

ADORATION 101 July 2, 2017  
The Sacrament of Charity: The Eucharist and the Indissolubility of Marriage

We continue looking this week into the relationship of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and the Eucharist by taking a special look at the connection between the Eucharist and the indissolubility of marriage. In his Apostolic Exhortation “Sacramentum Caritatis” (the Sacrament of Charity, para. 29), Pope Benedict underscores its importance by mentioning a few profound observations. He begins by reminding us that marriage is, first and foremost, a reflection of the love between Christ and His Church. This indissolubility of love is what marriage ultimately aspires to. With this being said, he makes mention of the incredibly painful situations which many of the faithful find themselves in today, who having received the Sacrament of Matrimony, have since been divorced and remarried. He confirms the Church’s practice, which is based on Sacred Scripture (Mk. 10:2-12), of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, “since their state and condition in life objectively contradicts the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist.”

The Holy Father makes clear that the divorced and remarried “still continue to belong to the Church, which accompanies them with special concern and encourages them to live as fully as possible the Christian life through regular participation at Mass, albeit without receiving communion, listening to the Word of God, Eucharistic Adoration, prayer, participation in the life of the community, honest dialog with a priest or spiritual director, dedication to the life of charity, works of penance, and commitment to the education of their children.”

Moreover, Pope Emeritus Benedict makes sure to point out that there may be legitimate doubts which may exist about the validity of the prior sacramental marriage. In which case, he states that the necessary investigation must be carried out to establish if these are well founded. Of which, he makes clear that, for respect of Canon Law, each case must be brought before the presence of the local ecclesiastical tribunal, whose duty it is to bring their activity ever closer to the faithful. Since there can be confusion about the relationship with pastoral care and ecclesiastical law, Pope Benedict repeats that the “fundamental encounter between the law and pastoral care is love for the truth.” “Truth”, he continues, “is never something purely abstract, but a real part of the human and Christian journey of every member of the faithful.”

In conclusion, he recognizes the complex cultural context we find ourselves in - in today’s world and shows that we must not let this weaken or cause confusion about the true value of marriage. He recommends devoting more time and effort in training couples preparing for marriage in it’s true richness, beauty, seriousness, and validity. The marital state is a powerful – if not THE most powerful – witness to the love of God in the day-in-age we find ourselves in, and we must do all we can to allow ourselves to be able to understand and live out this Sacrament by which we mirror the love of Christ and His Bride, the Church, and show the world the true efficacy of Jesus Present in the Holy Eucharist.

NEXT WEEK: The Eucharist and Eschatology (the last things, death, judgment, heaven and hell) – Paul A. Ray