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Nuptial Theology for Everybody

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Nuptial Theology for Everybody

I am glad to be here with you listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Because only in the strength of the Spirit can we grasp the beauty of the nuptial mystery. The nuptial mystery is the unity of distinction, of the love that can only be lived in God. In the first chapter of Genesis, we find the image of God in the loving distinction of men and women. He created them—male and female He created them. We start from the simple fact that we are always born as distinct persons. Sexuality characterizes people in the deeper dimension. We must not dwell only on the external distinction of bodies, but consider a far greater distinction between males and females as it is manifested in the central nervous system, in the muscles, bones, glands, and so on.

This distinction is to state precisely the connection between a purpose and an end, of communion, and of relationships that are essential for everyone to be fully themselves. We are each autonomous, but none is able to be fully themselves if they are alone. We need others. We are structurally predisposed to come out of ourselves to find others. And this is true not just for the erotic dimension. As we come out from ourselves, we find our identity, we find ourselves; and this is confirmed in all human beings at every stage of life. The child discovers his own identity from the relationship he is having with those in front of him. It is the same for the bride and the bridegroom and between friends. This instinct to go out from ourselves, this instinct for communion, which translates into a need to be loved and to show love, demonstrates even more fully how we are made in the image and likeness of God. And this ache we experience, to receive and to give, is not focused solely on finding a spouse. The energy contained within this desire to go out is much more dynamic and powerful. This longing to love, to go and to meet is meant not just for a bride or a groom.

With respect to love, it is as though we feel that a car is enough for us, but we received a plane; or we think that a glass of water is enough, but we received a river. We feel that a breath of air is enough, but we received the sky. In other words, the longing to go out and to

receive love is infinitely greater than the giving and receiving we find in a married couple alone. Marriage is not the goal of life. In fact, in a sense, marriage is a pathway to even greater loss when a spouse dies, and we feel the loneliness of death.

We feel and understand nuptial love as this longing to go out, this inner urge to reciprocity which is much higher in quality and quantity than the sexual instinct alone. Those who believe that their emotional desire can be fulfilled only in the sexual dimension have an impoverished understanding. On the other side, many people believe that this instinct for communion, this nuptial dimension, can find fulfillment only when it can be expressed in a full reciprocity with another person through human marriage.

How many couples can testify that the thirst for love is much larger than the response that my spouse is able to give? And here, we can understand the source of so many betrayals, the belief that what my wife does not give me, I can find in another woman. What my husband cannot give me, I can find in another man. But you will never find a man who can answer your infinite thirst for love. You will never find a woman—even if you change women many times in your life—who will meet this need, because you possess an instinct for infinite love. We think we can fill this instinct with other things. People erroneously think that those who get married may fully realize their nuptiality, and, as a result, think that those who, for various reasons, are not married are alone and will never be able to live and experience nuptial love.

Marriage is not the purpose of this life. Marriage cannot be explained completely and cannot be fully realized in this life. It is as if one would propose to himself to drink all the water of the river flowing next to his house. And this would be the greatest injustice because even those who marry often experience failures, fatigue, difficulties. Nuptial love is in the middle. This—our nuptial structure—is the means: it is the rail line, but it is not the station; it is the way through which to achieve the definitive marriage with the Lord. This definitive marriage also applies to those who do not believe in it, because they will be tormented all their life trying to find something else to meet the nuptial need and

finally invoking death to say, “I have not found it, and I’m tired of living.” These people are tired of living because they have not taken the right train, were not on the right rails, and because they do not know what station the train was headed to in their lives. Many try to find other approaches to life. They walk through the train, change positions, look out the window, but they do not stop to ask, “Where is the train going?”

What is the destination of this train of love that I am living with my wife, with my husband? What is the destination of this train of love that I am living in a friendship, in my ministry? Nuptial love is in the middle, the way through which we realize the definitive marriage with the Lord. *This* marriage is the purpose of life. If my ultimate destiny is the final wedding with God, then my life must be deeply nuptial. If my destiny is the wedding with God, I have to try to be constantly nuptial, day-to-day, knowing that I will become like God, as stated in 1 John 1. I cannot figure out how to get on the road, and how to live the journey, if I do not know the destination.

