

We bow our hearts in prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise and thank You that You have loved us, even in our unfaithfulness. And have given Yourself for us. May we reflect that selfless love with our families and neighbors to Your glory and their salvation. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In all the commandments, God would protect His gifts to humanity.

Before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, there was no need for this protection.

They knew God's will and desired to, and had the ability to, fulfill it.

But since the Fall into sin, we are so corrupted that we no longer know God's will by nature.

He must teach His will to us.

And by nature, we no longer have the ability to abide by His will perfectly as He requires, let alone the desire to.

This is no less true of the 6th Commandment, when God says: **You shall not commit adultery.**

In this commandment, God would protect His gift of marriage and family.

It is the basic building block of society, as well as the Church.

And yet, look at our marriages.... Look at our families....

These are often the relationships that we struggle with the most, and hurt us the most.

When struggling, and even when things are going well, it is often advantageous to go back to the origin / institution of the matter, evaluating the original definition and purpose.

And so we do today, as we meditate on God's creation and institution of marriage and family.

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen ^(John 17:17)

There are people that would like you to believe that marriage is of human origin;

that early peoples just found this relationship to be the most useful for their purposes/pleasures and so instituted or established it as the cultural norm and castigated all others.

These people would say that because marriage is merely a human custom,

we are free to redefine it from being only the public union

between one man and one woman willingly entered into for life, to anything we desire.

If we accept that marriage is of human origin, all sorts of things are possible.

Our marriage vows are no longer considered as binding, legally or otherwise,
but flowery adornments to heighten the romantic atmosphere of the wedding ceremony.
Thus cheapened, these words are easily ignored and forgotten when life gets difficult...
or when one just doesn't feel the butterflies in the stomach anymore...
or until one finds someone else that makes him feel nicer/treats him better than she does.

When we consider marriage only something we humans invented,
A man doesn't have to limit himself to marrying only one woman, or vice versa.
In fact, he doesn't even have to limit himself to marrying a woman at all, but another man.
And it doesn't have to stop there....
What would be wrong with marrying multiple people, both men and women?
Don't think that this is non-sense. These polyamorous relationships are already happening.

And if marriage is only a human thing, Why marry at all? After all, it is only a piece of paper.

There are probably a lot of other situations that we haven't covered here yet,
And it would be idilic to say that these are only things that happen in our society,
and that the Church is free from such influences, temptations, and situations, but it isn't.
Christians, young and old alike, fall into the culturally common temptation of living together
as man and wife without marriage, or enjoying the benefits without even living together.
The rate of divorce in the Church mirrors that of society.
Some false teachers and church bodies are pushing for the legitimization of immoral unions.
And even in strong marriages and families, selfless sacrificial love is often set aside
for selfish ambitions and desires, to the hurt of the ones we love the most.
It is as if we were the ones who were deciding what marriage was supposed to be
and who it was supposed to benefit the most – namely, ME.

But is marriage a human innovation? Not according to what we just read in Genesis.
It is the Lord who defined marriage: **"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother
and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."**
And it was the Lord Jesus who said, **"So they are no longer two but one flesh.
What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."** Matthew 19:6

And it's the Lord who gives marriage its purpose.
After creating Adam, God said, **"It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make him a helper fit for him."** Genesis 2:18
It was the Lord who had Adam realize that none of the animals were a suitable companion for him.
It was the Lord who first formed Eve from His flesh, then brought her to Adam.
It was the Lord who chose not to make her identical to him, but complimentary to him,
as an equal companion in human worth and dignity, but under his care and keeping.
It was the Lord who blessed them saying, **"Be fruitful and multiply
and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..."** Genesis 1:28
It was the Lord who gave us the blessing of children, and gave children the blessing of a family,
to live with their father and mother in a protected, stable environment
where they could develop physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually in safety & love.

And so it is the Lord who would protect this godly institution saying: "Don't adulterate it....
Don't contaminate this one-flesh union with the flesh of another individual.
Don't defile your marriage, or future marriage, with lustful thoughts, emotions, or images
of one who doesn't belong to you.
Don't make impure by your carnal selfish desires what is to be lovingly and selflessly shared
with your spouse.
Don't cheapen the riches of God's gift of marriage by irresponsibly and foolishly jumping
into it with someone who does not believe or care for God's institution of it.

Of course, there's another way to explain all this, much more masterfully,
*"We should fear and love God so that we lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed,
and that husband and wife each love and honor the other."* (Explanation to the 6th Comm.)

But apparently our fear and love of God is imperfect. You could say it's adulterated.
You don't love Him so much that you are always faithful in your love & honor for your spouse.
Even in close families, even in good marriages, there is conflict, isn't there?
Why? Because a marriage is made up of two sinners, both naturally selfish.
And marriages with children adds more selfish sinners to the mix.
You do not fear, or stand in awe of, Him and faithfully marvel at His wisdom in instituting
such a wonderful estate by which you are daily able to serve your closest neighbors
with those things that are so necessary for healthy human development.

So what would you expect God do to with us who are unfaithful to Him and our family?
If He were like us, He would be eternally hurt and infinitely angered.
He would put you away and refuse to love you.
And yet, we read of Him that He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,
to be born into an unholy family, under sinful parents and with jealous siblings,
to grow up and develop perfectly along with them into adulthood,
in order to be your righteousness, to fulfill God's righteous demands perfectly for you.
At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus blessed a marriage with His presence
and used that occasion as the first demonstration of Divine power,
as we heard in the Gospel lesson.
In Jesus' public teaching, He led the Samaritan woman to repentance for her 5 divorces
and current live-in relationship. ^{John 4}
He chastised the Pharisees' flippant excuses for divorce. ^{Matthew 19}
And He forgave the woman caught in adultery. ^{John 8}

And also now forgives your sins, including those sins against the 6th Commandment,
for we read that Jesus, took to Himself a Bride, the Church.
Though she was not faithful to Him, He loved her and **gave Himself up for her** in death,
He sacrificed Himself at the altar of the cross,
taking upon Himself the blackness of your unfaithfulness and receiving God's wrath
and punishment to protect you from it.
This Bride, like Adam's, was formed from His side,
when the blood and water poured out while He slept in death.
Why would He do this? **That He might sanctify you** [that is, set you apart for Himself],

having cleansed you by the washing of water with the Word [in Baptism].
Why would He do that? **So that He might present you, the Church to Himself in splendor,**
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that you might be holy and without blemish,
beautifully adorned in His white robe of perfect righteousness. Ephesians 5:26-27

So you see in this relationship between God and you one of the primary reasons
God desires to protect His gift of marriage and family.
It is a picture for you, and the rest of society, of His self-sacrificing love for you.
You see then, how any adulteration of this godly estate does not reflect the divine faithful,
self-sacrificing, undivided love that Jesus has for you.

In our earthly marriages, there is no “happily ever after,” as in the fairy tales.
That is, where love simply motivates all we do and so all we do is always pleasant and easy.
Marriage is work. Keeping a family together is work.
And if you doubt that, keep your eyes on Jesus and see the wonderful,
though incomprehensible passion that He put in to uniting Himself to you.
And then stand back in wonder and awe and love and honor of your God,
and praise Him that some day, He will call you out this labor to your eternal home with Him,
Into your true, and everlasting, “happily ever after.” Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria