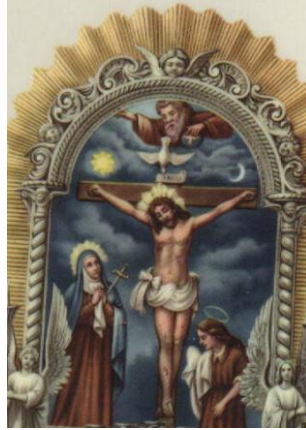


V4_3rd_of_Lent= The Love of Married People for, and their Unity with, Each Other
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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls
O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

Volume 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

The Love of Married People for, and their Unity with, Each Other

“Every kingdom, divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation.” — Luke 11:7.

With this one objection Christ refuted the envious Pharisees, and showed that he did not drive out devils in the name of the devil. If one devil drove another out of a possessed person, then they would divide their own kingdom against itself; a thing which they certainly would not think of doing. Hitherto I have shown how young people are to take counsel, and how they are to follow the divine vocation when embracing the Religious or the unmarried state. I have also treated of the sanctity and dignity of marriage, as a Sacrament instituted by Christ; when I spoke of how one should prepare himself for it, if the marriage is to be a happy one, by inviting Jesus to, and securing his presence at the wedding, and keeping always in his friendship, thus making certain of eternal as well as temporal happiness. There are still some obligations of married people to be explained, to which I barely alluded in previous sermons; this I shall now undertake to do for your instruction and consolation, and that young people who think of marrying may know what sort of a state they are about to embrace. The first and most necessary obligation of married people is suggested by the text: “Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation;” namely, that there must be constant love and unity between them; and I shall show in different sermons how that unity may be preserved. I begin, therefore, to-day, and say

I. *The married state, where there is constant love and unity, is a state that is happy and pleasing to God.*

II. *Where love and unity are wanting, it is a miserable and an unhappy state.*

I. The quiet, peace, and union of a state or community consist in the perfect harmony and uniformity of its various members, so that inferiors are subject to superiors, and each one does what his duty or office requires of him, and all live on good terms with each other. This union and harmony makes a state happy and prosperous, while without it there can be no regular government, and there will be nothing but confusion, disunion, uneasiness, and anarchy. Experience teaches us also, with regard to created things, that they find their greatest strength in union. The light of the stars is very beautiful, as long as they keep in their proper spheres, but if a star gets out of its place, or the moon comes too near the sun, darkness and confusion are the result. There are many magnificent buildings to be seen, but their magnificence depends on the union and harmony of their parts: if one of these parts is wanting, the whole edifice falls in ruins. It is very agreeable to hear good music played on fine instruments, as long as the latter are well tuned, but if there is the slightest discord the music is completely spoiled.

St. Paul points to the human body as a wonderful instance of the divine power, but in what does its stature, beauty, and health consist? In the union and just proportion of its members. If these latter commenced to quarrel with each other, or to be dissatisfied with their respective positions; if the hands wished to take the place of the eyes, and the feet that of the hands, or if the mouth desired to be raised as high as the forehead, what a monster would not man become? The same may be said of a country, town, or community, in which many individuals must live together. It will be a happy and joyful society if every one is contented with the duty and position assigned to him, and lives in peace and love with those around him. But if this unity is wanting there is nothing but quarrels, divisions and dissensions between inferiors and superiors, as well as between equals among themselves. “Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation.”

Married Christians, if a country or town is a large family and community, your state is also a community on a small scale. The former consists of many individuals, yours only of two, the husband and wife; but for that very reason, if your state is to be happy, peace and unity are all the more necessary for you; for, if quarrels and dissensions arise in a large community, where there are many individuals, at least every one is not my enemy, and I can have my own friends to support and console me, so that I may avoid those who dislike me and keep out of their way, and thus enjoy a certain amount of peace and quiet. But when two persons make up the whole community, and these two are united by a bond that death alone can dissolve, and are bound to spend their lives together, to be always in each other’s company, and to keep all their affection and love for each other, how could they find peace, consolation or joy if they were given to quarrelling and dissensions? So that almost all their peace and happiness consists in mutual love and unity, inasmuch as one is duly submissive to the other, and readily and willingly performs the duties imposed on him or her by God, while both agree by word and work in their opinions and inclinations, and have one mind, one soul, one heart, as our Lord says, speaking of married people: “Therefore, now *they are not two, but one flesh*” (Matt. 19 : 6), and one individual, as far as mind, spirit, and heart are concerned.

Certainly, that state is pleasing to God and man, and happy and desirable to the married couple, when man and wife thus live in constant peace and harmony. The Lord says: “With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and *men—the concord of brethren,*

and *the love of neighbors, and man and wife that agree well together*” (Ecclus. 25: 1, 2). Nor is it any wonder that God has such pleasure therein, since he says of himself that he is a God of peace and recognizes as his children those who live peacefully together: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5 : 9). What an edifying example may they not give their children and servants by never uttering the least word of contradiction, abuse, or contempt! How powerfully they may incite their neighbors and acquaintances to follow their example, when people say of them that are indeed a happy couple, and as united as if they were Angels.

