

Marriage and the Church

For in the resurrection they neither wed, nor are given to be wed, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

Marriage is an important topic in the New Church. We are told of a promise that Conjugal love or Marriage will be restored to be like marriages in the most ancient or celestial church. Additionally we are encouraged by such teachings that Conjugal Love is the fundamental love of heaven.

So such an important topic deserves some careful study to understand and appreciate what the Lord wants us to understand about marriage.

In the Gospel reading from Mark, Jesus has two seemingly unrelated stories. First is the question about divorce which leads to a discussion about adultery and the sixth commandment, the second is an episode where the Disciples try to send away children, but the Lord says “*of such is the kingdom of God.*” It is not an accident that marriage and children go together, and also that they are closely connected to the “Kingdom of God” or heaven.

The Lord’s purpose in creation is heaven from the human race. He loves all people and wants to make us happy. As great as the Lord’s love is, He wants us to be freedom, and so the good that He does from Providence is hidden, and the only way that we can directly experience the Lord’s love, is through other people.

This is part of the reason why the Lord puts an emphasis on marriage and children as pictures of heaven. The Lord’s goal is a heaven from the human race, and so people getting married and having children is a necessary part in populating heaven, but marriage and parenting also play a key role in helping prepare people to become angels.

CL 404. 404. XV. THAT WITH PARENTS, CONJUGIAL LOVE IS CONJOINED WITH THE LOVE OF INFANTS ... The spiritual causes are: That the human race may be multiplied and the angelic heaven therefrom enlarged; thus, that those may be born who will become angels, serving the Lord in the performance of uses in heaven and... is also the thought of married partners themselves. Moreover, they sometimes declare it, saying that they have enriched heaven with as many angels as they have descendants, and have put their mark upon society With as many servants as they have children.

Having children is only fulfilling part of the Lord’s goal. The other part is raising them for

heaven. Still, marriage is not only about populating the earth or even heaven. At the same time parents are trying to lead children on the path to heaven, the parents are also leaning to walk it, and grow towards heaven in serving that most important use. Marriage and raising children at a fundamental level, is heaven.

This is a familiar equation for New Church people, but can be a surprise for other Christians. People take Jesus' statement about not being "wed" (or "married") in heaven, to mean no marriage and no male and female after death. This is missing the fact that it is spiritual marriage that Jesus was teaching about in that instance, and that no-one can enter a spiritual marriage after death. Spiritual marriage is when each truth is united to its own good, or that the things we know from the Word, are united to living according to them. Having this spiritual marriage in our souls is what makes us "like the angels", and "like sons of God" or into the image of God. Which is why it says in Genesis, God made man (or mankind) in His Own image male and female.

Marriages on earth flow from the marriage of good and truth and also corresponds to the marriage of the Lord and the Church. The Spiritual marriage of good and truth is a fundamental for having and healthy and potentially eternal marriage on earth.

Although both parents have important gifts from the Lord to share with society, women have essential and obvious disposition towards these elements of spiritual service.

Both men and Women have a will and understanding or faculties adapted to receiving truth and good from the Lord. However with women, the will or love side is predominate. So women are born forms will or good Men are born forms of understanding or truth (CL 84, 160). This is apparent in how men are generally more interested in exploring and debating things, and women generally are more interested in relationships and personally connections, including caring for little children.

These examples are not just tendencies or cultural conditioning but correspondences based on the spiritual qualities of the masculine and feminine. This can also be seen in how the Word talks about women and mothers especially as an image of the church:

Alleluia, for the Lord God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and leap for joy, and let us give the glory to Him; for the wedding of the Lamb is come, and His wife has prepared herself.
Rev 19:6-7

We see in basically all women a desire to have children and barrenness in the Word is a source of sadness to the women, and having children a great joy.

This can be seen as simple confirmation of feminine nature, but this is also describing the church, which although it is made up of men and women, had a feminine quality when compared to the Lord. The idealization of the church as a bride preparing and looking toward marriage with the Lord shows how the Church should have love to the Lord at the center of all it does. Maybe that goes without saying for a church, but all too often as people of the church we can get side tracked with what we want, the success of our own ideas about what the church is or can be, and with our sense of spiritual accomplishment.

Being focused on the Lord first, is being spiritually faithful and loving spiritual marriage; the kind of marriage that also underlies having a healthy marriage on earth. It is how all people married, single, young and old can work on preparing for conjugal love.

It also helps us see why this 6th commandment is phrased in the negative: “Do not commit adultery”: If we are not faithful to the Lord or keeping Him in the center of our lives, then everything else will fall apart, and if we are faithful to the Lord then everything else will follow from that.

This love for the Lord, as the church is also tied to bringing His truth into the world by evangelization but especially by living it. This is how the church can bear spiritual children or offspring and care for it.

And again we can talk about the use itself, but we should not forget the love. The Lord shares His love with us when we share it with others. This is true in marriage and the love that husbands and wives share, as well as the love between parents and children. I don't think it is possible to overestimate the importance of the sphere of that love and security that children feel in the loving arms and care of a mother.

What does this look like the function of the church on earth? It might seem hard to picture a natural organization as providing this level of comfort and belonging, especially when so many people in it have human flaws. How could we make our church more of this kind of an environment? Lets look back at the reading from Mark. The Lord emphasized the importance of marriage and children. Marriage is uniting good and truth, and in the church we have learning the truths from the Word as an important first part, but it is not a church unless that is married to a love of putting those truths into life. The great thing about this marriage is that the attitude that goes along with it inspired new enlightenment in the ongoing search for deeper truths. Shunning adultery in the context of the church means shunning faith alone, or separating our lives from the truth we are learning. In addition it is to shun mixing merely human ideas or self focused loves

with worship and life of the church. A dangerous way this can show up in the church is instead of looking the Lord to see what He is teaching us to do, we look to the Word for confirming our own ideas by loopholes and twisting passages to mean what we want. Maybe saying we can do anything that we are not clearly told not to do, and making everything unclear.

