

During the holiest days of the year, we celebrate the Triduum. It begins with Holy Thursday and the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Saint Paul's account in Corinthians is the first written account:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (1 Cor 11:23b-26).

On Good Friday, the blood of Jesus pours out from his body as he is crucified on the cross. The image is a very bloody one but also a very sacred one. Jesus is the bridegroom who willingly lays down his life for the good of his bride the church. "Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed" (Is 53:4-5).

With the Vigil at Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus who has freed us from sin and offers us the promise of eternal life. "We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6: 9-11).

Our 1st Reading from Ephesians chapter 5 makes sense in light of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

- "Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord" (Eph 5:21). On Holy Thursday, Jesus washes the feet of the apostles. Peter is hesitant, but Jesus explains, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me" (John 13:8b). Unless Jesus lays his life down for us on the cross, then our sins will not be washed by his blood. A husband must be willing to wash the feet of his bride. He must be willing to shed his blood for the good of his wife. Peter responds to Jesus by saying, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well" (Jn 13:9). As Peter is subordinate to our Lord, so to with a wife. She must be willing for the husband to wash her feet and lay down his life for her.
- In the matrimonial rite, "It is ... fitting that the spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for his Church made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and by receiving the Eucharist so that, communicating in the same Body and the same Blood of Christ, they may form but "one body" in Christ" (Herzog, Celebrating the Rite of Marriage).¹
- On Good Friday, Jesus laid down his life for his bride. He had prayed to his Father the night before: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). The proper and holy role of a husband is distorted when a husband imposes his will on a spouse. Like Jesus, a husband truly fulfills his mission when he prays to the Father for guidance and is submissive to the will of the Father. The husband follows the mission of Christ, the wife responds to this and follows the mission of Jesus as well.
- With Easter, we celebrate Jesus risen from the dead. At first, the disciples do not recognize him. His resurrected Body is somehow different. In a sacramental marriage, a husband and

wife are transformed. They become an icon of the Holy Trinity. “For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Eph 5:31, Gn 2:24). In Holy Matrimony, man and woman and God are united. This sacred truth has its physical and spiritual expression in the marital embrace.

Marriage is a gift from God. It is not easy. It calls for great sacrifice. A husband will need to die to his selfishness and sinfulness to properly fulfill his sacred calling. Likewise, the bride will need to do the same. Both will need to call upon God in order to forgive hurts and to grow in love.

- This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church (Eph 5:32).
- Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready (Rev 19:7).

ⁱ uscgb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/marriage/upload/teaching-aids-herzog.pdf