

Dear Parishioners,

Much confusion that has arisen lately in both our society and the Church re: the true nature of marriage. With the recent Supreme Court decision to give marital recognition to same-sex unions, and with the speculation that the Church may soon allow certain Catholic couples who are divorced and remarried outside of the Church to receive the Sacraments, many people are developing erroneous ideas about what marriage is and what it is not. As marriage forms the basis of family life, and thus the very basis of human society, it is vitally important that we have a proper understanding of it.

To begin, marriage is the intimate, exclusive, indissoluble communion of life and love entered into by a man and a woman. Marriage is a covenant by which one man and one woman establish a lifelong partnership that, by its very nature, is ordered toward the procreation and education of children and the spouses' mutual growth in love and holiness. When both spouses are baptized, their covenantal relationship is sacramental. Because Holy Matrimony is a sacrament, it is both a supernatural union as well as a natural union. So the marital covenant involves not only the man and the woman, but also Christ!

Marriage has several characteristics that define it. The first characteristic of marriage is that it is *indissoluble*. This means that the bond of sacramental marriage lasts as long as both husband and wife are alive. The only thing that breaks the bond of sacramental marriage is the death of one of the spouses. Thus, for a validly married person to get a divorce and remarry another person (without an annulment and while the first spouse is still living) is an act of adultery.

As stated above, marriage is also *intimate* and *exclusive*. The *intimate* characteristic of marriage means that it necessarily involves the physical giving of oneself to one's spouse through the conjugal act. As marriage is *exclusive*, a spouse can only enter into marital intimacy with one other person. Having more than one spouse at the same time is contrary to the personal dignity of both the husband and wife, who give themselves to one another in marriage with a love that is complete, and thereby unique and *exclusive*.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. . . Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society." (cf. CCC 2384, 2385). Let us pray for all divorced persons that they may find personal healing, and for those considering divorce, that their marital bond might be healed.

In Jesus and Mary,

Fr. Reid