

My Dear Parishioners,

Recently someone shared with me a modern translation of an ancient Talmudic poem which sums up beautifully God's plan for the sacrament of **marriage**. The translation goes as follows: "God did not create woman from man's head so that he might boss her around. God did not create woman from man's feet so that he could walk all over her. God created woman from man's side so that she would **always** be close to his heart." Our Scripture readings for today remind us of the importance and sanctity of **marriage** and **family life**. Our readings remind us of three important **truths**: (1) **marriage** is a **unique relationship** deeply inscribed by God in the very nature of **human beings**, (2) **marriage** is a **vocation** in and for the Church, and (3) **children** are a **blessing** from God and the **fruit** of **marriage**.

Every great religion has sacred stories which account for the beginning of creation and the human race. In the Judeo-Christian tradition the book of Genesis has two stories of creation; the second of which we hear in today's first reading. The opening chapters of Genesis depict the close relationship between God and humanity. God fashions man of dust from the soil and the God breathes into his nostrils a "breath of life". God's breath is man's life. God then plants a garden in the midst of wasteland and this garden becomes man's first address. Man inhabits a beautiful place in Eden but the wasteland still surrounds his domain.

The man God creates is a symbol of the entire human race. The man embodies in his person the whole of **humanity**. He is not one human being among many. He **is** the **Human race**. Up to this point at each stage in the creation of the world God declared everything to be good because of its benefit for humanity. But then God unexpectedly declares something to be not good. What is not good is man's aloneness. Man does not have a suitable partner with whom to share life. So God sets out to correct this void in man's experience by creating a "helping partner". Then there is the striking and comical image of God creating all the beasts and the birds which He brings to man to see if he will name any of them "helper". There is a long procession of potential candidates for the post. Man gives names to all of them but none is the perfect partner nor are any named "helper". After all the interviews man is still

alone. Clearly God has to think again and come up with another plan.

God makes the man fall into a deep sleep and then takes something from him. What is taken is enclosed in flesh to become a new creature—a woman. The original man now makes for two creatures: an individual man and an individual woman. The woman is fashioned from the very substance of the man. She is clearly going to be his perfect complementary partner. The man confirms this by the name he gives her. This name is very close to his name. When God brings the woman to the man there is success as the man exclaims: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The man's relieved expression of "at last" signals that the search is finally over and he has discovered the perfect helping partner." Since the woman matches his very self ("bone and flesh") she is united with him and now he has a suitable partner. And so the author of Genesis adds: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh." In the sacrament of **marriage** the two separate human beings become **one** body. Only **marriage** captures the original completion of the total **human in one** body.

That original vision of the virtues of **unity** and **completion** (which are the essence of the sacrament of **marriage**) is what Jesus is speaking about in today's Gospel passage from St. Mark. In today's passage some Pharisees approach Jesus regarding the issue of divorce. They ask Jesus if it is against the Law for a man to divorce his wife. The Pharisees were attempting to "test" Jesus and his understanding of the Law of Moses on marriage and divorce. The Pharisees knew very well what Moses taught about marriage and divorce. The real issue here was not the correct content of Moses' teaching but rather the real issue is the **authority** of Jesus. The Pharisees wanted to get Jesus in trouble either with the civil authorities (consider the preaching of John the Baptist on King Herod's marital situation) or with the people who revered Moses and the law that allowed divorce. When Jesus asks the Pharisees what Moses commanded they reply that Moses permitted divorce. The Law allowed divorce to the male partner provided that he safeguarded the woman's interest by giving her a bill of dismissal which freed her to marry again (Deut. 24: 1-4). What the Mosaic Law did not

settle was the circumstances in which divorce would be legal.

According to the Mosaic Law, divorce was man's prerogative. A woman could sue (asking the court to compel her husband to divorce her) but it was he who divorced her. There was little agreement about the grounds for divorce. Two rabbinic schools of thought weighed in on this matter. The strict school of Rabbi Shammai interpreted the **only** ground was adultery. The lax liberal school of Rabbi Hillel allowed a man to divorce his wife for trivial cases- if she displeased him: "even if she spoiled a dish for him." In Jesus' day the more liberal interpretation prevailed and divorce was common. Marriage offered little security for a woman who could be dismissed at her husband's whim for trivial reasons.