Loving children in the context of the church also relates to teaching the Word and living the commandments, and how the uses of that life are what create a home where people are fed with spiritual nourishment and are able to grow. Sometimes the more masculine aspect of teaching the truth might seem like the more important part of the church, but it is the motherly side uniting that truth with love and fostering a life according to the Word that make a church alive and well.

Preparing people for the life of heaven is what it means for the Church to be a mother. Loving is an images of heaven, because a marriage of knowing the Lord in the Word, and doing what He teaches us in the commandments is what makes heaven. Caring for children and being like a child are images of heaven, because heaven is a place of innocence and loving to be led by the Lord. Marriage is an image of heaven because angels are all married, and they also have the marriage of good and truth in their hearts; they love to listen to the Lord and do what He teaches.

The church collectively as a mother, it is actually about trying to bring heaven on earth, we say “Thy will be done, as it is in heaven, also upon the earth.” This is why the Lord gives us the picture of the Holy City descending to earth.

This is an ongoing process to bring His truth to life, so that we can feel that love, and grow in our ability to share it, and eventually be prepared for our eternal home in heaven. Everyone who wants a happy marriage, everyone who wants to support marriage, and everyone who loves children can be involved on a spiritual level in making the church heaven on earth, by working on that spiritual marriage in their own soul.

When we have the church inside us, there is a home for the Lord, and there is a home for Conjugal love, whether we get to find our married partner on earth or in heaven.

For the human conjugal and religion go together at every step. Every advance and every step from religion and into religion is also an advance and step from the conjugal and into the conjugal that belongs to and is peculiar to the Christian. CL 80.

“ Glory be to the Lord Jesus Christ, The One God of Heaven and Earth... of His kingdom there shall be no end.”

Amen

READINGS: Mark 10:2-16; Luke 20:34-36; CL 41; TCR 313-315, 456; AC 5051

Mark 10

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2 And the Pharisees having come to Him, asked Him, Is it permitted for a husband to send away his wife? tempting Him.

3 But He answering, said to them, What did Moses command you? 4 And they said, Moses permitted us to write a document of divorce, and to send her away. 5 And Jesus answering, said to them, Because of your hard hearts he wrote you this commandment.

6 But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. 7 For the sake of this man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; 8 and they two shall become one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man sever.

10 And in the house again His disciples asked Him of this matter. 11 And He says to them, Whoever shall send away his wife, and wed another, commits adultery against her. 12 And if a wife send away her husband, and be wed to another, she commits adultery.

13 And they brought to Him little children, that He should touch them; and the disciples rebuked those who brought them to Him. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant, and said to them, Let the little children come to Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Amen I say to you, whoever shall not accept the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter into it. 16 And having taken them up in His arms, and putting His hands on them, He blessed them.

Luke 20: 34 And Jesus answering said to them, The sons of this age wed and are given to be wed; 35 but^o they who shall be held worthy to attain to that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither wed, nor are given to be wed; 36 for they cannot die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

CL 41. [Jesus] taught that people are not given in marriage in heaven by saying that those who

are held worthy to attain the second age neither marry nor are given in marriage.

The only kind of marriage meant here is spiritual marriage, and this clearly appears from the words that immediately follow, that they cannot die any more because they are like the angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.

By spiritual marriage, conjunction with the Lord is meant, and this is achieved on earth. And when it has been achieved on earth, it has also been achieved in heaven. Therefore in heaven the marriage does not take place again, nor are people given in marriage. This, too, is meant by the words, "The children of this age marry and are given in marriage."

TCR 313. THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

In the natural sense, this commandment means not only not to commit adultery, but it refers also to willing and doing obscene things and thinking and speaking about lascivious things. That merely to lust is to commit adultery, is evident from the Lord's words:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that everyone that looketh on another man's wife to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27, 28).

314. In the spiritual sense, "to commit adultery" means to adulterate the goods of the Word and to falsify its truths.

315. In the celestial sense, "to commit adultery" means to deny the holiness of the Word, and to profane it.

TCR 456... The conjunction of love to God and love towards the neighbour... TCR 457.3

Conjunction is effected by charity, because God loves every man, and as He cannot do good to man immediately, but only mediately through men, He inspires men with His own love, as He inspires parents with love for their children; and the man who receives that love has conjunction with God, and from God's love loves his neighbour; and in him God's love is within man's love towards the neighbor, and produces in him the will and the ability.

AC 5051. In a quiet dream I saw some trees planted in a wooden receptacle, one of which was tall, another lower, and two were small. The lower tree delighted me very greatly, and all the while a very pleasant rest, such as I cannot express, affected my mind. On awaking from sleep I

conversed with those who induced the dream. They were angelic spirits (see n. 1977, 1979), and they told me what was signified by what I had seen—that it was conjugal love, the tall tree signifying the husband, the lower tree the wife, and the two small ones the children. ...

[2] I afterward saw a great dog, such as that called Cerberus by ancient writers, with a frightful open mouth; and I was told that such a dog signifies a guard to prevent man's passing over from heavenly conjugal love to the love of adultery, which is infernal; for heavenly conjugal love exists when a man together with his wife, whom he loves most tenderly, and with his children, lives content in the Lord. From this he has in this world an inward pleasantness, and in the other life heavenly joy; but when he passes from this love into the opposite, and finds in this a delight that seems to him heavenly, although it is infernal, then such a dog is presented as a guard lest there should be a communication between these opposite delights.