



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Reverend Gustavo García-Siller



Homily - Anniversary Mass
February 13, 2015

Good Evening My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Your presence here tonight is a loving witness that unconditional love is possible through the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The sacraments are the life-changing signs of the reality of God's presence in the Church and our lives. The Sacrament of Reconciliation affirms the reality of God's mercy and forgiveness. The Eucharist blesses us with the undeniable truth of our Salvation through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In the sacrament of Matrimony we discover the bond of unity in love and your call to serve one another.

When we read this portion of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we are tempted to ignore his words, **"The husband is the head of the wife."** However, that is not a statement about control or superiority, it is about love that is faithful and pure. When we skip over St. Paul's words that seem so strange in today's modern world, we also risk missing his equally bold challenge, **"Husbands, love your wives, even**

as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for the Church.” We sadly live in a culture that too often finds the spirit of these words bizarre.

We must remember that St. Paul is writing to the Church of Ephesus. It was a part of the Roman Empire. Marriage at this time was in a disastrous condition. Writers of that period of history tell us that women did not measure time by numbers, but by the number and names of husbands she would have had. Men and society held women with low esteem. Men could put away their wives just so they could take a new, younger, or wealthier wife...or for any other reason.

So when Paul says that both men and women are to respect, revere, and love one another with equal dedication and commitment he was challenging the status quo. He was telling them that it was time to change and live lives of faith, creating a community of life and love. St. Paul is comparing the bonds of matrimony with the relationship of Christ with His Church. The most faithful, beautiful and selfless relationship he could imagine. He was calling husbands and wives to a holy communion that would be forged “until death”. Imagine in a society that held the marriage vows with disdain and maybe even amusement, Paul was calling men and women, husbands and wives to pull themselves from the depth of their own selfish passions and give to one another completely and unconditionally.

In the Gospel Jesus calls us to be the “Salt of the Earth.” Salt was considered a sign of purity. Tonight, he calls each one of you to be a sign of the purity of marital love. As you live out your marriage vows, you give flavor and zest to your lives and your families’ lives.

When Jesus tells us to be “Light to the World,” he is making a comparison to himself. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he summons us to be light, he is telling us that you, as individuals and married couples should be Christ-like, truly beacons of faith, hope, and life. Letting the unity of your marriage include a third partner, allowing you, your spouse and Jesus to come together to be a domestic Church that is both salt and light to the world.

As Pope Francis writes in “Joy of the Gospel” as Missionary Disciples of Christ, we should be source of “salt and light” to others, and never allow your love to turn dark and bland. The Holy Father writes, “There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter...Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.” It is knowing that God loved us first, that married couples find the strength to love each other with an enduring faith.

We can better understand Paul's meaning as he speaks of mutual respect and love between husband and wife when we understand how Paul truly defined love. **"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury..."** Most importantly, Paul gives us his priorities that apply to you and your married life. **"Faith, hope, love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love."**

It is love, my sisters and brothers that rejoices in truth. I was talking with a man who had been married for many years. He told me that these words that have remained with me as I reflect on the gift of love that a husband and wife share. He said, "I always tell my wife that I am a better person with you than without you." What a gift, that we can inspire one another and lead each other to encounter Christ in your midst. When your love **"bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,"** it also is a bright beacon of light shining on the world, giving it hope. It is your love that makes the Christian marriage a beacon of light, a sacramental sign that will brighten the shadows of loneliness and isolation that darken our society. In this we will be the salt and light that restores hope and makes our culture better with you than without you.