

In Nomine Iesu

Richard, Ann, and the dearly beloved who are gathered here to witness the marriage of this man and woman, grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

That is what matters: the grace and peace of God. It is the grace and peace of God that will allow you, Richard, to take this daughter of Eve and be to her as Christ is to His Church: loving her as your own body and dying to yourself that she may live through you.

It is the grace and peace of God that will allow you, Ann, to be given to this son of Adam in holy matrimony and so submit to him as the Church, the Bride of Christ, submits to her Head: not exerting your own will over his, but allowing him to lead you and care for you so that you may be of one mind and spirit, and so be holy in the sight of God and man.

It is the grace and peace of God that will do this because Richard, Ann, you are both marrying a sinner.

The world does not like this picture man and woman, and it does not like this picture of marriage. It does not like that the husband is the head of the wife and that the wife is to submit to her husband. And even now there are those sitting here who think this chauvinistic and old-fashion, but we Christians are bound to the Word of God. And this is what the Word of God says: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves His Church and gave Himself up for her," and "wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church."

The world prefers marriage to be contractual, to be a mutual agreement between two autonomous parties, who remain autonomous even after their vows. But marriage is no more a contract, like that of a builder or farmer, than the water of the ocean is the same as the water we drink.

For it was not man who created marriage, but God who created them male and female, and gave them to each other to become one flesh. It was God who laid the parameters of marriage, gave to it its purpose, and sanctified it with His holy Word and blessing. But I am speaking of Christ and His Church.

For the vows you make today are a reflection of the promise that Christ has made, and fulfilled, to you.

Pay close attention to your vows this day. They are not dependent upon mood swings and emotions. They are promises even unto death. But "unto death" does not only mean "until we die" but, "even if it kills me."

In this we see the picture of Christ and His Church. The Son of God left His Father, coming down from heaven, and joined Himself to His Bride by being born of a woman, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones. He gave Himself for and to us, even though it killed Him.

We are not faithful to Him. We prostitute ourselves out to other gods; the gods of greed and self-worship; the gods of pleasure and preference. We shame Him by ignoring His words and promises. We abuse Him by sinning against Him in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Yet He loves us. He gives Himself for us. He has made a promise to us that no matter how wicked and perverse we are, His love will endure forever, cleansing us from our sin and filth and making us to shine like the brightness of the sun. This is a profound mystery, but it is true and marriage is a picture of it.

In the way that Christ loves His Bride, His Church, you are called to love one another. Not the sappy love of Hollywood and Hallmark, but with the love of God that for our sakes He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to bear our sins and be our Savior. You are to bear one another's burdens, loving one another in Christ so that your marriage may be a blessing to you and all who know you. In this way you will show the world the love of God in you and will be counted among the righteous.

Do not be afraid to go to one another and confess your sins, for they will be many, but instead eagerly go, knowing that the other is obligated by their position as husband or wife to forgive you. Ann, you will be disappointed by Richard because Richard is a sinner; Richard, you will be disappointed by Ann because she is a sinner. Yet when Ann dishonors you and then humbles herself and asks your forgiveness, it is not your right to say no, and not forgive her, holding her sin over her. But instead you are called by God to love Ann as Christ loves His Church. This means that you die for her. Of course you forgive her because you can do nothing but forgive her as you are called to do.

In the same way, Ann, when Richard sins against you by lording his authority over you and not loving you as he should, and yet humbles himself and comes to you seeking your forgiveness, you, because you are to submit to him, must forgive him in the Lord.

The world will tell you differently. The world will tell you that you have been wronged and that he or she should make it up to you. The world will tell you that such sacrificial love weakens you and destroys your self-identity and empowerment. And in this the world is right. Such sacrificial love does destroy you; it kills you. Thus do you fulfill your vows even unto death.

For there is no longer "he" or "she" but only the "we" of marriage. Cast out the demons of division by turning to God and begging Him to forgive your sins of pride and rebellion, and the God of our fathers and of our Lord Jesus Christ will remove your sins from you as far as the east is from the west.

So we see the true picture of your marriage in the marriage of the Lamb to His Church; the bride-groom dying for the bride, and the bride humbling herself to the point of dying in pride and self so that you may both live for the other just as Christ lives for His Bride and His Bride for Him.

Do not neglect the admonition of the Word of God to confess your sins, but come eagerly and often so that your soul may be sanctified by the promises of God in Christ. Come often to the Lord's Table, the marriage feast of the Lamb, where your sins are forgiven and where you become bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, being made one with your true Husband, even Christ, and your lives may bring honor to His name as you live out your marriage...

...In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