

## “AND GOD BLESSED THEM”

*“And God blessed them, and God said to them,  
‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’”* Genesis 1:28

As was stated in the previous newsletter, we will devote some forthcoming issues to the topic of the family as we approach the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the family. With the unprecedented assault on the family in the post-Christian West, the Synod’s importance cannot be understated. Remember also that this isn’t a question of “liberal” versus “conservative” politics but that a great spiritual battle is taking place. Recall that Pope Leo XIII composed the prayer to St. Michael the archangel precisely because our Lord revealed to him that Satan would attack the Church as never before. We must also mention what Sr. Lucia of Fatima related The Blessed Mother said regarding this: *“The final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family. Don’t be afraid, because anyone who operates for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be contended and opposed in every way...however, Our Lady has already crushed its head.”* So during this synod let us ask the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, head of the Holy Family and St. Michael.

During Our Lord’s earthly public ministry He was approached by Pharisees who questioned him about marriage: *“And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, ‘Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?’ He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one?’ So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”* The Pharisees did not accept this so they countered with, *“Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away? He said to them, ‘For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And*

*I say to you: Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery.”*

Notice that Our Lord goes back to the creation of our first parents, Adam and Eve, to stress that marriage is a divine institution and not a human one. The State did not create marriage, marriage existed before the State, therefore the State has no authority or right to change it. In His teaching Our Lord restored marriage to its position **before** the Fall as God intended it to be. After the Fall with sin introduced into the human race marriage will be thenceforth adversely effected and one result is this has become THE major bone of contention between the Catholic Church, other Christian denominations and the World. As the Servant of God Fr. John Hardon SJ has stated, *“Every Catholic who leaves the Catholic Church, with few exceptions, is protesting against the Catholic Church’s teaching on marriage.”*

Here we also see why the Catholic Church considers marriage to be a sacrament. The sacrament confers on the couple the supernatural life (which is what grace is) and strength necessary to live faithfully in marriage. Because of the effects of the Fall, without the life-time graces conferred on those who receive the sacrament of Matrimony, Christ’s demands on a husband and wife are humanly impossible. Hence we have the saying “the family that prays together **stays** together.” The Sacrament of Matrimony grants the couple grace that strengthens and purifies their union and deepens their commitment and love for each other. An interesting statistic is that those Catholics who practice their faith and don’t practice contraception have an almost zero percent divorce rate. Coincidence? Not likely.

In instituting marriage Almighty God said to

Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." Therefore by its nature, marriage and marital love exist for the good of the spouses and for the bearing and raising of children. True love in marriage is always outgoing and not based on "what's in it for me" which is very selfish and self-centered. A contraceptive anti-culture inveighs against marriage and has the effect of reducing love to lust. The child is the fruit of marriage and the couple participates with God in His plan of creation. Interestingly, where religious faith is strong you have a high birthrate. Where religious faith is weak or non-existent the birthrate plummets. This will be the subject of a future newsletter but suffice to say it's revealing that our current anti-culture regards natural God-given human fertility to be a pathology or disease that must be chemically suppressed through contraception and should that fail, we kill the child through abortion. You could say that contraception is the ultimate sin against environmentalism.

The Pharisees challenged our Lord on his prohibition of divorce by stating that Moses allowed it. This challenge continues today as the Catholic Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage separates it from virtually everybody else, both religious and secular. But as Catholic apologist Dr. Peter Kreeft states, the Church has divine reasons for this. *"The Church cannot allow divorce [as everyone else does] because she does not have the authority to contradict Christ her Master. The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble. He abrogated the accommodations for divorce that had slipped into the Jewish Law. In fidelity to her Master, the Church teaches that between the baptized, a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or any reason other than death. The Church's prohibition of divorce can be understood only in the light of her teaching on marriage. The most important aspect of this teaching, and the one hardest for many today to understand and accept, is that marriage is not a human invention. It*

*has its own unchangeable inner essence, like anything else in nature, as designed by God. Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract to which spouses freely consented to live with each other till death. It is the prime example of promise-breaking, as marriage is the prime example of promise-keeping and the primary image of God's covenant with us. We are the people of a faithful God, not one who breaks faith."*

It should be noted that **NO** Church Council, Church Father, Saint or Pope ever sanctioned divorce and remarriage. Some Church Fathers have interpreted Christ's "except for unchastity" allowing for separation but not for remarriage. Thus an adulterous situation may give cause for separation so long as the spouses do not embark upon a second marriage. This squares with St. Paul's teaching that a separated couple has only two options: be reconciled to one another, or remain single (1 Cor 7:10-11). We can also take to heart this comment from G.K. Chesterton: *"I don't need a church to tell I'm wrong where I already know I'm wrong; I need a Church to tell me I'm wrong where I think I'm right."*

During his plane ride back from Philadelphia to Rome in meeting with reporters on the plane, Pope Francis strongly reasserted the importance of the family. He has constantly stressed the importance of "holiness" in the family so that it can be a sign of Christ in this hedonistic anti-culture. Nothing converts like example. The Servant of God Archbishop Fulton Sheen said: *"The world has heard every argument and is ready to reject them all, except one: holiness. The holy priest, the holy sister, the holy lay person; and we have too few of them."*

In closing it needs to be stressed that marriage is a vocation which needs to be lived. Every state of life has its own inherent problems because we all suffer the ongoing effects of Original Sin. However, God's grace will always enable us to surmount those difficulties if we are humble enough to recognize this and ask Him for grace. ✠