; a respectful method of resolving disagreements is important to maintaining a healthy relationship. Love is a choice, it is demonstrating behaviors that nourish your relationship and doing the right things, more than about how you feel. Your meaningful actions will strengthen your marriage. *This is the Habit of the Little Things.*

The fact is, you change; your spouse changes; each of you grow and change at different times, and at different rates. Life happens. Parenting changes you, the challenges such as providing for your family, illness, family drama and many more areas of life change you. Society and culture creates pressure on us. How we react to these stresses impacts the way we treat each other, and whether we adjust to these changes as individuals or as a couple. It takes work to grow together, to share perspectives and to reflect together on life's options; your meaning and purpose. By praying together, you better understand God's call. Using the Prayer Process asking the help of the Holy Spirit to reduce stress and tension and to increase self-control; to give you the ability to better regulate your emotions and how you respond to each other.

The key to a long-term marriage is patience. Marriages are like wine, they grow, change, and mature over time. How do you help your marriage not only survive, but thrive through all these inevitable changes? *This is Habit of Ages and Stages: Patience.*

What is the most important word in a marriage? Think about it: the single most crucial word for your marriage. What would that be? Perhaps love. Or you might think the critical word is faithfulness. What about trust, or honesty, or commitment. But the most important word in a marriage is forgiveness. And along with forgiveness, comes its spouse, grace.

Why is forgiveness so important? Because your purpose is to help each other get to heaven. You are helping your spouse to grow in virtue, love, joy, and peace. You want your spouse to flourish in patience, kindness, and generosity. You hope that your beloved will delight in faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But along the way, you know that he or she will stumble. Your spouse will make mistakes. And you know, that most of all, you will make bad choices, too.

Asking for forgiveness will wipe the slate clean. Grace will confront the failures, meet them head on, and push the reset button. Forgiveness and grace will offer a second chance to grow from mistakes, rather than causing the marriage to be crushed by them. The key of forgiveness opens the door to redemption.

When our spouse fails to be the best-version-of-themselves, we can seek justice or revenge. We can strike back out of anger or disappointment. Or, we can seek the way God has embodied for us in Jesus, a

way of absorbing the hurt and the releasing its energy in a more positive way. This way offers a second chance, a fresh start, redemption.

Like God, a spouse offers forgiveness, redemption, and the chance to move forward to a better future. Forgiveness produces grace, and more love and peace in your relationship. No marriage will survive long without it. With it, a marriage will prosper and be a source of grace for all who encounter it. *That's the Habit of Forgiveness.*

Each year we celebrate marriage weekend to honor our families and the couples who live this vocation daily. Jesus offers his blessing and a wonderful example of how important it is to keep our eye on the little things, patience, and forgiveness as the path to eternal happiness. Our commitment to each other provides a sign of faith, love and hope in a world that so desperately needs it. As Bishop Curry mentioned at a recent wedding "love is the only thing that changes the world." May you live in peace and harmony practicing these habits to strengthen your marriage and family.