

Today I am going to preach on 2 vastly divergent subjects and then attempt to bring them back to a single conclusion. Let's will start with the Gospel reading for this Sunday.

The Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection came forward and posed a totally ridiculous question pertaining to marriage to Jesus. In our eyes, the question seems even more outlandish because our cultural context is much different from theirs.

In that age, the survival of the clan was paramount. Therefore if a woman was brought into the clan from another clan and her husband died without leaving a child to bind her to her new clan, by law she wouldn't be tied to her husband's people any more. And since she was no longer a virgin, she couldn't go back to her father's clan because she wasn't considered marriageable leaving her as an outcast without a home. Marriage to her husband's brother preserved both clans' honor and treated the widow with mercy by providing her a home.

Marriage back then and in most cases up to the beginning of the 20th Century was for social status, economic security or gain and procreation. Only in this modern age, and mostly in western society is marriage for love. Throughout the rest of the world, arraigned marriages are the norm.

What about today? How does this apply to us? Do we think that because we marry for love that God changed the rules in heaven for us? I don't think so. Heaven is the place of perfect love, the place where everyone loves everyone. Since there is no procreation in heaven, and no children to raise, there isn't any need for marriage.

The gift of entering into the Sacrament of Marriage because a man and a woman are in love with one another is one of God's great gifts to us. In a sacramental marriage, the love of the man for the woman and the woman for the man is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The love of the parents for their children and the love they return to their parents are also gifts of the Holy Spirit. Marriage and family life is one of the most wonderful ways that we can put ourselves in the way of, and experience God's love for us. Lived as God intended, in married life

we experience peace, joy and love. A small slice of heaven here on earth.

Now, let's go back to the Old Testament reading from 2nd Maccabees and as we go through this, please keep in mind that scripture may have been written thousands of years ago, but it was written for us and is as applicable today as it was when the ink was still damp on the paper when it was written.

This reading is an extract from an entire chapter devoted to the martyrdom of a widow and her seven sons because they refused to follow the decrees of the king because those decrees went against God's law. They were tortured, and killed one at a time, eldest to the youngest while the survivors watched ending with the death of their mother.

As horrific as this reading is, there are verses from the previous chapter that are even more distressing. This is from 2nd Maccabees 6:12-17.

“Now I urge those who read this book not to be disheartened by these misfortunes, but to consider that these punishments were meant not for the ruin but for the correction of our nation. It is, in fact, a sign of great kindness to punish the impious promptly instead of letting them go for long. Thus, in dealing with other nations, the Sovereign Lord patiently waits until they reach the full measure of their sins before punishing them; but with us he has decided to deal differently, in order that he may not have to punish us later, when our sins have reached their fullness. Therefore he never withdraws his mercy from us. Although he disciplines us with misfortunes, he does not abandon his own people.”

A few weeks ago I spoke about the interesting times in which we live. Our God is a subtle God. Bread and wine are transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ during the Sacrifice of the Mass, but still taste like bread and wine. I propose the thought to you that through the natural, social and economic events of the past couple of years, God is trying to get our attention before we reach the fullness of our sins as a nation.

In a few days we go to the polls to set the course of our country in what may be the most important election of our generation. Our

ability to vote is not just a right, it is a sacred duty and we are responsible for the results of our vote. This is a quote from Archbishop Fulton Sheen that applies directly to the choices we will make on Tuesday.

“The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil. The Tragedy of our time is that those who still believe in honesty lack fire and conviction, while those who believe in dishonesty are full of passionate conviction.”

I pray that you will pray and examine your choices in light of the teachings of our Catholic faith as you make your selection before you vote. I recognize that our choices aren't ideal and I admit that much of my ballot will be cast this year as in years past, not so much in support of a candidate, but against the other candidate because of their stand which is diametrically opposition to the teachings of the Church.

Now, how does the experience of God's love in marriage relate to martyrdom, elections, and God's justice?

In our married lives we constantly die to ourselves in small ways for the good of our families. We sacrifice time, treasure and talent without a second thought because of the love we have for them and consider our sacrifices as nothing because of the love we receive in return. Just as we can't experience the peace, joy and love of heaven without dying and passing from this earth, we can't experience the peace, joy and love of our families without the small martyrdoms of self for the ones we love.

Our choices, the decisions that we either make or fail to make have an impact on our families by setting the conditions, the environment, social, economic and political in which we live. The conditions in which we experience God's justice, God's mercy and most importantly, God's love.

May God Bless America.