

Also WORLD MARRIAGE DAY

“...he went off to a deserted place... where he prayed.”

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

Once upon a time, some prelate, somewhere, said, “Let there be ‘World Marriage Day’ ”. And so it came to be... that 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 was last Wed.—actually Ash Wednesday. So, guys, if you’re just realizing all this, now--I DO feel sorry for you.

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

You see, except for my two brothers and a few, so called, ‘close friends,’ who say I only work two weeks a year (Christmas & Easter), most, rational people tend to say:

“Oh, the poor priest. He has it so-o hard. (He has no cook!) He has no life-partner, no soul-mate!”

“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.)

Oh, the poor priest. He has no one----to tell him where to go

--to tell him what to do

--to tell him what to say

--to tell him how to dress... (“Put on sox, you damned fool!”)

--to tell him how to act

--to tell him when he’s... ‘Out of line’

--to tell him when he’s... ‘Gone too far this time!’

“Oh, the poor priest. He’ll never have to worry about paying property taxes, utility bills, grocery bills, auto insurance, home insurance, health insurance, maintenance bills, or worry about cutting his grass or shoveling his own sidewalks.” (The parish takes care of all that for the... ‘poor priest.’ So, I don’t make a lot of money--about \$25,000/year! But, who needs a lot of money, when just about everything is already paid for?!)

I could go on and on about ‘the poor priest,’ **BUT**, all kidding aside, I must tell you:
Your job, your vocation, is far more challenging and far more difficult than mine is.

“How so?” you ask. Well, once again... I am glad you asked that question!

You see...

--I’ll never walk the floors at night, carrying a sick, crying baby, who can’t tell me what is wrong,
(... 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...night worrying, when my 16 year old is out, driving, for the first time, in an unexpected snow.

--I’ll never walk the floors wondering...what my son or daughter is doing, allegedly, at the mall or a ‘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 at night trembling over how he or she is acting ...or is being treated on a date.

--I’ll never worry myself sick that I could lose my job, our house, the car...in this ‘crazy’ economy.

--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 my spouse broke his or her vow to God... & to me.

Yes, my job, **'my vocation' is** very important! I offer sacrifice for sin; I change bread/wine to God. I administer sacraments. I preach & explain his Word in, hopefully, meaningful ways. For over 40 years, I have worked, tirelessly, to keep parishes and schools open. I have visited the sick, buried the dead, converted searching-souls, comforted the prisoner, found the lost, and counseled the forlorn & the broken hearted.

But...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 'honest communication.' Done right... 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 the **next** world!

(Incidentally, I suspect most couples don't even **know** they're married...until they **have** kids, when **EV-ER-RY**thing changes! Kids—when they're little, they walk on your feet. When they're big, they walk on your heart. And, it's amazing, for they know **so much more** about life than you do... just like **you** did at **they're** age! Oh, the wondrous, glorious 'view' **grandparents** must have!)

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. Unaware on your wedding day, 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, to be a parent—if only from a distance. I have married relatives and close, married friends. I ask serious, delving questions. When they talk to me, I listen intently. A student of life, I am extremely observant. 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 **Senior Parochial vicar**...with about as much authority as I had over 40 years ago, when I first started out, a newly ordained!

Please, 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 & wine to Him ...to God—**ev-e-ry** day!) Then, after apologizing for my sins & seeking grace for the next day, the second thing I do, is ask him to bless all my married/once married/yet-to-be-married parishioners, relatives, and friends--especially the exhausted parents/grandparents among them... most especially, the parents, who aren't happy with one another, who are disappointed in themselves, or ...in those around them. You see:

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; Widowhood ... isn't easy

-----**All 'journeys' in life are... important... no matter how brief/extended.** -----

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 tad late}, a day to honor the Sacrament of Matrimony, I am now going to request something unusual. (We did this last year if we were together then.) I want all married people in this church and within the sound of my voice... 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's eye/in your 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 its many extended members.

SO:

(The Hands of Matrimony)

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

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... and for you alone.

Beloved *Husband*, take your wife's hands in yours, physically or mentally:

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, 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 skillets and pans, 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—with God, 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 could cry for her...and her alone!

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. The very hub of society... these hands, your marriage, are the hope of a troubled humanity.

These are the hands that will help change the world ...at least 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. Amen.

Universal Prayer:

Intro: Heavenly Father-Abba, we come from many walks of life ...with diverse views, mixed feelings, and even different politics. Regardless, though often exhausted, we all 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 2/14/18):

(Originally written :)

***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.