We need to try to understand what this marriage with God is. In Revelation 19:7-9 we find: “‘Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.’—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’”

This is written for all of us, not just for those who get married. If it were only for the married, all of you would flee from this room. But blessed are those who are invited to the wedding of the Lamb. How many times Jesus used the wedding feast to describe our future condition, when He will come to serve us. The Lord says, “Where I am, I want my servant to be as well.” It never enters the mind of Jesus to live alone. He wants us there, too. The wedding of the Lamb is the final point of everyone’s story, even of my story, because it has been planned since the creation of the world (Ephesians 1): “Blessed in Christ before the foundation of the world.” But why has God thought of me from time immemorial? Why does God love me always? Are we just to become

a dry leaf falling to rot on the ground? He is a God who wants to give of Himself and draw us to Him. Our destiny is to become “one” with God totally. It is astonishing to think what Jesus means when he prays, “That they may be one as you and I are one.”

How many of you looking at a beautiful couple in love say: “I wish we were like that couple.” An even greater beauty will be before us when we are one with the Father, one with the Son and one with the Spirit. How phenomenal! We will be one among us, and this is exactly what the Apostle Paul understood and explained in 2 Corinthians 11:2: “I feel for you in fact a divine jealousy, since I betrothed you to one husband, to whom I present you as a virgin, chaste to Christ.” The apostle feels that this church to whom he writes is the bride of Christ. Paul is saying he could achieve nothing greater than that you may encounter Christ the bridegroom, because he is the fullness of life. We could say that we are “engaged” to the Lord. He chose humanity as a fiancé, and this moves me. We are desired by Him, and this is astonishing to me. The creature is desired by the Creator.

As we enter into Holy Week, the Gospel will remind us of the expression of Jesus when he said: “I eagerly desired.” A man knows what it means to desire a woman, and a woman knows what it means to desire a man. But how does God desire us? How great is God’s desire? Jesus says, “I have desired to eat this Passover with you. I have desired to give you my body. I have desired to give you my body to love. You thought that the exchange of two bodies in bed was the apex. I, God, have desired to give you my body for love to allow you to participate in the same divine unity, the unity of love, the divine inebriation of which human inebriation is only a timid announcement.” If the purpose is marriage to God, He certainly does not play favorites. We all are qualified and have the ability to live in a nuptial way to achieve this marriage with God.

During my visit, I have reflected on your trees here in Virginia: every person is allowed to marry God, like all the trees reach to the sky. Just as all the trees look for light, every person looks for relationship with God. We are all entitled to this marriage, but living in a nuptial way

is not just about getting married. In fact, sometimes married people think they are living in nuptiality but they are not. They are playing the part of a nuptial couple, a comedy of a marriage, but they are not living in the fullness of love toward the spouse. Living in a nuptial way is possible for those who are married, but also for individuals, separated, remarried and widowed persons. So what does it mean to live in a nuptial way?

Three points:

1. To love nuptially means growing in the ability to love, up to giving everything, including our own life.

This aspiration and growth is possible for everyone. Jesus tells us that there is no greater love than that of one who lays down their life. Jesus did not say that there is no greater love than the man who has found the most beautiful woman! There is no greater love than of one who gives his life for others. Jesus says that those who have lost their souls for me and for the gospel will find it. Growing in love—for the single, separated, divorced, and so on—means day by day enlarging the heart in giving and receiving!

On this point, we must be especially careful because we are educating future generations only to receive. The child today is at the center of all: games, parents, grandparents, uncles. Everything is for him, his room, his things; he is at the center. When he reaches the age of 17, what will he say: “She is mine! It is for me!” He will take this attitude because he has not learned to give. We have to teach our children to give free gifts without waiting for an answer. What is the greatest love that you have shown in your life as a couple? When you give, and you receive no answer. When you give, maybe in tears. When you give, and it does not seem that your children are aware of it. Growing in love, to give and receive, is to be prepared for the wedding with God to give all of ourselves to Him and to welcome him totally. So, the first point is to grow in our capacity to love in a way that means giving before receiving.