In His answer to the Pharisees Jesus does not question the validity of the Law of Moses nor does He undermine Moses' authority but rather Jesus claims that Moses' response was a concession to human sinfulness and weakness. In His answer to the Pharisees' question Jesus the teacher becomes Jesus the prophet as He goes back to Genesis and proclaims the intent of God's original plan for **marriage**: "that a man leave his mother and father's home and clings to his wife, the two becoming **one**." In God's plan of **marriage** a woman and man are equal partners. They love, honor, and respect each other. They complement each other and they are united in an indissoluble bond. For Jesus, what God intended from the beginning of time should be the norm for every **marriage**. Thus, in His answer to the Pharisees Jesus is attempting to restore **marriage** to a serious life-long commitment. He is also protecting women from being treated as disposable possessions of their husbands.

The Church's teaching on **marriage** and **family life** flows from Jesus' teaching about God's plan. God's plan is that **marriage** and **family life** be graced and life-giving; a community of love and life. Children (the fruit of **marriage**) are to be cherished, blessed, and protected, and never neglected or abused in any way. Today in our society where traditional **marriage** values and **family life** values are being attacked and challenged the Church is calling us to go back to the beginning (Genesis) to uncover God's original plan. Our Church is calling all of us to return to

the roots of **marriage** and **family life** which is an invitation for every man, woman and child to see their loving commitment to each other in the light of God's vision. Have a blessed week.

Love & prayers,

Fr. John

Let us all pray the following prayer for married couples and families

"Loving God you created man and woman in your own image and you have called many to the vocation of marriage as a witness to and participation in the love that binds you, Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hear our prayers for all married couples and families and make their love faithful, fruitful and forever. Amen"

P.S. Today as we celebrate **Respect Life Sunday** let us remember that all human lives are **sacred** and should be **respected**. All humans are created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore **everyone** should be **loved** and **respected** from conception until natural death. Let us all pray for the safeguarding of the **sanctity** of human life and for the **protection** of the inherent dignity of everyone.

A TIME of PRAYER and PENANCE

This past August, Bishop Gainer designated the rest of this year and next year as a "**Time of Prayer and Penance**" throughout our Diocese in reparation for the sins of clerical sexual abuse and the sins of Church Leadership within our Diocese. Bishop Gainer designated certain days each month to mark a corporate act of reparation for the whole Church: clergy, religious, and lay members. These days of **Prayer and Penance** are as follows: October, 20th, November 3rd, December 5th, January 16th, 2019, February 8th, 2019, March 6th, 2019, April 15th, 2019, May 16, 2019, June 28th, 2019, and July 17th, 2019. Everyone is invited to **fast** and **pray** on these days for the forgiveness of sins within our Diocese. A Mass for the Forgiveness of Sins will be celebrated on these days. Thank you. Fr. John



After the conclusion of the 11:00 am Mass **today** we will begin our Annual Forty Hours Eucharistic Devotions. Our devotions will continue until **Tuesday, October 9th** ending at 7 PM. Rev. Matthew Allman, C.Ss.R. will be our guest Preacher. During these Forty Hours of

Eucharistic Devotions we all will have an opportunity to do what St. Pope John Paul II challenged us to do in his Encyclical on the Eucharist: "Renew our amazement and gratitude for the great gift of Jesus' Sacramental Presence in our lives."

We will have Eucharistic Services on **Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday evenings at 7 PM**. We will also have **ALL NIGHT EUCHARISTIC ADORATION of the BLESSED SACRAMENT on Sunday and Monday nights**. Please come out and spend some quiet time with our Jesus present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

We ask that our Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist and our Altar Servers to be present for our closing service on **Tuesday (October 9)** at 7 PM.

OMPH COMMUNITY MEALS

OMPH will be hosting **our last Community Meal of 2018 on October 11th**. Once again we are looking for volunteers to help. Our Community Meal Program provides free, freshly prepared and nutritious meals, to hungry residents of the Ephrata area. Our Thursday, October 11th meal will be held at: **Bethany United Church of Christ, 167 E Main St, Ephrata, PA**

There is no special expertise required so if you can help out at either meal it would be great. Our volunteer will have varied duties from helping to set up the dining area, serving meals to our guests and of course cleaning up after the meal. Our meal program has been serving anywhere from 120 to 180 people, so we usually need around 20 or so volunteers. Without our volunteers, it would be difficult if not impossible to accomplish our mission. Whether you have helped in the past or this is your first time we would love to have you join us for this worthwhile and rewarding experience.