But the married couples themselves derive the greatest happiness and profit therefrom, even as far as this life is concerned, for there must be prosperity and grace in their house. Just as peace causes the prosperity of a whole country, so love and unity between man and wife are the source of all blessings. Union makes small things great, says the proverb, while disunion makes great things small. “*A threefold cord is not easily broken*” (Eccles. 4: 12). By the threefold cord the Hebrews understood the bond of marriage, which unites three kinds of persons together—the *husband, the wife, and the children*; the closer the union of hearts and minds among these three, the greater will be their happiness and prosperity.

And what could disturb the happiness and peace of married people who love each other and live well together? I know that they have many difficulties, annoyances, and trials to contend with daily. Sometimes the children are ill-behaved, or grow sick, or the favorite child dies an untimely death; sometimes the servants are unfaithful, unruly, or lazy; the neighbors may be envious and deceitful, so that there is no peace with them; or God may allow misfortune, losses, and want to come upon the family. But if the married couple live in peace and love with each other, all these trials lose their bitterness, and half the burden is taken away from them; one consoles the other, and they share each other’s joys and sorrows. Elcana said to his wife, to console her when she was afflicted on account of her barrenness: “Anna, why weepest thou? And why dost thou not eat? And why dost thou afflict thy heart? Am I not better to thee than ten children?” (Kings 1: 8.) Oh, fortunate state, I repeat, which, instituted by God, is maintained in constant love and unity! It is the household of which the Lord prophesies: “My people shall sit in the beauty of peace!” (Is. 3: 18.) A household which resembles the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the house of peace, whose inhabitants are “the Angels of peace;” it is that dwelling which we wish to the departed in the prayer: “May they rest in peace.”

But, alas! how many can with truth boast of this? How rare such a marriage nowadays! When the first few years of wedded life are over, if for a wonder unity lasts so long, what a great change then takes place with many! The devil, the sworn enemy of peace, seizes hold of every opportunity to sow the seeds of discord. Sometimes he makes use of an obstinate, vain, idle, impatient, peevish, and disobedient wife, to torment the poor husband; at other times he makes the wife miserable by means of a savage, passionate, ill-tempered, and drunken husband, or he incites some scandal-monger to stir up dissensions between husband and wife by his wicked tongue. Now, on such occasions, if there is not Christian virtue, mildness, and patience on both sides, and if neither wishes to give in to the other, what will be the result? Certainly unhappiness and misery, and a hell on earth.

II. Hell is an accursed place, where discord reigns supreme and the damned, hating each other like deadly enemies, spend a long eternity in howling, cursing and blaspheming, while they torture each other mutually. “Where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth” (Job 10: 22).

See what a fearful picture I make to myself of the married state, when man and wife live in strife and discord continually. And I say continually, because it is a common thing for married people to be vexed with each other now and then, even for half a day, so that one will not speak to the other—and that is particularly the case in the first years of wedded life—it may happen to those who are very fond of each other, nay, excessive love is often the cause of it. Meanwhile, they must acknowledge that, although their quarrel is only trifling and by no means serious, yet it causes them bitter sorrow, so that each awaits the end of it with impatience, and is quite glad to make matters right again, so as to put an end to the uneasiness and torment. If they had to live continually on such bad terms with each other, what would you think of it, married Christians, who love each other? Would it not be an intolerable trial? From this you may see what a happiness it is for married people to be on good terms with each other, and what a misery it is if even the least misunderstanding comes between them. What a torment must it not be when, not love, but hatred and dislike, are the cause of disunion, when this disunion lasts, not for one or two days, but for the greater part of one's life, and is not confined to mere pouting and pettishness, but gives rise to continual quarrels, abuse, cursing, and swearing? What the husband likes, the wife detests; she wants one thing, he another; one ridicules the other's lowly birth, or poverty, or other natural defect; there is a constant storm of abuse going on on both sides: Would that I had never seen you! I wish you were dead, so that I might be rid of you! Alas! I need not tell you much about it; experience has taught you more than enough on this point! What a misery it must be when things have gone so far that curses and abuse lead daily to blows and ill-usage, so that the unfortunate couple live like cat and dog together? Who can sufficiently explain the wretchedness of such a state? Is it not a kind of hell to have to live thus in the same house, and to live together till death?

It must have been a demon that inspired the tyrant Maxentius with the cruel idea of chaining a living man to a dead body until the insupportable stench should make life impossible. What more terrible torture could be thought of? The bare idea of it horrifies us: to rot away gradually, along with a putrefying corpse, is indeed a terrible thing; but it is a picture, too, of the married state, when two persons who are bound to live together till death hate and detest each other. Hence come those despairing sighs that are so often heard: Oh, unhappy me, when shall I be released? When may I hope for freedom? Wherever I turn, I find nothing but contradictions; everything is against me; every word I hear is an imprecation; everything I taste is gall; everything I feel is a thorn in my side! I cannot have one hour's peace!

