

- Marriage and children...two of the greatest blessings that God gives mankind while we are here on earth.
 - As God says in scripture: “*My soul takes pleasure in three things, and they are beautiful in the sight of the Lord and of men; agreement between brothers, friendship between neighbors, and a wife and a husband who live in harmony.*” (Sirach 25:1)
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 - God puts the coming together of Adam and Eve at the very beginning of the Bible quite purposefully.
 - Man and woman come together in love as helpmates for life...that love often reflected in their bringing forth children—becoming co-creators with God in bringing human life into existence.
 - What a privilege...especially for you ladies who bear within yourselves new life...new little images both of you and your husband, but even more so of God.
 - Whatever our earthly achievements, they pale into insignificance compared to a new life created in the image of God.
 - ...because our bodies cease to function...but with an immortal soul no human ever goes into non-existence...and with the general resurrection promised by God at Jesus’ second coming, we know that each of those little ones...each of those new lives...each of US...is eternal.
 - Christ’s whole purpose on the cross is to offer us a higher and everlasting existence...for those faithful to Him.
 - But we must be faithful, for our eternal existence is guaranteed by God Himself...but where we exist is a matter of our own choosing.
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- Now the Church defines marriage as: “...*the covenant between a man and a woman which establishes between them...life and love naturally ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children*”...children really being marriage’s greatest achievement.
 - For those who have the sorrow of not being able to have children, I believe God will compensate as they continue in their faith—with love in this life and/or in the next.

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- Marriage itself is a reflection of the union within the Trinity...and as the Holy Spirit is love proceeding from the Father and the Son, so a child is a reflection of that Spirit of love proceeding from his parents.
- Jesus raises true marriage to being a sacrament among the baptized...the Holy Spirit forming a unity of body and soul, indissoluble in the eyes of God: “...*what God has joined together, no human being must separate.*”
- Therefore, by God’s own Word a true and valid marriage is unbreakable by ANY power on earth—Church or not—and that’s why it must be entered into only with the most careful consideration.

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- Even with all the broken marriages and the infidelities littering our society’s landscape, we still yearn deeply for, and hope to find that one person, with whom we can bond in the lifelong partnership of matrimony.
 - That is what we desire: to love and to be loved...in security and to the exclusion of all others.
 - *Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one.*

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- The creation story has God creating woman from one of the man’s ribs...from the center of his body, indicating that they are equals before God...each to be loved and cherished in mutual lifelong partnership.
 - We see that as Adam says in relief and rejoicing: “*This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*”...finally here is my match...to share my life...to share my burdens...to be the object of my undying love.
 - For they both, alone of all creatures, are made in the image of God. As the book of Genesis tells us: “*God created man in his own image... male and female he created them.*”

- And therefore the man clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body, one flesh...and what God has joined, let NO man break asunder.
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- But they must have patience with each other and work through hard times and frustrations. When frustrated with your spouse, know that you, too, have imperfections and quirks which THEY have to put up with.
 - Certainly there are times when there are unreasonable and abusive relationships; even canon law recognizes that sometimes separation is warranted...
 - ...but studies show that normal couples who have problems and work through them—sometimes even for years—end up having some of the strongest marriages.
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- Before marrying, then, remember that even the Church has no authority to dissolve a true marriage.
- Man cannot unseal what God has sealed. A courthouse does not dissolve what God has joined.
- Annulments are not divorce, even though effects are similar.
- Annulments are simply the Church's judgment that something essential for that sacrament was missing from the beginning of the marriage, and thus no true sacramental marriage had existed.

- Finally remember that bodily relations are holy, and for marriage only...to increase the love and strength of union between husband and wife and for children.
- What unique gift can you give to your spouse on the wedding night if you have already relinquished the total gift of yourself to others?
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- So keep marriage—its idea and its reality--holy always...that beautiful covenant between man and woman...and yet also one with God.

- And so, husbands...to you I quote Proverbs: “...rejoice in the wife of your youth...a lovely hind, a graceful doe. Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love.” (Proverbs 5:18f)
- And to you wives: Hear from your husband’s heart as he takes your hand in his...these words of the Song of Songs: “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; ...the winter is past, the rain is over and gone...let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is beautiful...” (Song of Songs 2:10ff)

Reading 1
[Gn 2:18-24](#)

The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone.
I will make a suitable partner for him."
So the LORD God formed out of the ground
various wild animals and various birds of the air,
and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them;
whatever the man called each of them would be its name.
The man gave names to all the cattle,
all the birds of the air, and all wild animals;
but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man,
and while he was asleep,
he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.
The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib
that he had taken from the man.
When he brought her to the man, the man said:
"This one, at last, is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called 'woman,'
for out of 'her man' this one has been taken."
That is why a man leaves his father and mother
and clings to his wife,
and the two of them become one flesh.

Responsorial Psalm
[Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6](#)

R. (cf. 5) **May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**
Blessed are you who fear the LORD,
who walk in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.
R. **May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants
around your table.
R. **May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**
Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.
May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!
R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

Reading II
[Heb 2:9-11](#)

Brothers and sisters:
He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels, "
that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he,
for whom and through whom all things exist,
in bringing many children to glory,
should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering.
He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated
all have one origin.
Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers."

Gospel
[Mk 10:2-16 or 10:2-12](#)

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked,
"Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?"
They were testing him.
He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?"
They replied,
"Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce
and dismiss her."
But Jesus told them,
"Because of the hardness of your hearts
he wrote you this commandment.
But from the beginning of creation, *God made them male and female.*
For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.
So they are no longer two but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
no human being must separate."
In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this.
He said to them,
"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another
commits adultery against her;
and if she divorces her husband and marries another,
she commits adultery."

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them,
but the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them,

"Let the children come to me;

do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to
such as these.

Amen, I say to you,

whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child
will not enter it."

Then he embraced them and blessed them,
placing his hands on them.

or

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