

May 10-11, 2014

Thoughts from the pastor,

Just a reminder: If you are looking for my Bible notes the parish web-site is now, stelizabethann.org not .com. Last week I ended my thoughts on marriage with the idea that God sees work or sacrifice as a necessary part of marriage. I purposely avoided using the word sacrifice until the last line. For many people that word is worse than the four letter word work. It is "I" surrounded by four letters on each side. The word sacrifice actually comes from the Latin *sacer*, holy; and *facere*, make. For many the joining of the words make and holy is also bad news. Holy has all of those saintly connotations that scare people. They don't even want to think in terms of being a Saint. That is for popes and people like that. They don't realize that the only ones that will be in heaven with God at the end of time will be Saints and angels, so if they don't become a Saint they won't be there.

But this goes back to the concept of work. Everyone knows that you would have to work at being holy. You don't fall into holiness. Vices are totally different. We can fall into them without any problem. But of course they lead to hell and many don't want to think that even exists, much less realize how easy it might be to end up there.

Marriage bonds two people together. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is one of God's plans for getting us to heaven. But if that is the case then it would have to do with being a Saint. Wait a minute, who signed me up for that? Last week I described the lazy way towards that inevitable state of marriage. That is not God's plan. That is Las Vegas style. God's plan involves work. It especially involves being a part of God's work. Most people don't even know that God works. They think of Him just sitting there in heaven. No He works on two primary things, creation and helping us accept His invitation to join Him in heaven. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony involves both of those. It is designed by God to help people become a part of His creative power by having children. But just about any man and woman can do that. By itself it doesn't take a genius. But when He combined it with the idea of getting people to heaven it becomes more difficult.

First God wants a person who gets married to be in love with someone enough that he/she will be willing to sacrifice toward the ultimate gift of love, getting their spouse to heaven. In that process He set the marriage to include the creative power to have children who would also need help and many sacrifices to get them started on their path to heaven. When a couple is willing to undertake these responsibilities God is willing and desires to give them special graces to achieve these goals. That is when He makes a marriage a Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

The difference between marriage and the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is based on those goals. You can get married by any judge and with our "No Fault Divorce" have it ended just about as fast. You can go to that judge and get married and have no intention to have any children. If those intentions are known to a priest, he will not do the wedding. He knows that those intentions are essential to life with God in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The question that many people don't ever get to the point of asking is why a God who is so interested in getting us to a place like heaven, which is all about happiness, would make us set ourselves up for these potential sacrifices.

If we are married for life we may have to sacrifice a lot of potential "joy-rides" in life to deal with a spouse that is making it very hard to get them to heaven. And to have children can really put a crimp into our fun time. What is God thinking? To understand it we have to look at the alternative that I talked about last week. That was the life of a self-centered, childish person who hates to work. As you noticed it did not end well. That is the minimalist side of the story. We must also look at fullness of life that Jesus taught us about. I will write about that next week.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank