Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
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27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Date: Sunday, October 6, 2024 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** B
First Reading: Genesis 2:18–24
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 128:1–6 | **Response:** Psalm 128:5
Second Reading: Hebrews 2:9–11
Gospel Acclamation: 1 John 4:12
Gospel Reading: Mark 10:2–12
Preached at: the Ridgeway Medical Campus of the University of Zambia **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

Today's readings offer us profound reflections on the sanctity of marriage. They remind us that marriage is a gift from God, a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, rooted in God's original plan for humanity. As we reflect on these readings, let us also consider how these teachings resonate with the realities faced by you young medical students, especially as you prepare for futures that may include both marriage and professional service.

In the first reading from Genesis (Gen 2:18-24), we see the story of Adam and Eve, where God says, "It is not good for man to be alone." In response, God creates Eve from Adam's rib — which despite the medical questions it might pose to us, is a beautiful symbol that man and woman are equals, made of the very same stuff, and are meant to live in union with each other. The passage concludes with, "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two become one flesh." This highlights the deep connection intended in marriage, not just as a physical bond, but as a spiritual one, where the couple shares life fully and equally.

Amoris Laetitia, Pope Francis' 2016 post-synodal apostolic exhortation on marriage and the family life echoes this teaching, reminding us that:

> "The very word 'covenant' is applied to marriage, not simply in terms of a pact that the couple make, but as a reality that brings them together for life." (AL 63)

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Marriage is not just a legal or emotional arrangement. It is a sacrament—a covenant of love in the presence of God that reflects God's unbreakable love for humanity.

In today's Gospel, the Pharisees test Jesus by asking whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus points them back to the original teaching of Genesis, emphasizing the permanent nature of marriage: "What God has joined together, let no one separate" (Mark 10:9).

Jesus recognizes that divorce was allowed in the Law of Moses, but only because of the hardness of human hearts. However, He insists that marriage, as God intended, is meant to be indissoluble. This teaching highlights the Church's commitment to the permanence of marriage, which is also echoed by Pope Francis in Amoris Laetitia:

> "Divorce is an evil and the increasing number of divorces is very troubling." (AL 246) "There are cases in which separations are inevitable. At times, it can even be morally necessary when it comes to removing a spouse and children from grave harm." (AL 241)

While the ideal of marriage is a lifelong union, the Church acknowledges the painful realities that sometimes lead to separation. Even in these situations, however, the Church approaches with compassion and pastoral care, always seeking to accompany people with love, not judgment.

As young medical students, you are entering a profession centered around healing and care for the whole person. In many ways, the sacrament of marriage and the vocation to medicine share a common ground: both call for lifelong commitment and service to others. In the medical field, you will encounter patients going through many challenges—physical, emotional, and spiritual. In your future relationships, whether in marriage or otherwise, you will also face moments that test your resilience and love.

Marriage, like medicine, requires patience, dedication, and the ability to heal wounds through understanding and compassion. Pope Francis, in Amoris Laetitia, offers a valuable reflection that can guide you in both your personal and professional lives:

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> "It is a profound spiritual experience to contemplate our loved ones with the eyes of God and to see Christ in them." (AL 323)

This perspective invites us to approach every person, whether a patient or a spouse, with dignity and love, always seeking to serve and heal.

The Church's teaching on marriage reminds us that true love is not without sacrifice. There will be times when, like your future medical cases, marriage requires difficult decisions, healing, and perseverance. As future healers, you have a unique ability to understand the fragility of life and the strength that comes from mutual support.

Though Jesus calls us to uphold the indissolubility of marriage, the Church also recognizes the complexities of human relationships. Some marriages face profound difficulties—infidelity, abuse, or emotional harm. In these cases, the Church offers the process of annulment, discerning whether a true sacramental marriage was present. This process is done with compassion and care.

As Pope Francis says in Amoris Laetitia:

> "It is important that the divorced who have entered a new union should be made to feel part of the Church." (AL 243)

The Church, while upholding the sacrament of marriage, never abandons those who are suffering or marginalized because of broken relationships. We must walk with them, offering support and a path to healing.

Today's Psalm (Ps 128) echoes this theme of faithfulness. It speaks of the blessings that come from those who walk in God's ways: "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table" (Ps 128:3). This passage reminds us that faithfulness to God and to one another brings about lasting joy and peace, not only for individuals but also for families and communities.

Amoris Laetitia reminds us of the blessings that come from committed love:

> "Marital joy can be experienced even amid sorrow, for it involves accepting that marriage is an inevitable mixture of enjoyment and struggles, tensions and repose, pain and relief, satisfactions and longings." (AL 126)

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Marriage, like life, is filled with both joys and struggles, but when lived out faithfully, it becomes a powerful witness to God's love for the world.

Since you're students, I'm offering some homework, some questions for you to reflect on:

- How can you, as future medical professionals, support married couples in their commitment to lifelong love?
- In what ways can the skills of healing and care that you are learning be applied to your future relationships, including marriage?
- How can we, as a Church, better accompany those who are struggling in their marriages or who have experienced the pain of divorce?

As we reflect on today's readings, let us pray for the grace to live out the true meaning of marriage as a sacrament and as a witness to God's love in the world. Let us also pray for all married couples—that they may grow in love and fidelity, and that their marriages may reflect the healing power of God's presence.

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