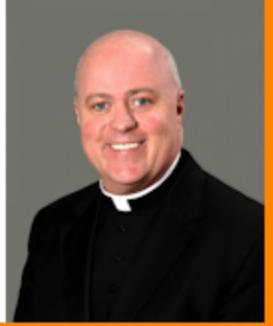


Father Chapin's Homily



October 7, 2018 – DIVORCE

Well today we are going to talk about something that hits home for just about all of us.

And THAT is the issue of Marriage and Divorce.

In the last 10 years 50% of marriages fail.

Just about ALL of us have been touched by this issue.

Years ago parents had a lot of kids.

Now days kids are apt to have a lot of parents.

Marriage and Divorce

As followers of Christ seeking the will of the father, and a conscious contact, I think we should look at what God had to say about DIVORCE.

If we go back to the Old Testament to the Book of Nehemiah we get a pretty clear picture on how God felt about this particular subject.

The Prophet Nehemiah rose up at a VERY difficult time in Jewish history.

Babylonia conquered Israel and had taken many of its citizens off to Babylon as slaves.

There were three major deportments of citizens to Babylonia.

Meanwhile, they were IMPORTING up to 5 different ethnic groups into Israel to dilute the blood of Judaism and quell nationalistic feelings that could lead to a possible uprising.

In time, the Assyrians conquered Babylonia and when they did they decided to let the Jewish slaves go free and return to their homeland

This is when the Prophet Nehemiah arises and encourages the people that it is time to return to Yahweh, rebuild the temple, and to no longer act as slaves in captivity.

So, the nation of Israel starts to recover from a dark period.

But in a relatively short period of time, Nehemiah becomes enraged by what he sees.

Moreover, in those days, I saw men of Judea who had married woman from ASHOD, AMMON, and MOAB.

Half of them spoke the language of ASHOD or the language of the other peoples.

They did NOT know how to speak the language of Judah.

I rebuke them and called curses down on them.

I beat some of the men and pulled out some of their hair.

Imagine that.

This man is speaking for God.

And he is calling down curses and pulling out hair.

But, times are a changing.

Can you imagine if you showed up at church and your priest or pastor starting screaming and yelling at you and pulling out your hair?

I don't think that would go over do well.

Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't think that church is going to grow.

So, I guess MY first question is, WHAT is Nehemiah so angry about?

Well, he goes on to say.

It is NOT because of marriage that King Solomon of Israel sinned.

Among the many nations there was NO King like him.

He was loved by his God and God made him King over all of Israel.

But even HE was led into sin by FOREIGN woman.

Must we now hear that YOU TOO are all doing this terrible wickedness and are being UNFAITHFUL to our God by marrying foreign woman?

So, is this an indictment?

Are we to assume that they and WE are not allowed to marry a foreigner?

No, of course not.

The problem here is these men DIVORCED their wives to marry these woman and the family unit was compromised.

They are not even speaking the SAME LANGUAGE much less the faith of Judea.

Now one of Nehemiah's contemporaries, Malachi who wrote about the same time.

He wrote that the people complained that they felt abandoned.

And Malachi lets them know.

Speaking for God, because that is what Prophets do, he says,

The Lord has been a WITNESS between you and the WIFE OF YOUR YOUTH.

Whom you have dealt TREACHEROUSLY, though she is your companion wife
BY COVENANT

Then he goes on to say,

I hate Divorce says the Lord the God of Israel.

So, you can't get much clearer than that.

And it is pretty harsh.

Something most of us really don't want to hear because we live in a culture where divorce is so prevalent.

But, let's get back to this Gospel.

We pick up in the Gospel of Mark Chapter 10 verse 2.

Since we are already there, let's go ahead and begin with the first verse.

This all would have gone down about 400 years after both the Prophet Nehemiah and the Prophet Malachi spoke on the issue of divorce.

He set out from there and went into the district of Judea across the Jordan and again crowds started to gather around him and as was his custom he again taught them.

We are coming to the end of the Galilean ministry and now he has crossed over the river Jordan.

So, he is now in Judea.

The land of King Herod.

And a group of Pharisees are there waiting for him.

Now these Pharisees have been after Jesus for some time now.

Back in the 3rd chapter Jesus made them look like fools.

And the Pharisees went out with the Herodians and began to plot how they could kill Jesus.

They are not interested in a DEBATE with this man.

They are not trying to figure out this man.

They are not even trying to discredit this man.

They want him dead.

PERIOD!

We are talking HATE here.

And HATE can be very powerful.

So they craft a very careful question,

The Pharisees approached and asked, “*Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?*”

The next line is they were TESTING him. PIERAZO

Same word used in the desert by Satan himself.

Matthew, who tends to give a bit more detail, adds “**Divorce his wife for any cause?**”

Now interestingly, divorce in that day and age was pretty common.

Particularly among the leadership.

The Pharisees, who were the spiritual examples for the people, divorced regularly.

And they followed the Tradition of their Elders.

There were schools of the prevailing thought in that day.

Rabbi Hilal wrote years earlier that a man could divorce his wife for any reason.

He actually wrote UNLOAD THAT WOMAN.

Maybe, she spun around and showed her ankles.

Maybe, she burnt dinner.

