

## ARTICLE 9

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage – The Salvation of Souls

##### The Call to be Faithful

The two previous articles in this series explored two extraordinary wives, Blessed Elisabeth Canori Mora and the Servant of God Elisabeth Leseur, who loved their husbands despite all the odds, and who, through their heroic sacrifices, obtained the conversion of these men both of whom ended their lives as priests of the Holy Catholic Church. Just imagine for a moment how the lives of these four spouses would have turned out if these two wives had refused to take up the cross fashioned for them on the day they took their marriage vows. Think of the eternal consequences and of the many souls, now saved through the example and advice of these women, who may have been lost if these women had chosen differently. Think of the souls who came under the influence of the priestly ministry of their husbands after these women had died.

Modern western society has lost sight of the eternal destiny of our lives; has lost sight of the heavenly vision that is to come. We are ourselves in danger every day of being dragged deeper and deeper into a worldly *here and now* which sucks us dry and leaves us despairing and without hope because the promises of a happy life in this worldly *here and now* have proved to be as false as the father of lies who makes them.

##### No Guarantee of Happiness on Earth

God did not create us to be happy here on earth. He created us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him here on earth so that we can be happy with Him forever in Heaven. This is basic catechism and yet the world, very successfully it would seem, seeks to hide and distort this reality in order to rob us of this heavenly promise by substituting this reality with a false and overly romantic notion of a love filled with sweet caresses, abundance of worldly goods, and fairytale marriages of happy ever after in this life with no sadness or hardship or death.

When we die, will we be judged on the success or otherwise of our marriages according to this false vision? Or will be judged on the secular world's view of how our children have turned out?

St John of the Cross tells us “In the evening of your life you will be judged on love alone”

##### Salvation comes at a Price

Not all of us will be called to such extraordinary depths of suffering in our marriages and we may thank God for that. Nevertheless, in marriage we should be prepared to pay whatever price is necessary for the salvation of our beloved spouse and for the salvation of the souls of our children, if God so blesses us, because some of us may indeed be called to the heroic heights of self sacrificing love. When we took our marriage vows we claimed that we would remain faithful, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, till death do us part. It is not for nothing that our wise mother the Church suggests to us, on the very day we take our wedding vows, some of the alternative paths that our marriages may follow.

As we enter into holy week, where we prepare to re-live the Passion of Jesus Christ, it is good to reflect on the nature of *True Love* and to reflect on how well we are trying to live this in our marriages. St Paul, in his famous text from one Corinthians chapter thirteen, which is often used in wedding liturgies, expresses love as follows. It is worth quoting the chapter in full.

### **St Paul defines Love**

“If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide these three but the greatest of these is love.” (St Paul 1 Cor 13)

### **Christ epitomises Love**

The life of Christ and His death on the cross give us the perfect example of this love that St Paul talks about. During lent I have been meditating on the stations of the Cross once per week during a very early morning hour of adoration which I am very blessed to be able to make alone with Christ in a nearby Church. As I followed each station and particularly at Christ's three falls, the stripping of His garments, the nailing to the Cross and His death upon the Cross, I became very much aware of my own sinfulness and the part my sins have played in the crucifixion. ***Christ died because of my sins***. I would sometimes become very remorseful and then realise the hopelessness of my situation. How could I, a mere man, make reparation to an almighty God for all of those sins and offences which I have committed in my life?

One night, as the familiar clouds of remorse began to gather once again in my heart, I realised that I was always looking at the crucifixion from my own perspective; ***my*** sinfulness; ***my*** guilt; ***my*** fault. I slowly realised that there was something almost selfish in how I was viewing the crucifixion. I began to try to look at the crucifixion from Christ's perspective. God the Father has been offended by my actions and His perfect justice demands reparation for these offences. I am helpless to undo what I have done or to make sufficient reparation and therefore I am facing condemnation for my sins.

Jesus loves His Father and from the love between the Father and the Son proceeds the Holy Spirit. Jesus loves me and all mankind with the same love that He has for the Father. Jesus volunteers to make perfect reparation to His Father for my offences and as these offences were committed in my human form, Jesus becomes human so that the reparation is both perfectly human and perfectly divine, that is, it is a perfect act of reparation in every way.

### **A change of perspective**

Now, instead of seeing the crucifixion from my perspective as being solely caused by my offences, I began to see more clearly that the crucifixion, being a voluntary act of submission on the part of Jesus, is the perfect act of sacrificial love. Golgotha, is the most romantic place on earth, in the true sense of that word, because it was at Golgotha, that the greatest act of love was made to God the Father on behalf of mankind.

It is this love that we are called to try to emulate in our marriages and it is for this reason that Christ raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. From the false worldly perspective, Christ's mission on earth was an absolute failure finishing with an abominable death. The same could be said of the marriage of Blessed Elisabeth Canori Mora which we looked at recently. But, when seen through the eyes of faith, Christ's mission becomes glorious at the resurrection, because of love. So too the marriage of Blessed Elisabeth Canori Mora can only be properly judged in light of faith which sees the salvation of souls in the heavenly realm and not just the misery of our earthly life.

Let us unite our hearts to the resurrected Christ this Easter and renew our commitment to try to love as Christ loves in our marriages.

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