

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 6/7, 2021 – Week of Celebration of the sacrament of Marriage – Reflection

"Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her ... (later) He left and went off to a deserted place, where He prayed."

From the *Gospel of St. Mark*

As we begin this week in the Church which is set aside to celebrate the beauty and the richness of the Sacrament of Marriage and those who live and witness to that sacrament with their lives, we read in the gospel passage for this Sunday of Simon Peter's home situation. He is a married man and his wife's mother lives in the house with her daughter and son-in-law. She is gravely ill and the couple are worried sick over her. In their love and concern, they turn to Jesus for help.

A cynic once remarked that marriage involves three rings:

The Engagement Ring;

The Wedding Ring;

And, the Suffering!

I know it's only a stupid joke, but y'know, there's truth to be gleaned from that kernel of wit.

Simon Peter and the woman he married became no longer two, but one flesh. And so, when they were joined together in God and in love, they became a family; "Your people will be my people, and my God will be your God too." His wife's mother became like a mother to Simon Peter, "This one, at last, is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone," and he loved her and cared for her like a son. When she became so sick and was suffering, the couple suffered with her, acted as one unit of care and concern and did everything they could to make her well. That included inviting God into their home, when man was able to do no more. It was God who touched those two people and joined them as one. It was God who touched their sick mother and made her well. It was God who invited them to closer relationship to one another and to the community through prayer.

The marriage of Christians is meant to reflect the love of Christ for His Church. It is a love that is one and forever, not yours and mine and dissolvable. It is a love that is patient and kind, not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It is a love that does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. It is a love that does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth and in being true. It is a love that should show to all that the love you see in us is just a tiny glimpse into the love God has for you.

The marriage of Christian souls is meant to shine the light of Christ's love from their home and hearts on the world. But that light can only shine if the Light of the World, Jesus, is invited into the home and the soul of each marriage. If the love of husband and wife is to last and bear fruit, they must walk into the Light, they must pray together, for it is the God of forever who joins them on their wedding day, in the good times and bad, in riches and want, in health and sickness. Without

God, without prayer, the light of love will grow dim and fade, and the two-made-one will drift and fall apart.

Today, a married couple prayed for one they loved. And, Jesus came and touched their lives with hope and healing.

Let us gratefully celebrate the love of married couples. Let us pray for them that they might join hands together on their knees in prayer to the One who joined them in holy union, who keeps them in abiding love. And let us pray that these loving couples might touch the world, their children and grandchildren, their neighbors and friends, their church and even strangers with the power and the strength and the generosity and the understanding and the enduring faithfulness of their love ... "a love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things ... a love, when all is said and done, that testifies that there are, in this life, but three things that are important, three things that last: faith; hope; and love ... and the greatest of these is love."