



Homiletic Guide – Love Is a Verb!

April 6, 2025 – The Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21 – See, I am doing something new!

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 126 – The Lord has done great things for us.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14 – Straining forward, I continue my pursuit toward the goal.

Gospel: John 8:1-11 – The woman caught in adultery: “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

The following notes are provided as a leadoff for your reflection—it is not necessary to address every bullet point in your homily. With that in mind, here are some thoughts to ponder:

- **In Christian marriage, the covenant of husband and wife means that the heart of each offers the other a place of irreplaceable belonging for the rest of their lives.**
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 - This mutual belonging is not a transactional contract. It is not about “I will do XYZ for you if you do ABC for me.” Rather, it is a total, faithful, and free gift of each to the other. In this way, it respects the infinite dignity of each as a child of God, created in love and for love, designed to love in the way God loves.
 - In the security of this irreplaceable belonging, human beings thrive. They are most free to pursue and develop their gifts when the purpose of those gifts is manifest: that they are to be given first as gift to the beloved and the children that may come as a fruit of their union, and then as a witness to the world.



- The experience of irreplaceable belonging can be summarized in one word: joy. It is the pure joy of love. In this sense, it is a foretaste of our eternal embrace by God, who is perfect love.
 - St. John Chrysostom understood this reality when he offered the following words for new husbands to say to their wives: “I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself. For the present life is nothing, and my most ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not being separated in the life reserved for us.” (See the Catechism, n. 2365)
- **If Christian marriage is so great and so beautiful, why does it feel so hard sometimes?**
 - As Jesus showed us on the cross, love always comes with a cost. And when we miss the mark of conjugal love through human frailty, misunderstanding, or sinful choices, it is often our spouse or children who pay the price.
 - It is then that God provides a path through the wilderness (Isaiah 43:19), made straight by the example of Christ’s love for us. And we rejoice in the words of the Psalm: “The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy!” (Ps 126)
 - Even so, it takes continual effort to grow in the interpersonal skills required to make lifelong love work. The words of Saint Paul in the second reading can be applied to this task in every marriage: “Forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:13-14)





- **In this Lenten season, we are all called to repentance, and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation can serve as a model for renewal and growth in love after a hurtful experience between a couple or within the family.**
 - Humbly listening to and sharing with one another in openness, trust, and vulnerability makes forgiveness possible. This frees both the forgiven and the forgiver to make reconciliation real, bringing healing and a new beginning.
 - The first step is to recognize that you have messed things up: in prayer, conduct an examination of conscience to recognize your mistakes and take responsibility for them, without blaming others or making excuses.
 - Second, prayerfully reflect on the wrongdoing to develop a sincere sense of contrition for having offended or harmed the other. Ask for God's assistance to feel the gravity of the harm and develop a firm purpose of amendment.
 - Third, humbly go to your spouse or loved one and sincerely apologize. Use discretion in naming the offense to avoid making the wound worse, while avoiding distortions. Emphasize your awareness, sorrow for having fallen short of expectations, and the desire to do better in the future.
 - Fourth, ask for forgiveness. Depending on the gravity of the offense, a betrayal of trust may take time and support to heal, but Jesus encourages us to forgive without condition. Pray the Lord's Prayer together.
 - If your spouse is seeking your forgiveness, reflect honestly on how you may have also fallen short of expectations and ask for mutual forgiveness.
 - Fifth, prayerfully discuss how God can help you both to prevent a repeat and decide on steps you can each take to avoid falling into the same mistakes.
 - Seek sacramental absolution in confession as well, to restore sanctifying grace in your spiritual life, and frequent the Eucharist together for spiritual nourishment.
 - Check in with each other from time to time as a way to provide support and accountability for your growth together in holiness and love.



- **In this Sunday's Gospel, Saint John gives us an extreme example of God's love and forgiveness for all sinners. Yet the consequences of this grave sin against marriage remain. How can God lead couples dealing with a profound betrayal of trust into a true renewal of their marriage?**
 - The homily is not a place to offer simplistic answers to the most challenging problems in human relationships. Do not try it.
 - Emphasize instead that God desires all of us to thrive in life and grow in holiness as we journey together toward eternal life with Him.
 - In the face of intense suffering in relationships, true love—willing the good of the other in the model of Christ—may require seeking help and a willingness to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that harm is not repeated endlessly.
 - For couples who are mutually committed to make the effort, the Church offers pastoral accompaniment and the assistance of peers who have walked that path before in movements such as Retrouvaille.

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. Emphasize that all are invited to explore the monthly 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, especially through the witness of a commitment to family life that leads to growth in holiness as the domestic church. The [Marriage Fact Sheet 2024](#) offers some important background information for your review, but not necessarily to include in your homily. The social trends regarding marriage in California are not great right now, but it is important to be positive, practical, and personal.

This Homiletic Guide is 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 April](#) (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 the [Blessing for Families after Communion](#) at all weekend Masses.

These tools are designed to help pastoral leaders fulfill their canonical duties toward married couples and families in accordance with [Canon 1063](#):

- “Pastors of souls are obliged to take care that their ecclesiastical community offers the Christian faithful the assistance by which the matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit and advances in perfection. This assistance must be offered especially by: 1) preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youth, and adults, and even the use of instruments of social communication, by which the Christian faithful are instructed about the meaning of Christian marriage and about the function of Christian spouses and parents... [and] 4) help offered to those who are married, so that faithfully preserving and protecting the conjugal covenant, they daily come to lead holier and fuller lives in their family.”

