

Host or designated reader/leader begins the Upper Room prayer hour by reading this message from Fr. David:

Message for October

Dear friends in Christ:

A vocation is: "A call to love (by God) in a particular way." Every Christian has a vocation or a call to love. The vocations recognized by the Church are: Marriage between a man and a woman; the single state and the religious life (priesthood or consecrated life). For the purpose of this exercise my comments will be focused exclusively on the vocation of marriage. Reason being that the majority of participants in the Upper Room either are currently married or have been married.

Discerning the vocation is sometimes the easiest part because (typically) we "fall in love" and we know with certainty with whom we belong because our heart tells us so. Maintaining that call to love is the more difficult thing because we become overly familiar with the person we are called to love and the relationship ebbs and wanes with time and its many issues. Doubt clouds the once clear skies of our hearts and we are left in the tumultuous waters of marriage.

Here is where God and prayer must enter. The spirituality of a marriage, and for that matter, any vocation is centered on Christ, the mediator of all grace. He (Jesus) is the incarnation of all good things. He taught us how to live with each other in relationship with sinners and saints alike both by His words and by His deeds. From the Pascal Mystery flows every grace necessary to conquer sin and death. This is what we believe and it is why every vocation must be driven by grace. How is this done? Examine the following exercises and discuss these questions in the Upper Room.

In Christ;

Fr. David

CCC 1642

Christ is the source of this grace. "Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony." Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ," and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb:

How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father? . . . How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit. (Tertullian)

- 1) Unity in faith, called to be one, driven by the same Spirit. Discuss how difficult it must be for married couples who are not of the same faith or are not "on the same page" when it comes to faith, morals and religious practice to truly **be** one.
- 2) Just as there are repercussions or residual effects for those who did not follow the prescripts/commands of God the Father and His Covenants with His people please discuss how sin and addiction affects the Sacrament of Marriage.
- 3) If you can witness to how your spouse has helped you to carry your cross and what it means to you.

CCC 1648

It can seem difficult, even impossible, to bind oneself for life to another human being. This makes it all the more important to proclaim the Good News that God loves us with a definitive and irrevocable love, that married couples share in this love, that it supports and sustains them, and that *by their own faithfulness* they can be witnesses to God's faithful love. Spouses who with God's grace give this witness, often in very difficult conditions, deserve the gratitude and support of the ecclesial community.

- 1) What does unconditional love mean?
- 2) Who but God can love in this way?
- 3) Are Married couple called to love in this way?
- 4) Is it possible? How if so?

- 5) Can a married couple love unconditionally without the support of God's Grace or the support of a community of believers?
- 6) Witness to how God gives you the grace to live out your vocation.
- 7) Witness to how you have helped to support a marriage in trouble or your own marriage was supported by the Church.
- 8) Finally and (most importantly) what value (based on these Catechism quotes) do you think do you think the value of praying together (in a Marriage) the Church would give to this habit?
- 9) Do you pray with your spouse? Daily? Weekly? Seldom if ever? Never?
- 10) How would you begin?

Prayer

*There are many destructive forces in the way of happy and holy marriages today. In the book of Tobit it tells of the devil's play in one. Read reflectively Tobit 8:1-9 and sit in silence for a period of 3-4 minutes. Then pray out loud for healing in marriages that you know are troubled. Pray aloud for those who have been wounded by troubled marriages of the past or today. Pray for your own spouse as Tobit prayed for Sarah.

End with an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be

*The topic for next month's **Upper Room** is on praying for priests.*