

“Behold, your reward will be great in heaven.”

In the name of the Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, some prelate, somewhere said, “Let there be a ‘World Marriage Day’” so now... in many, if not most parishes around the diocese, around the country, and around the world, today is acknowledged as ‘World Marriage Day.’ It is a day set aside to honor the Sacrament of Matrimony. This day is usually celebrated, liturgically, the weekend before or after Valentine’s Day. This year, Valentine’s Day hit on this weekend. Guys, if you’re just realizing this is Valentine’s Day (weekend)...well, I’m glad I’m not in your shoes right now!

For what it is worth, I want you married folks to know something you may not know, but that **I** know. And that is --that your job, your vocation –being a spouse and being a mom or dad (if that’s part of His plan at this point in your life) --is far more demanding than my job, my vocation, is –being a priest.

Except for my two brothers and a few, so called, ‘close friends,’ who say I only work two weeks a year (Christmas & Easter—I always tell them “That is SO wrong!”), most, rational people tend to say, **“Oh, the poor priest. He has it so-o hard. He has no partner!”**

--to tell him where to go
--to tell him what to do
--to tell him what to say
--to tell him how to dress
--to tell him how to act
--to tell him when he’s... ‘out of line’
--to tell him he’s... ‘gone too far this time!’

“Oh, the poor priest. He’ll never have to worry about losing his job or about getting fired.”

(A priest can’t quit, but they can’t get rid of him, either. Just look at what happened to me when the bishop thought, for a minute that I was fiscally irresponsible. What a terrible fate –exiled to Finleyville via Bellevue! This has been a very, soft landing for me & the bishop knows it. With my re-assignment here, he has been very kind to me. And I am very grateful to him.)

“Oh, the poor priest. He’ll never have to worry about paying his own property taxes, utility bills, grocery bills, auto insurance, home insurance, health insurance, maintenance bills, or worry about shoveling his own sidewalks or cutting the grass.” (The parish takes care of all that for the ‘poor priest.’ So, I don’t make a lot of money –a little over \$20,000/year! But, who needs a lot of money when, just about, everything is paid for?!))

*I could go on and on, but, all kidding aside, I must tell you:
Your job is far more challenging and far more difficult than mine is.*

‘How so?’ you ask.

Well... I am glad you asked that question!

You see...

--I’ll never walk the floors at night, carrying a sick baby, who can’t tell me what is wrong, but won’t stop crying (... when I have to be at work in 3 hours and my spouse is still ‘wiped out’ from the prior day).

--I will never walk the floors at night worrying, when my 16 year old is out, driving in the snow for the first time.

--I’ll never walk the floors wondering ...what my son or daughter is doing, allegedly, at the mall/sleepover.

--I will never have to beg God to keep those ‘bad kids’ & those ‘bad families’ from infecting mine.

--I will never walk the floors trembling over how he or she is acting ...or is being treated on a date.

--I will never wrack my brain, wondering if my spouse is being honest...or if I’m just crazy with insecurity.

--I will never have a broken heart because someone broke their vow to God ...& me.

Yes, my job – ‘my vocation’ --is very important! I offer sacrifice for sin. I administer sacraments. I preach and try to explain his Word in meaningful ways. For nearly 43 years, I have worked, tirelessly, to help keep schools open. I have visited the sick, buried the dead, and counseled the forlorn.

But, your job – ‘your vocation’ --is **no less important** than mine is! You ‘partner’ with another human being --risking all you are and all you have, on one, other ...individual, with one, other ...individual. Everything you are **about** ...is **about** ‘compromise.’ Everything you are **about** ...is **about** ‘communication.’ There is very little ‘privacy’ left in your life. You are responsible for, not only, bringing other human beings **into this world**, but for shaping & preparing them for this world, as well as for the **next** world!
(Incidentally--I suspect most couples don’t even know they are married..until they have kids...when E-VER-Y thing changes!)

It may only take several months, perhaps a year, to realize the weight of such a ‘union,’ but it takes years to appreciate its awesome opportunity and beauty. The two of you have, uniquely, ‘co-partnered’ with God ...forming a completely ‘other’ kind of Trinity –**a man, a woman, and their God!** 

Together you address the world ...a broken, selfish, often cruel, and heartless world. Of course, it has its wondrous beauty, but it has its undeniable ugliness. Just turn on the evening news. You’ll find man’s incredible cruelty to man –right there, in your living room or game room, on a flat screen TV!

All I am trying to say is ...I realize how difficult it is to be a spouse and a parent –if only from a distance. I have married relatives and close friends. When they talk to me, I listen intently. I sit in the confessional week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade. I HEAR the truth about how difficult, how confusing, how completely overwhelming life can be for you. I know, firsthand, how broken and lost we can become. Remember, I am a recovering alcoholic! Remember, I have been ‘busted down’ to an assistant-pastor, a vicar...with as much authority as I had some 40 years ago, when I started out!

Please --know that every time my head hits the pillow at night, the first thing I do is to thank Almighty God for another wondrous day. (You see, no matter how bad or lonely it might have gotten, he still lets me change bread to Him ...to God—e-ver-y day!) Then, the second thing I do is ask him to bless all my married parishioners, relatives, and friends, --especially the exhausted parents among them...and most especially, the ones, who aren’t happy with one another, who are disappointed in themselves or... in those around them.

