

Reflections

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41 – August 15, 2008

The Growth of Our Married Love

In marriage, our permanent task should be to cultivate love, and to grow in it until it reaches perfection and maturity. In the beginning, all love is selfish. Slowly, a little bit at a time, that primitive love becomes a mature love.

How do we have to cultivate our married love?

Father Kentenich, the founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, gives us three answers:

1. We should want to mutually make each other happy. It means, in the first place, not to make myself happy, but to make my spouse happy; it means going from selfish love to unselfish love for you. It requires that I ask myself constantly: With what I am doing, with what I am saying, will I make my spouse happier?

It is a great growth in love. It is a high level of surrender and generosity beyond the ordinary.

2. We should help each other mutually to reach perfection. How many opportunities to work toward perfection present themselves in daily life! For example, when people permanently live together, it is very difficult to maintain respect for each other.

In what way do we make ourselves see our faults? Is it a feeling and an entering into the weakness of the other? Is it bearing patiently his/her limitations, or, is it yelling at one another and mutually offending one another?

Sacrifices can become a heavy load. We all know it and we have all experienced it at one time or another. Father Kentenich also knew it and, therefore, said once, quoting an ancient philosopher: "If married life is compared to the lives of the martyrs, we find few martyrs who were able to bear so much suffering as many marriages should bear."

All of this requires a high level of love and sanctity. It is impossible to reach this level if our married love is not rooted in God.

3. Married love culminates in fully-tested fidelity. We know the description of fidelity given to us by Father Kentenich: the pure, youthful and creative maintenance of the first love. It is to maintain it through the trials of time in order to make it eternal. Fidelity in this profound and broad way is to always give to my spouse with my whole heart, to give him/her my privileged time and my especially prioritized interests.

It is impossible to be faithful, in this sense, without a great spirit of sacrifice and without direct contact with God by means of the sacraments and prayer.

Regardless, if we see married life from this point of view, it becomes a **school of sanctity of the first magnitude**. It has to do with living everyday sanctity of marriage and also living the spirituality of the marriage covenant.

Marriage is not only a community of love, rather it is based on a mutual covenant of love. That covenant tends toward deepening itself. It wants to give to the other all rights over myself so that he/she can be happy: I want nothing which you do not want.

Later, we can even go further: I am willing to renounce and give to him/her what is most difficult, what is hardest, if you wish it. If you want that renunciation, I pray that you ask me for it. That is how I want to show you my love.

Questions for reflection

1. Do we laugh as a couple, as a family?
2. Do we hurt each other when we criticize each other?
3. Am I willing to accept what my spouse asks of me?

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