

Reflections

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From Ideal Love to Real Love

Our Father and Founder helps us to see that the great disappointment of our lives could be the following.....we thought our life together would be like that of the angels: united by a deep union of hearts and by a warm mutual love.

During courtship, at the beginning of a marriage or of a community, often what is loved is an idea or a dream. At that time we did not see our shadows or dark sides since everything was illuminated by the first love. But years after having lived together, we awaken to the reality: we know each other with our weaknesses and miseries. Defects appear: my defects and the defects of others. Also apparent, as a part of life, are obsessions, craziness and whims or at least what these appear to be as far as I am concerned.

Carlos Valles relates how he frightened a young man who was asking him advice for his troubled marriage. He told him that the only solution he had was divorce. After the fright, he explained: he had to divorce the woman he had married, that is, divorce the woman of his dreams whom he had married.....divorce the image of the perfect and ideal wife which he himself had conceived in his mind and had taken to the altar in pure romantic fantasy.

What he now had to do was to divorce himself from the woman of his dreams and to remarry his wife, his real wife. Now we have to love our partner as they are and not as we had imagined them to be.

On the contrary, the desire comes forth that “you” have to adapt to my wishes to change. As a matter of fact, I try to change him/her. Then, the partner shuts down when he/she cannot or does not want to listen to me. I am offended and let him/her know. I feel as if I am sitting on a throne ready to observe his/her conduct, ready to receive his/her excuses or his/her flattery. This is a primitive form of love like a sour not-yet-ripe apple.

As time passes, we grow. From ideal love we go on to real love. I allow him/her to be as he/she is and I accept him/her. Then the relationship changes. There is more freedom and more respect. When I am ready to bear with him/her then I have matured. I no longer make him/her feel as a burden which causes me pain or that he/she should be different, but that I accept him/her simply as he/she is. That is true love.

For that reason, Father Kentenich says that after the first years “our life consists in great part to supporting each other and bearing with each other mutually” (Milwaukee 1-13-64, 7).

As I further grow and mature, I am even happy about it. I do it with a smile. “The more sacrifices we offer for each other, the happier we will be” (Family Work, 36) affirms Father Kentenich. I contribute to the Treasury of Grace; I offer to Blessed Mother the burden of my spouse. In this way I get closer to the Crucified Lord. He accepted and endured the nails. Therefore, I am happy that the Lord brings me to His Cross, that He makes me more like Himself.

The spirit of family largely consists in the love which is capable of bearing the burden of others. It is one of the hardest tasks in the family. Regardless, daily life shows us that: while we are on this earth there will be arguments and tensions. The masterpiece consists in enduring them without losing the unity of the hearts. The masterpiece consists in making use of the frictions in order to grow and to become more deeply united.

Questions for reflection

1. Is it hard for me to accept the defects of others?
2. What does the following phrase tell me: “they are endured with joyful sacrifices”?
3. Do I insist that others act according to what I think is correct or to what I like?

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