

# MARRIAGE: GOD'S GIFT OF LOVE SUSTAINS YOU

*Husbands and wives need each other. God made them female and male out of love, for love. The love between a husband and wife comes from God.*

FROM BISHOP NOONAN

*Marriage is not the Creation of any Government, June 2013*

*Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" He said in reply, "have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." Matthew 19:3-6*

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Recently there has been much talk about the Supreme Court decision regarding the Defense of Marriage Amendment (DOMA) and California's Proposition 8. Neither of these rulings directly affects the Constitution or laws in Florida, though it is naïve to expect they will not be challenged in the future. The Church will continue to vigorously protect our age-old belief in marriage in our state, should it be challenged.

While the decisions of the Supreme Court may bring about the opportunity for a couple who have civilly made a commitment to each other to access goods and services from or through the government, such as health care or military benefits and taxation, it does not change the way Scripture defines marriage, the context of which was born long before the birth of Catholicism. Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of "the wedding-feast of the Lamb." Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and its "mystery," its institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, its various realizations throughout the history of salvation, the difficulties arising from sin and its renewal "in the Lord" in the New Covenant of Christ and the Church.

In Genesis, we read God makes female and male out of love, for love. The love between a husband and wife is placed in their hearts by God to fulfill his design for each person. We respect all people with compassion and sensitivity. For the Catholic Church, marriage is more than a social contract made by two people. It is more than the benefits afforded married couples by society. The sanctity of marriage unites the entire being of spouses in love and is a sign of God's love for humanity. It is the joining of a man and woman to be co-creators with God to bring children into the world.

The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life: "so they are no longer two, but one flesh." They are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving. This human communion is confirmed, purified, and completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given through the Sacrament of Marriage. It is deepened by lives of the common faith and by the Eucharist received together.

What does the Supreme Court decision regarding DOMA have to do with the Catholic Church's belief about the Sacrament of Marriage? Nothing. Marriage is not the creation of any government. What the decisions do is highlight the countercultural nature of Jesus Christ and, as Pope Francis has spoken, our own yielding to separation from God. It challenges us to be fervent in building a culture of marriage as Sacrament. It requires us to be heralds of the Gospel and stand steadfastly together in promoting and defending marriage as a Sacrament, the joining together of a man and woman to be co-creators with God to bring children into the world. It begs us, as people of faith, to be courageous against this tide of disbelief and lead others as the first apostles also did to Christ. It calls us to prayer; to ask forgiveness for our neglect, and for those who review the Court's decisions and their implications. It demands our evaluation of the common good and the future of our society under God.

I hope you will join me in enkindling a deeper faith in the hearts of our people as we come to understand and experience the sacredness of the Sacrament of Marriage as it is born through, with and in Christ.