August 21, 2022—21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

We have been reflecting on marriage and human sexuality for the last month in the Sunday homilies. One of the guiding principles is that God is the author of marriage, and the sexual relationship is holy when lived according to His plan. It allows a man and a woman to give themselves to one another within the marriage covenant to bring about a deeper love and in cooperation with the Divine Creator, to bring new life into the world. Pope St. Paul VI spoke about the two purposes for marriage, put simply, love and life. That was God’s plan, in the beginning, as Pope St. John Paul explained in his Theology of the Body. Not just the soul, but the human body, he said, was also created in the image and likeness of God and it is through the body that we express love. We use the tongue to speak words of love, the hands to do deeds of love, the marital embrace to express the covenant of love in marriage.

After the Original Sin of Adam, lust, as well as all kinds of evil entered into the heart of man. The original plan of love was warped. Many things went wrong in the relationship of marriage and the understanding of one’s own sexuality.

There is a deliberate attempt in our culture to break down all moral norms, especially those from Christian morality. This is making it all the more difficult to live in our world and know what is right and wrong. A guiding principle of those trying to destroy our culture is that there is no objective morality. Everything is a matter of opinion and of feelings and is constantly in flux. Your truth may not be my truth, they hold. This brings about the disunity and chaos that dominates the world today.

To illustrate the respect we should have for the human person, soul and body, Pope Benedict XVI made a comparison between respecting the environment and respecting the nature of the human person. He wrote, “**The importance of ecology is no longer disputed. We must listen to the language of nature and we must answer accordingly. Yet I would like to underline a point that seems to me to be neglected, today as in the past: there is also an ecology of man. Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled**.”  [Benedict XVI, Bundestag, “The Listening Heart: Reflections on the Foundations of Law,” 2011](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin.html)

You may have heard of the term “gender dysphoria” to describe those who are confused about their sex and feel they are really of the opposite sex. There have been reports in the news of teachers in primary grades who are encouraging children to doubt their biological sex. They can take on a new name of the opposite sex at school and everyone is expected to use the pronouns that fit their choice.

20 states have laws that if a teen as young as 13 feels they want to change their sex, the health professionals cannot question this self-diagnosis. Many don’t even require parental consent for minors. They must immediately refer them to hormone treatments and even surgery to begin this transition or lose their medical license. In 2007 there was one clinic in the country for transition, now there are 300.

Gender dysphoria was very rare and usually involved boys who didn’t feel right in their body from early on, now it overwhelmingly involves teenage girls who suddenly discover it. Through social media and counselors of questionable expertise, they are encouraged to question their sexuality and transition. Most of it is irreversible and leads to a high rate of suicide. The media hides their misery and isolation; they also hide the stories of those who discover they want to transition back to their biological gender.

These young women are encouraged to write letters or emails to their parents that denounce them and all that they stand for in the most hateful terms: they cut themselves off from their parents and anyone who questions their thinking, which brings further isolation. They are given all the talking points to make it sound like they have felt like this from their childhood and that their parents stifled their true sexuality. Don’t think that these parents are only those who follow Christian morality. Abigale Shrier in her book, “Irreversible Damage” has many examples of parents who were far from Christian beliefs but were also denounced by their daughters. She says it follows the same pattern of anorexia and bulimia in the 1980’s among teenage girls, but now has the power of social media behind it.

As Pope Benedict noted, we do not make ourselves, we are created by God and need to discover His plan for our lives, which is written in our human nature—"male and female He created them”. Gender ideology has the purpose of defeating God’s plan for marriage, human sexuality and the propagation of the human race. Its purpose is not to bring happiness or help, but confusion and misery.

This completes the series on marriage and human sexuality that I have been preaching for the last 5 weeks. One last thing. Jesus worked His first miracle at a wedding at the request of His Blessed Mother. The CCC says, “**The Church attaches great importance to Jesus’ presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ’s presence**” (#1613). You need the Presence of Christ in your marriage. It’s hard enough to live the covenant of marriage, but without the Presence of Jesus in the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Confession, it is almost impossible. Just as you must forgive one another because you will hurt and be hurt by your spouse, so you need the healing and forgiveness of Jesus in Confession. The Holy Eucharist is the true Presence of Jesus, and it is meant to strengthen His presence in your marriage and your bond of love. God has called married couples to be a living sign of His love in the world!