

FEBRUARY 28, 2025 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

Is it lawful to divorce your wife? The moment one speaks about marriage, you open a whole Pandora of questions. Marriage. Marriage, as understood and decreed by God. Marriage, as we learn for it in canon law. Marriage, according to the law of Moses. Divorce, remarriage, communion after divorce. All these questions, and you can only treat them broadly. If you go down into details, you'll find the TV Mass switchboard alight with saying, "This question was not covered, and what about this specific thing? And what about that specific thing?"

The moment we start speaking about divorce, we are like the Pharisees in our Gospel today. They started on a wrong road. The moment they start on a wrong road, you're going to open a whole lot of messes that you cannot even deal with. Jesus was speaking about marriage. Marriage which meant fidelity. Marriage that reflected the fidelity of God towards us. Marriage that reflected God's love within the Holy Trinity. And that is what it is all about.

Whenever I've had couples come to me and say, "We would like to get married," not one of them starts with, "In case of divorce, we will." They always start off with, "This person is the soul mate of my life. This person is the one I want to spend my life with entirely." Their story is a love story, not a life sentence. They never come to me and say, "Well, in case of a divorce, we should..." The moment they say that I said, "Well, you're not even entering in the right direction."

I'm happy to say that 50 years ago I celebrated the first marriage of a couple who celebrated their marriage--their golden anniversary last year with their children and grandchildren, and during all this time you've noticed that the people that come to you have got all sorts of issues. The reality is marriage is not very simple. I tried to live my life by myself

and I find that it's the ups and downs, my moods, my variation, my difficulty is my problem. How about living it with somebody else?

There are issues like children, grandchildren, religion, finances, sex, the bringing up of our society, and most important, communication. A wife told her husband, "Go to the grocery store and get me a litre of milk, and if there are avocados, get me six," and he came back with six litres of milk. And she said, "What's happened?" He said, "You simply said, 'Get me a litre of milk and six if there are avocados.' There were avocados, so I got you six bottles of milk." Communication is something that we can mix up all the time, and that's the reality in which we live in.

So, how do we deal with this issue? We deal with this issue looking at it the way Christ wanted it, And the way Christ wanted it is you do not look about yourself. You look at the other. The moment we start with our world's attitude towards marriage, namely, "What is there in this for me?" that marriage is going to fall apart. Couples often tell me, "What are you speaking about marriage? One in every three break up." It also means that two in every three work, and what works is because you take the other, not yourself, as a center of this entire love relationship.

One of my friends, Brenda from Scotland, told me, says that we often hear that marriage is 50/50. She says, "It does not work like that. Each one has to put 100% into marriage. We are not supermen and superwomen. There are times when my husband works very hard, and he comes back totally drained in the evening, he's got no energy left. I have to not only put in 100%, but also his percentage, and there are days when I cannot manage because I suffer from sunlight effective deficiency, and they are times when I just have to drag myself, and my husband, even though he comes back from work tired, he'll pick up, he'll

bathe the children, he'll do the laundry, he'll even cook, and do things together. We put in 100% each and that what makes marriage work."

So, finally we come together. We ask what is marriages all about? It is what Jesus tells us, what God has put together and what God has put together is a reflection of God's own life. a life of faithfulness, of faithfulness to me that whether I am a sinner or a saint, God will still love me. Now, I'm not saying that an abusive relationship where there is physical abuse, mental abuse, alcoholism that simply not only destroys one person, but destroys the spouse and the children, that there should not be a split. I'm not saying that, but the point is there are things that you are not going to be able to deal with the other person, and therefore, you take that into consideration, because he or she is dealing the same with you. That's the first thing.

It's the fidelity that puts the other person first, and the second thing about marriage is what God wants us. He says, "Be fruitful." Our marriage must produce, I'm not speaking, just of children, but the words that we say in marriage, to love, respect, and honor. How often do we need to respect the talents, the goodness, and to see what the other does and to bring it out to the full, and that is what works in our marriages and works in our own private life. Unfortunately, in our life today we take the easy path. For us, when we say "life," where we get to get married for life, it is usually five years to 10 years according to the standards of Hollywood, and the moment we take that standard that marriage is bound to dis-- to d-- to die, and therefore the law of Moses, give a right-- a writ of dismissal, and allow her to go is exactly what works in these cases. Very often in our world today we start off with "What if it does not work?" rather than the positive attitude. This person is really somebody that is going to bring the best out of me and therefore I have to do the best to bring the best out of her, out of him, in order to make

the good Lord who loves us be reflected in our lives and we can show it to others. That is what love and marriage is all about. It's a love story, not a life sentence. God bless you all.