What a countless number of sins arise from this discord, to increase the torments of the eternal hell when this temporal hell is at an end! I could weep tears of blood when I think of it, partly through pity for so many souls who are thus ruined forever, partly through sorrow at the many insults that are thus daily offered to God. For, from this discord comes *detraction*, inasmuch as the wife speaks ill of the husband, and the husband of the wife, through hatred and desire of revenge, and they try to ruin each other's character amongst neighbors, friends, and acquaintances by their constant complaints and fault-finding. Hence arises *the danger of adultery and other shameless crimes*. Hence comes *the secret joy and satisfaction at the misfortunes of another*, as well as *the deliberate desire with which one wishes the death of the other*, and even *the desperate resolve that suggests suicide* as the best means of putting an end to a misery that makes the unfortunate people curse the day on which they were born, and the day on which they entered the married state. When this discord rules supreme, housekeeping is neglected, the husband tries to forget his sorrow by frequenting saloons and spending the little he has left in gambling and debauchery; the wife, through revenge or desperation, sits idly at home and allows everything to go

to ruin, or takes to gambling and drinking to be revenged on her husband. In such a household the children are not looked after, and they learn nothing good. And how could they? What good could they hope to learn in such an accursed school, which resembles hell itself, where children hear nothing from their parents but cursing and swearing, and see nothing but quarrelling and fighting? They will learn, indeed, but it will be to speak and act as their parents do; they will learn to behave to each other as they see their parents behaving; they will learn, when they grow up, to treat their father and mother with no greater respect than the latter show each other; and they will learn to lead a wicked, good-for-nothing life, and to bring up their own children as they themselves were brought up. And what a bad example they give to the whole neighborhood, which they disturb by their quarrelling and fighting? This, too, is often the cause that, to the great scandal of the community, the husband and wife must be separated, as far as cohabitation is concerned, by ecclesiastical authority, or, what is still worse, that they separate on their own authority, which they have no right to do, in order to escape an insupportable trial. Where there is such a spirit of discord, what must become of the service of God and the salvation of the soul? The continual quarrelling and bitterness prevent the morning and evening prayer; they are not capable of hearing Mass on days of obligation or of going to sermons as they ought; almost all their confessions and Communions are sacreligious and only add to their sins, because they will not give up the hatred and ill-will they bear each other, nor will they consent to give in to one another, or to pardon each other from their hearts. And what have they then to look forward to but hell for all eternity, of which they have a foretaste already on earth? And there their lot will be to curse each other forever, after having lived in discord during their lives on earth.

The foundation of this misery is laid when parents *force their children or persuade them*, to marry a certain person against their will. It is an old saying that an oath taken under pressure of necessity is offensive to God; now, where there is no love nor affection, what else can come of it but hatred, discord and ill-will? This misery is caused, also, by marrying a person, *not for virtue's sake, but for riches*. In such a case, if the riches are less than they were first thought to be, if adversity comes on, there is an end to love, and discontent takes its place. Children, too, cause themselves misery by marrying without the knowledge and consent of their parents, or, what is worse, by embracing the first opportunity of marriage without first consulting God to know whether he calls them to that state; or by making use of unjust means to get married, and thus receiving the Sacrament in the state of mortal sin; or, as is, alas! only too common amongst those who are engaged, by committing sins of impurity with each other before marriage. In all these circumstances, since they neglect God and offend him when entering in what is in itself a holy state, what wonder is it that he does not bless them afterwards? What wonder is it that he refuses to give them the special graces which he has prepared for those who enter the married state according to his vocation and in his fear and love? And is it surprising, then, that, in the difficulties to which the married life is exposed, they should quarrel, fight, and be at variance with each other, and thus make for themselves a hell on earth, through their want of virtue?

Catholic young men and ladies who intend embracing the married state, see first of all whether God really calls you to that state, and then be careful to enter on it in a holy manner and for a holy object, that it may not turn out unhappily for you, as a punishment for your sins.

But you, unfortunate married people, who live in discord, oh, how I pity you! For God's sake put an end to your misery at once! If you have grievously offended God before, or at the time of your marriage, learn to bear your cross with humility, knowing that you well deserve it, and ought to hear it with patience. Married people, cry out in your daily crosses: "Thou art just, oh, Lord," and thy judgment is right. Whatever has been the cause of discord to you, learn to give

way to each other, to curb your anger, to forgive from your hearts, and to beg of God by earnest prayer to restore peace and harmony to you. Do you know what you must do? Go, both of you, and make a general confession, at least of that part of your lives which you have spent in discord; do not forget to accuse yourselves of all the confessions and Communion that you made while in that state, for they may have all been bad, on account of the want of true sorrow and purpose of amendment, since there was no sign of improvement in you after them, and then take each other's hand and renew your consent to your marriage. You must also ask each other's pardon for the many injuries and annoyances you have mutually caused, and make a firm resolution to forget the past, and to love each other truly, as if you were just married; with this resolution go to the table of the Lord, and humbly ask your Lord and God, who is present within you, to ratify your resolution and keep you united in love until death. Follow my advice, if you do not wish to go from a temporal to an eternal hell! Amen.



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