2. To love nuptially means to be faithful to love.

Unfortunately, we have applied the word indissolubility only to marriage, but the greatest indissolubility is the one that God has for each of us. This is the indissolubility that we have to give to all our brothers and sisters: a love that never ends, in every circumstance, without pause. Loving our enemies means that there can be no suspension of love. Who of you has for a day stopped loving their child? Who of you has switched off love to be able to sleep peacefully? True love cannot be switched off; it is unbreakable, constant, and continuous. Here, Jesus has very strong words. I cannot mention all of them, but one will be sufficient: "If you do good only to those who love you, what credit will you have? Pagans do the same."

3. Fecundity (fruitfulness) in love: this means not just to have your own children but to know that every person is a child of God, and each of us is called to help grow the life of those around us.

I cannot be so excessive in the attention to my child that I am unable to greet my neighbor. How is God looking at me? My son is a son of God! It is bad when we do not consider another as a son of God. Fruitfulness in love is to help grow life in those who are around us. A little self-examination test for you: Am I used to making those around me feel better? Are people around me growing? Are they enjoying their life? This applies to spouses, widows, single, remarried, and also to priests. That is why marriage is made for all, and all are called to nuptial love, through the various ways that each situation offers.

But be careful! God calls us in our current situation. Sometimes I hear someone saying: God did not want me to meet a woman. God did not want me to meet a man. Or, unfortunately, God gave me this wife; unfortunately, God gave me this husband. It is not He who decides. God gives us freedom of choice. He blesses our choices but does not replace them. God knows what happens. He knows that with muddled eyes, I can choose the wrong woman, because the decision always belongs to our freedom. God knows what happens in our lives, but He does not bring us on a leash like a dog. It is not that Jesus says, I

do not want you to get married because you are fool, or I want you to marry because you are smart. The most important thing is that when a couple gets married, Jesus agrees to live with them. So being single, married, or married with this person, or being separated from the spouse is never a divine decision, but always the fruit of our personal freedom and of those around us. If a wife leaves her husband, this is the fruit of the woman's freedom to decide or the fruit of a man's decision to leave his wife. The same is true of other individuals—single, separated, divorced and widowed. We must find more opportunities for encounters between people, a problem that is especially acute in the age of super communication. In this age, we are less able to create a communion, to create opportunities for encounter. Virtual meeting has replaced actual meeting. There may be personal reasons for the lack of connection and relationship. People may be less developed in the capacity to love, or outside in a social environment, or neglected in a church community. There are many reasons for which one may not be able to be married that leave large emotional and spiritual wounds.

The good news is that God calls everyone to the marriage with *him*; he calls within the concrete situation in which we find ourselves, whether by chance or by free choice or by our mistakes. He always calls everyone to a wedding without exception. It's up to us to choose to celebrate or not celebrate this marriage. Do you remember the parable of the guests at the wedding feast? The king enters the room, and everyone is wearing the wedding garment. But one had no garment, because he had chosen not to marry; he had chosen only to eat. He calls us to put us in motion, where we are, with whom we are, through our ability, whether we are married, single, separated, remarried, divorced, or widowed. He calls us to make choices about where we can love more intensely. This is the sign of our growth and of the knowledge that we are moving towards a greater love.

And here, unfortunately, let me express my condolences for the suffering of so many couples who seem to me to have stopped. They are parked on the highway that leads to the fullness of love but they choose to stop in a parking area; there is greenery, there is shadow, it is nice. How sad it is to stay on a train that isn't moving. It is sad to be

on the highway but stopped in a parking area. But I do not want this to remain only a spoken word. Let me provoke you. Ask yourself this question: "Over the past five years, has my love for my wife grown? Am I giving signs that show my love for my husband is growing?" Because love does not exist just in our head. There is the love of service, love of true signs of the heart. Am I growing in these kinds of love? To those who are single, widowed, separated or divorced, I ask you to ask yourselves: "Am I growing in love? Do I love people more than in the past? Am I maturing in the idea of giving all of myself and more often to a higher and higher quality of love?" To do this means responding to the call of the Lord, the Bridegroom. Seek for more of love! And you will be even greater witnesses of Jesus, who changes the water of our poverty into the new wine of His love.

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