



Homiletic Guide – Who’s Keeping Score?

August 25, 2024 – Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a,15-17,18b – We will serve the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34 – Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32 (Long version) – Be subordinate to one another... The two shall be one flesh; I speak of Christ and the Church.

Gospel: John 6:60-69 – Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

The following notes are provided as a leadoff for your reflection—it is not necessary to address every bullet point. As you prepare your homily for this weekend, it may be helpful to reflect on some of the tensions we see between our contemporary cultural realities and today’s readings:

- **“Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord”** (Eph 5:22).
When taken out of context, this line has been used to justify the domination of husbands over their wives in many Christian households. However, the fuller context makes clear that a mutual subordination out of reverence for Christ is what is called for (Eph 5:21).
 - The Homiletic Directory on the Vatican website (n. 122) gives a good explanation of this teaching.
 - The core of this teaching is about loving service: every family member is equally called to generously serve the others or to ask for help when in need. Following the example of Christ, help is then given freely and cheerfully, even to the point of sacrificing one’s own priorities, without counting the cost or keeping score.
 - Both the husband and the wife equally make the decision to sacrifice and serve, yet the complementary actions carried out by each may differ.



- **The sacramental union of a man and a woman is an image of the love of Christ for the Church.** (Eph [5:31-32](#)) This passage contains the heart of the Church’s teaching on the distinctiveness of a sacramental marriage:
 - In the Eucharist, we the baptized receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ, and through that bodily union we become what we are –the Bride of Christ. As the Bridegroom, Christ lays down his life to show us the true meaning of love (cf. CCC, [1612-1617](#)) and the significance of bodily union (Eph [5:28-30](#)). Christian Marriage is modeled on that covenant relationship (cf. CCC, [796](#)).
 - Therefore, Marriage is an indissoluble and faithful relationship between a man and a woman, naturally open to receiving the gift of new life (cf. CCC, [2360-2365](#)).
 - For Christians, other understandings of marriage do not live up to the standard of love we have received from Christ.
- To be sure, marriage is not always easy, and not everyone nowadays is open to the Church’s teaching on the sacrament of Marriage. Some want marriage to be easily dissoluble for any reason or no reason whatsoever. Others want it to be an “open,” non-exclusive relationship. Some seek to take children out of the equation.
- **That is not Christian Marriage.** Like the multitude in today’s Gospel, many are walking away muttering to themselves, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” (Jn [6:60](#)) People have lost hope for a love that can last a lifetime. But for those of us who are called and chosen, Jesus is our hope, and his teaching is Spirit and life ([6:63](#)). We stand with Peter when he said “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!” ([6:68](#)) Or we may join Joshua: “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!” (Jos [24:15](#))





- **Christian Marriage is good for us.** The truth is that God knows us better than we know ourselves. He created us in love and calls us to love, and only a love that reflects the fullness of God's love is worthy of that call. Marriage responds to our human longings while preparing us for the eternal embrace of God's merciful and infinite love in heaven. See the [Marriage Fact Sheet 2024](#) for more benefits for couples, children, and society.
- For all who are married or may be called to marriage and family life, invite them to **take time to invest in their capacity for a Christ-like love.** This is the surest path to finding satisfaction, not only in marriage, but in their whole life:
 - **Children and young adults:** practice giving and serving at home or in the community without expecting anything in return.
 - **Married couples:** discuss how today's readings call you to renew your commitment, pray for and serve one another, and grow together in love.
 - **For those whose marriage is not sacramental:** God loves you, and the Church is here to journey with you! Take time to reflect together on the graces that might be yours through the blessing of a convalidated marriage, as well as the spiritual and human growth that will be required of you to embrace a sacramental, lifelong love.
 - **For people who have experienced a divorce:** God has not abandoned you! No human relationship is perfect, but discernment is required. Healing through the annulment process may help prepare you for a sacramental love that endures.





- The ***Radiate Love Marriage Initiative***

- The Catholic Church throughout California is progressing along the year-long *Radiate Love* initiative to deepen our appreciation for the gift of Marriage.
- Highlight any activities that the parish will be sponsoring in the coming months, and invite couples and parents to explore the resources on the [website](#), especially those for marriage enrichment or designed for faith sharing at home.

Note for homilists: This Homiletic Guide is intended to help you encourage your people to invest in their marital relationship, share the faith with their children, and open their hearts to recognize the ways the Lord is leading them to radiate love out to the world. The [Marriage Fact Sheet 2024](#) offers some important background information for your review, but not necessarily to include in your homily. Although the social trends regarding marriage in California are not great right now, it is important to be positive, practical, and personal.

This *Guide* is just one resource among many others designed for your parish ministries or your parishioners' home use. You may want to take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources for August (bulletin insert or announcement, prayer card, blessing, intercessions, videos, etc.) on the *Radiate Love* website: www.radiatelove.info. In particular, be sure to make use of the [Intercessory Prayers and Prayer for Greater Love in Families](#) at all weekend Masses.

