The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS ***GENERAL AUDIENCE***

St Peter's Square
Wednesday, 31 October 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to complete the catechesis on the Sixth Word of the Decalogue, “You shall not commit adultery”, highlighting that the faithful love of Christ is the light by which to live the beauty of human affection. Indeed, our sentimental dimension is a *call to love* that is manifested in fidelity, in welcoming, and in mercy. This is very important. How is love manifested? In fidelity, in welcoming, and in mercy.

It must not be forgotten however, that this Commandment refers explicitly to marital fidelity and therefore it is fitting that we reflect more deeply on its *spousal* significance. This Scripture passage, this passage from the Letter of Saint Paul is revolutionary! Considering the anthropology of that age, it is saying that a husband must love his wife as Christ loves the Church: it is a revolution! Perhaps in those times it was the most revolutionary thing that had been said about marriage. Always on the path of love. We can ask: to whom is this command of fidelity addressed? Only to spouses? In reality, this command is for everyone; it is a paternal Word of God addressed to every man and woman.

Let us remember that the journey of human maturation is the same path of love that goes from *receiving care* to being able to *offer care*, from *receiving life* to being able to *give life*. Becoming adult men and women means developing the *spousal* and *parental* aptitude which is expressed in life’s various situations, such as the ability to take someone else’s burden upon oneself, and to love him or her unambiguously. It is therefore the overall ability of a person who accepts reality and is ready to enter into a profound relationship with others.

Who then is the adulterer, the lustful, the unfaithful? It is an immature person who keeps his life to

himself and interprets situations on the basis of his own wellbeing and his own gratification. Therefore, in order *to get married*, the wedding ceremony does not suffice! We must make the journey from *I* to *we*, from thinking alone to thinking together, from living alone to living together: it is a good journey; it is a beautiful journey. Once we succeed at decentralizing ourselves, all action is *spousal*: we work, we speak, we decide, we meet others with a welcoming and oblational attitude.

In this sense every Christian vocation — we can now expand the perspective further and say that in this sense every Christian vocation — is *spousal*. The *priesthood* is such because it is a call in Christ and in the Church, to serve the community with all the affection, the tangible care and the wisdom that the Lord gives us. The Church does not need people who aspire to the *role* of priests — no, we do not need them, it is better if they stay home —, rather we need men whose hearts are touched by the Holy Spirit with an unreserved love for the Bride of Christ. The priestly ministry means loving the People of God with all the paternal care, the tenderness and strength of a spouse and a father. Thus *virginity consecrated* in Christ is also lived with fidelity and with joy as a spousal and fruitful relationship of motherhood and fatherhood.

I repeat: every Christian vocation is spousal because it is the fruit of the bond of love in which we are all regenerated, a bond of love with Christ, as we were reminded by the passage from Paul that was read at the beginning. Starting from *his* fidelity, from *his* tenderness, from *his* generosity, we look to marriage and every vocation with faith, and we understand the full meaning of sexuality.

The human creature in his or her inseparable unity to the Spirit and to the body, and in the male and female polarity, is a very good reality which is destined to love and to be loved. The human body is not an instrument of pleasure, but the setting for our call to love, and there is no room for lust or superficiality in authentic love. Men and women deserve more than this!

Thus the Word, “You shall not commit adultery”, despite its negative form, directs us to our original call, that is, to the full and faithful spousal love which Jesus Christ revealed and gave to us (cf. Rom 12:1).

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam and the United States of America. I thank the choirs for their praise of God in song. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord’s blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

I extend a special greeting to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow we will celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints and the day after tomorrow the memorial of

all the faithful departed. May the witness of faith of those who have preceded us strengthen in us the certainty that God accompanies each of us on life’s journey, he never abandons anyone to themselves and he wants all of us to be holy, as he is holy.

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