For those individuals who are unable to volunteer some of their time but still want to help out, monetary donations are always welcome for the 'OMPH Community Meals.' If you are interested in volunteering or want more information, please email Tara Montgomery at jazzcat9@ptd.net or contact Pat or Georgia Hogan at 717-738-0825.



HOLY HOUR AND HEALING SERVICE

The Parish Pastoral Council and I would like to invite you to a time to gather in prayer for the survivors of clergy abuse, for their families, and for the reparation of the sins of the clergy and those in leadership roles within the Catholic Church **and** for the healing of all on **Wednesday, October 24th**. We will have a Holy Hour and a Healing Service from **6:30-7:30** followed by some time to talk about and share our feelings about the Grand Jury Report. May God continue to bless us and Our Mother of Perpetual Help watch over and protect us as we move forward as a Eucharistic Community.
Fr. John

DIOCESAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Registration is now available at www.hbgdiocese.org/women, for the **4th annual Diocesan Women's Conference**, taking place **Saturday, October 20**, at **Bishop McDevitt High School**. Theme is *Women of Life and Love: Celebrating the Beauty of Humanae Vitae*. Keynote Speaker is **Jennifer Fulwiler** of Austin, TX, well-known Catholic radio personality, speaker, and author. The title of her keynote address is: "**Pro-Choice to Pro-Life Conversion**." This conference includes **36 workshops** from a blue-ribbon panel of speakers, a **Eucharistic Holy Hour** with Divine Mercy Chaplet and Benediction, **Confession** available throughout much of the day, beautiful music from "**Women at the Well**", lots of **Catholic exhibitors**, good food, **Mass with Bishop Gainer** as Principal Celebrant and Homilist, and fellowship with hundreds of women. **Last year, 900 women attended** this conference. Besides the online registration, registration brochures are also available at the church. This conference is available for all women both within and outside of our diocese. We expect another large crowd this year. We would love to see you there! Thank you!

IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

We will be publishing the names of your dear loved ones who are seriously ill or injured. After the period of one month their names will be removed. **For example, names announced in the bulletin the third week of the month will be removed the third week of the following month.** If at that time prayers are still needed, please feel free to contact the parish office, and we will be more than happy to re-publish your loved one's name.

Bishop Ronald Gainer, Phoenix Rann, Margaret Gardner, Brenda Crawford, Abigail Lowe-Critchfield, Michael Lillis, Richard Warner, Anna Leshner, Florence, Windish, Gloria Reynolds, Patrick Michael Ward, Jeff Gorman, Wanda Rutt, Pat Fry, Robert Bevans, Bob Eisenbise, Carlos Luciano, Margot Arden, Jennifer Ranker, Neil Gruber, Mary Kay Hensel, and Tillie Bocabello.

SANCTUARY LAMP

You may have the Sanctuary Lamp burn for a sick or deceased loved one for a donation of \$5, to defray the cost of the candles. This week the candle burns for Lou Leone.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

Parents of 8th-12th graders, is your teen coming with Radiate Youth Group to Steubenville Youth Conference next summer? Main Campus 4 July 12-14 is the date for your calendar. I need to know by October 20th so I can register your teen on November 6th of this year when registration opens. The down payment to hold the spot is \$40.00 per teen and the remaining balance is determined after fundraising takes place in February. Contact me at 717-989-8900 or email me at deniseives89@yahoo.com. In His Service, Denise Ives



TREASURES ABOUND!



Find your treasure at OMPH School's Treasure Island Auction on **Saturday, November 3rd**! Purchase your ticket(s) in advance for \$20 and receive 5 Treasure Tickets at the door! For more information, or to purchase tickets, call or stop by the School Office (717-738-2414). Bring your friends and get ready for an evening of fun, food, and winnings! Doors open at 6p.m. Auctioning begins at 7 p.m. If you have a treasure you would like to share, please contact the Development Office (717-738-2414). **You must be 21 or over to attend.**



Religious Education Corner:

**RE Registration For The 2018/2019 Year
Is Now Closed As Of Monday, October 1st.**

**The Are NO RE Classes This Sunday Due To
40 Hours. Please Attend 40 Hours This Sunday,
Monday, Or Tuesday With Your Family In Order To
Receive RE Class Attendance Credit. We Will See
You Again At Our Regularly Scheduled Class Time
Next Sunday, October 14th.**

Kelly Lawrence