No ‘vocation,’ that is, ‘life’s-work,’ ...is easy.
Priesthood ...isn’t easy.
Matrimony ...isn’t easy.
Parenthood ...isn’t easy.
Single-hood ...isn’t easy.
All ‘journeys’ in life are ...important.
All ‘journeys’ in life are ...difficult.
I know you support me in my vocation.
I want you to know that I support you ...in yours!

Since this is World Marriage Day, a day to honor the Sacrament of Matrimony, I am now going to request something unusual. We did this last year, if you remember. I want all married people in this church and within the sound of my voice in cyberspace to hold their spouse’s hands. If your spouse isn’t present due to, perhaps, scheduling, different priorities, perhaps because of death –close your eyes and hold his or her hands in your mind and memory. If you are not yet married, hold his or her hands in your dreams, in your imagination. If you are divorced, remember the good times and trust God to give you strength to hope again and to make ‘good’ out of the chaos you’ve gone through ...just as He did with Creation itself! If, like me, you have no clear plan to ever marry, just ‘hold on for now’ and pray with me for our married, once married, & yet to be married ...parish family and extended family members.

SO:

(“The Hands of Matrimony”)

Beloved *Wife*, take your husband's hands in yours:

These are the hands ...young, strong, and vibrant with love ...that held yours, on your wedding day, as he promised to love you all the days of his life.

These are the hands ...that you placed, with expectant joy, against your stomach, until he, too, felt his child stir within your womb.

These are the hands ...that looked so large & clumsy, yet were so gentle as he held your baby for the 1st time.

These are the hands ...that work long hours to earn the money for you and the family.

These are the hands...that are nicked and bruised from fixing things around the house to make you more comfortable.

These are the hands ...that have wiped tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands ...that have comforted you in illness and held you, when fear or grief racked your mind.

These are the hands...that caressed your body over the years, to make the wonder of love come alive for you.

These are the hands ...that tenderly lifted your chin and brushed your cheek, as they raised your face to look into his eyes; eyes that were filled, completely, with his over whelming love and desire for you.

Beloved *Husband*, please take your wife's hands in yours:

These are the hands ...that held yours, as she gave you her pledge to love you and accepted your ring on your wedding day.

These are the hands ...that were smooth and young and carefree then, but are lined and rougher now, from 1,000's of dishes washed, tons of laundry cleaned, & 100's of meals prepared.

These are the hands ...that are nicked and burned from knives and irons, hot skilletts and ovens, which have worked in partnership with you to provide for the family.

These are the hands ...that held you in joy and excitement each time she said you were to have another child, that, together, you had created 'new-life.'

These are the hands ...that have held each child in tender love, soothing them through illness, disciplining them when naughty, diapering them, sewing for them, baking for them, and wringing themselves, in worry, when troubles came.

These are the hands ...that massage tension from your neck & back after you've had a long, hard day.

These are the hands ...that, over the years, have caressed you in the passion of love.

These are the hands ...that held your face and wiped tears from your eyes, in wonder and awe that you would cry for her.

Beloved *Couple*:

These are the hands of the Sacrament of Matrimony. These four hands are your armor & your shield against the evils of this world. These four hands are God's plan for renewing his Church. These are the hands that will reach out to the teen, bring hope to the lonely, teach the engaged (the wonders of married love), & heal the abused, hurting children of society. These hands are the hope of a troubled humanity.

These are the hands that will help change the world ...in our corner of the vineyard!

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless your hands...and mine,
in the name of the Father, & of the Son, & of the Holy Spirit.

Intro: *Heavenly Father-Abba, we come from many walks of life ...with diverse views and mixed feelings. Though often exhausted, we trust in your divine guidance and never ending compassion. When we fall, we know, in your love, you are there to pick us up. So, with utmost confidence, we offer these special requests (Updated to 2/14/16). Universal Prayers:*

***Additional General Intercessions
2/08/09, 5th Sun. in Ord. Time
By: Fr. Tusky***

For those who suffer the pain of a troubled marriage, separation, or divorce, that God will guide them through a world of broken promises and ignored expectations into a future filled with hope, sanity, and harmony ...we pray to the Lord,

For those who enjoy a rewarding and fulfilling marriage, that their success, though tempered by trial, may be a beacon of hope and light for others ...we pray to the Lord,

For widows and widowers, that God may comfort them with compassion and console them with wonderful memories, until we all meet again, where the only tears will be tears of joy ...we pray to the Lord,

That children and grandchildren, with their natural zest for life and their spontaneous hunger for truth, will give the rest of us renewed hope for the future ...we pray to the Lord,

For all veterans, living and deceased, for their spouses & families, and for all those men and women serving our country in military uniform this day, that they will be safe from all harm, not only in body, but especially in mind and spiritwe pray to the Lord,

For peace on our planet, starting in our own homes, most especially in our own hearts, for we can not give or share what we do not have ...we pray to the Lord,

We now pause to add our own intention, in our own word, in the privacy and sincerity of our own thoughts, (pause) ...and for that very special, unspoken intention –that rests in our hearts, known only to ourselves and our God ...we pray to the Lord,

Close: *Father-Abba, we thank you for many countless gifts, which, so often, we take for granted. With love and patience for those around us, we will serve you, one day at a time, each and every day, for you are ever in our heart and at our side. So, again, with utmost confidence, we make this prayer, as all prayer, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*