

From the desk of Fr. Stimpson:

October 3, 2021

Dear Friends,

Every one of us is personally touched by the tragedy of divorce, whether it's our own history, our parents or relatives or friends. Indeed, every time there is divorce it is a sadness...and I think deep within us we are aware that we are sad because we are made for a love that lasts. (There are so many rabbit holes we can go down, of course, with all the uniqueness's of personal situations. What of spouses that separate rightly for the safety of one or both, or whether one of the spouses was unjustly abandoned by the other, etc. Then there's foxholes we could go down like what's an annulment and all those great topics.) Yet, the focus of today's letter is simply to understand what the teaching of Jesus Christ is on the indissolubility of marriage.

So the Pharisees, the most religiously rigorous sect of the ancient Jews, come to Jesus with the question about what are the circumstances that one can divorce. There were two main schools of thought among the Pharisees at the time: the school of Rabbi Shammi which said that divorce was only possible if the wife committed adultery, the school of Rabbi Hillel allowed for any source of shame to be cause for divorce including being a bad cook. Jesus asks them what did Moses say? The Pharisees quote Deuteronomy 24 that for indecency the husband could write a bill of divorce. Jesus says that Moses' provision in Deut 24 was because of their own hardheartedness and failings at fidelity. Jesus then quotes Moses from Genesis in Genesis 1 and 2...God made them male and female and the two shall become one flesh, no longer two but one, and what God has joined, Man must not separate. The disciples even question Jesus about this in private because they too are amazed at the most radical teaching on marital indissolubility in the history of all religions. Jesus reaffirms his teaching that if one divorces (whether the husband or the wife) and remarries violates the sixth commandment and commits adultery.

This Gospel is the biblical foundation (also in Matthew) of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Jesus teaches us that marriage is of divine origin, and through the free consent and consummation of their covenant, the husband and wife are indissolubly one.

The words of St. Peter on this topic in the Gospel of Matthew come to mind, "Lord, this is a hard saying, who can do it?" and Jesus responded, "For Man it is impossible, but for God, all things are possible."

So a few takeaways from the Gospel this week: 1) to understand clearly that Jesus teaches that Holy Matrimony is an indissoluble institution of divine origin, and that one who divorces and remarries commits adultery 2) in light of how broken we all are, to renew ourselves in praying for healing and mercy for ourselves and anyone that we know is impacted by divorce and remarriage...to never give up hope but to always storm the heaven's in the confidence that even if we fail that it's God's everlasting love that will get us to Heaven and 3) let us do our best to help young people to grow in their pursuit of Christ so that they may be well prepared for the sacrament of matrimony

Peace,
Father