

October 4, 2015 The Divine Plan for Marriage and Family Homily

My brothers and sisters, in the late nineteenth century, the English writer, H. G. Wells, penned one of his most famous novels, "The Invisible Man". So popular was Mr. Well's novel that, years later, the story was adapted for the silver screen. The film featured the inestimable actor Claude Rains as the main character, Dr. Griffin, a brilliant scientist. In brief, Dr. Griffin makes an astonishing discovery while conducting research in his laboratory. He discovers chemicals that make human tissue invisible. Sometime later, he carries out the procedure on himself and, he, too, makes himself invisible. Although he cannot be seen, people inexplicably can sense his presence, his powers.

In today's gospel Jesus offers us his words on marriage. He challenges our values and our way of life. It is perhaps no accident that his sobering and, what appears to be controversial, teaching on marriage and divorce occur only after Jesus has spoken of the high cost of discipleship. It is a daily struggle to live out God's design for human love.

The antagonists of Jesus, the Pharisees, want to test Jesus, put him on the spot, and trap him. Ultimately, their goal is to goad Jesus into making a statement which would contradict the Law of Moses, a teaching which they interpreted quite liberally. (In the Book of Deuteronomy, we are told that a man may divorce his wife if he finds in her something indecent. See Deut. 24:1-4)

It is clear that the Pharisees have an agenda against Our Lord. The adversaries of Jesus concern themselves with personal rights. Jesus, on the other hand, speaks of the divine plan for marriage and the family. He makes reference to the mystery of creation. (Mk.10:6-8) What Jesus does is effectively and persuasively speaks of the invisible Hand of God, truly present, though unseen, in every relationship blest by the Almighty.

Just consider: First, by the mystery of his Divine providence. He calls the man and women to embrace marriage; Second, He seals their union. "What God has joined, no one must divide" (Mk.10:9) Third, He sustains their marriage by promising them Divine Assistance. A couple can only fulfill their mission in life if they are supported by Divine Grace. "Behold, I am with you always" (Mt. 28:20), said the Lord.

Every marriage is a reflection of the relationship of God to man. In his commentary on Christ's dialogue with the Pharisees, the fine scholar Erasmo Leiva Merikakis makes the following point: "Let us make no mistake about it: we, would-be disciples of Jesus, are in fact the Pharisees Jesus is here addressing for, as we have said before, all of us to various degrees, are always in a state of self righteous rebellion against God's deepest purpose, which is always the unifying work of forgiveness and love".

A few questions: How hard is my heart when it comes to the teachings of Jesus? We recall the words of Jesus: "It was because of your hardness of heart that Moses permitted divorce" (Mk.10:5). Do we at once recognize in the Pharisees dramatic confrontation with Jesus an embarrassing and precise echo of the drama of our lives and attitudes?

What happens in any society when giving your word is rendered meaningless? Has our sense of commitment vanished? Are the promises a Christian man and woman make to each other outdated, unrealistic? Have too many couples failed to sense God's invisible hand in their marriage?

Since God is the author of marriage and the family, let us regard the Sacrament of marriage as a precious gift and make a personal resolution to be faithful witnesses to the sanctity and holiness of the vows we make to the Lord!

Amen!