

## **I. Dangerous Homily**

- A. You know preaching today can be dangerous.**
- B. The preacher is caught between a rock and a hard place.**
- C. You know, that passage from St. Paul, “...wives be submissive to your husbands...”**

- 1. On the one hand, I have the husbands cheering me on, “Go to it Father!”**
- 2. On the other hand, I have the wives who are saying, “Don’t you dare Father.”**

## **II. Seriously, however, there are a great many things that a priest does not know about marriage and family life, at least, by his own experience.**

- A. The celibate priest will never know what it is like to wait up late at night for his son or daughter to come home from a party.**

- 1. The priest will never know what it is to send a child off to war and pray that they return safely.**
- 2. The priest will never know the joy of holding his newborn son or daughter in his arms.**
- 3. The priest will never know the joy and intimacy of the relationship with his wife...or the struggles of making that relationship work...**
- 4. And, of course, the list goes on and on...**

- B. We may look at this passage from St. Paul in the same way. We may think this passage of scripture out of touch or lacking understanding of the real world...**

- 1. Yet, if we do view it that way, we are automatically excluding from our field of vision a portion of God’s revelation to us about his relationship with us and how he views our relationship with each other.**
- 2. So, it might behoove us to look a little deeper than just that cursory reflection.**

### III. Fireproof.

#### A. Perhaps, a more modern example can help us to understand.

1. The example is a movie called "Fireproof". Although the writing is not the best and some of the acting will never receive an academy award, it is really quite an excellent movie about relationships.

2. It is the story of a fireman and his wife who are struggling in their relationship.

3. He is not a bad man.

a) *In so many ways, he is a very good man.*

b) *He believes in God. He is a Christian man.*

c) *He is a firefighter and a very courageous and good firefighter at that.*

4. Yet, there is a problem in his relationship with his wife.

#### B. They are like two ships passing in the night.

a) *They barely speak to one another.*

b) *They rarely eat together.*

c) *The love seems to have gone out of their relationship.*

d) *In fact, they are close to divorce.*

#### C. The problem is that he cannot understand how he does all of these amazing things in his life as a fireman;

1. He risks his life to save other peoples lives:

2. He runs into burning buildings to save a small child.

3. He pushes a car off of railroad tracks in order to save some teenagers trapped in the car while a train moves on...

4. Yet, this does not seem to matter in the least to his wife.

5. He does not understand why she will not respect him like everyone else respects him.

6. He does not understand why she will not bow to him when he walks in the door, because of all the things that he does outside the home.

7. She, on the other hand, does not understand why he seems not to care the least about what she is going through...he seems oblivious to the fact that she is also working full-time, caring for her ailing parents and doing all of the household chores...washing the laundry, doing the dishes, etc.

8. She wonders why he is so wrapped up in saving up for his boat, while at the same time, he comes home, sits in front of the computer and looks at things which are less than edifying...

**D. Then, when things really started to get bad, his Father takes him under his wing, gives him a book and asks him to promise to do what it says in that book for 40 days.**

1. The book contains one task that he must perform regarding his relationship with his wife every day for 40 days.

2. The fireman promises to do it, but only out of love for his dad.

3. He wants to get his wife back, but he promises to do it for his dad.

4. And he does do it:

*a) The first day the lesson is simply: "Do no harm." This day is simply do not say anything to harm your relationship with your wife; no harsh words or actions.*

*b) The second day is "Do some act of gratuitous kindness for your wife."*

*c) So on and so forth, every day goes by with him performing each of the tasks of the Love Dare faithfully...*

*d) All of them he faithfully performs through the 20<sup>th</sup> day except one...*

*e) He seems unable to perform the task of praying for his wife...*

*f) Until he gets to the midpoint...and after having done all these things with her rejecting him...he finds on the table an envelope...*

*g) In that envelope...are the divorce papers from his wife...*

5. This is the true crisis point and he cannot understand it...so he phones his spiritual director...his Dad...

*a) He realizes that up to this point, he was performing the tasks always with the expectation of getting something in return...*

*b) Now...he had to perform the tasks not because he expected in return...but purely and simply...because he loved her...*

*c) But there was something else...he realized that he had to love her like God had loved us...Christ had freely given all out of love for us without expecting anything in return...and in order for him to love as God loves...he had first to put faith, hope and love in God...then there could be faith, hope and love in his relationship with his wife...*

6. This is what he does. Although he has received the divorce papers, he continues...and he continues without expecting anything in return and he continues simply because he loves her...and because he loves Christ...

7. Soon everything begins to change...

*a) Now I am not going to spoil the ending, but suffice it to say that everything changes.*

## **IV. Conclusion**

**A. My friends, this is the lesson of St. Paul. It is exactly the same lesson.**

1. When St. Paul tells us: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." Doesn't that sound a lot like the journey that fireman and his wife endured.

2. Certainly, St. Paul acknowledges that men and women are different in their relationship with each other. Big surprise!

3. However, listen again to the words of St. Paul, but this time think of the lesson of that movie:

*a) "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.*

*b) "He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church..."*

**B. Finally, it is true that there is a great deal that the priest does not know about marriage and the family and we can make a very long list, but there is something that he does know...**

1. He knows the relationship of the Son, Jesus Christ, to the Church.
2. He does sit in that confessional several hours a week.
3. Those that come to the confessional are husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.
4. One thing he knows is the profound need for forgiveness and the need to forgive.
5. He sees young couples preparing for marriage. He sees how certain issues get glossed over and other issues are treated with particular tenderness.
6. He sees how somethings come first and others last.
7. He sees the couple still together, after 50, 60 or even 70 years who have just received word that one of them will soon be called home.

**C. Finally and perhaps most importantly, there is something else that he knows concretely and experientially.**

1. He holds, every day, a simple piece of bread and he utters the words "This is my body" and holds the cup of wine and utters "This is my blood."
2. And he knows that he holds in his hands every act of charity, every sacrificial act of every person who ever was and every will be now united in the one and whole Christ and the selfless sacrifice Christ offered on the cross...the one sacrifice that is now present in our midst...