Maybe, she made a rude comment about your mother.

It could be no other reason that finding ANOTHER woman you like better.

So, that is Rabbi Hilall.

Now on the other side was Rabbi SHEEMY.

He believed the ONLY reason for divorce was PORNEA or fornication.

So you have these two different schools of thought.

Very much like the LIBERALS versus CONSERVATIVES today.

Rabbi Hilall would have been very comfortable in the Hollywood of his day.

Hanging out with George Clooney.

Meanwhile RABBI SHEEMY would be in the HEARTLAND among those who still see marriage as a covenant before God.

It is a blue state, red state issue.

But let's get back to our question.

Again, a very well-crafted question.

Jesus had spoken about this before earlier.

In the 5th chapter of Matthew he says,

It has been said that anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce but I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except in case of sexual immorality, makes her a victim of adultery and anyone who marries a divorce woman causes her to commit adultery.

So, Jesus has ALREADY stated, quite clearly, that he is in the Rabbinical Tradition of SHEEMY and that GOD HATES DIVORCE.

Therefore, what God has joined together no human being must separate.

This question is NOT a question in that it is seeking information.

NO.

This question was carefully crafted for ONE thing and that is to DIVIDE.

Much like the question on cable news.

So, let's get back to Jesus.

He is in Judea.

This is Herod's territory.

His fortress MAKIRUS is probably very nearby.

Herod Antipas was a paranoid psychopathic killer and had many of his own family murdered.

He started to lust after his brother Phillip's wife.

Her name was Herodias.

So Herod divorces his wife and marries Herodias even though she was already related as his sister-in-law.

Well, John the Baptist got into his face and said, **“You have broken the Law of God and you are an adulterer and so is she.”**

Truth to power. And this did not sit well

And we all know how THAT ended.

Herodias was furious and John the Baptist was put in prison.

Later, he was beheaded at a dinner party.

So, if the Pharisees can just get Jesus to say this again, MAYBE JESUS will be beheaded.

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked **“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”**

And Jesus responds, **“What did Moses command you?”**

They replied Moses permitted him to write her a bill of divorce and dismiss her.

Now watch this ...

Jesus COMPLETELY disregards the Rabbinical Views and the Traditions.

No.

He goes right for it “What did Moses command you?”

And that word COMMAND is critical.

Moses never COMMANDED them to do anything in regards to divorce.

NO.

He PERMITTED them.

And of course, Jesus sees right through this and declares an awful truth when he says.

It was because of the **HARDNESS OF YOUR HEARTS** that he wrote you this commandment.

But in the beginning it was not so.

You have to understand that in this world, **WOMEN** and **CHILDREN** had **NO** rights.

And if there was **NOT** a provision for divorce there would be a lot of shallow graves just outside of town.

Moses did not grant divorce because of a man's **LUST** or **WHIM**, but rather he granted divorce to **PROTECT** the women and the children.

But in the beginning it was not so.

In the beginning of creation, God made them **MALE** and **FEMALE**.

THAT was the **WORK OF GOD**

And for this reason, once again because of a **WORK OF GOD**, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become **ONE FLESH**.

So they are no longer **TWO** but **ONE** flesh.

Therefore what God has joined together no human being must separate.

That's it.

Now Matthew has the Infidelity Clause but this is tough stuff.

And he does not soften it when he says

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against HER and if SHE divorces her husband and marries another SHE commits adultery.

What do you do with his?

I have divorce in my family.

So, as we search for the deeper meanings of scripture I guess the question becomes **WHY?**

WHY is Jesus so harsh when it comes to marriage and divorce?

Why such harshness around this issue?

Well, let's go back to the very beginning.

God created man in his own image.

In the image of God he created him.

Male and female he created them.

And then God blessed him and said,

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY.

When you look at the PURPOSE of God

And you consider HIS will in the beginning.

He created MAN and WOMAN.

He did not create a thousand of each.

He could have.

But he doesn't.

It is HIS will that they be fruitful and multiply.

So, that the UNION of man and woman and children was God's WILL from the very beginning.

And when a man shall leave his father and his mother and be CLEAVED to his wife, they will become ONE FLESH.

That word CLEAVED means TO BE GLUED to PRESS HARD AFTER EACH OTHER.

The Hebrew word for marriage KID-ISH-SHEEN.

Which means the EXCLUSIVE POSSESSION OF EACH OTHER.

It is a COVENANT created by God.

And through this covenant, TWO become ONE ... and ONE is indivisible.

And a child that comes from the TWO, becomes PART of the ONE.

So, marriage is the WORK OF GOD.

It come out of HIS creation.

What God has joined together let no man separate.

Marriage is a WORK OF GOD.

Marriage is an ACT OF GOD.

And out of this common grace of TWO comes children.

So, in the beginning ALL marriage and ALL children were an ACT OF GOD.

Two of the 10 commandments have to do with this issue ...

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBORS WIFE.

Which is, of course, where adultery begins.

The lustful look.

Jesus speaks to this directly when he says.

I tell you anyone who looks at a woman with lust in his heart has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Adultery happens LONG before the act.

But let's get back to divorce.

Where did it come from and why has it become so prevalent?

Well, it all kind of goes back to the 3rd chapter in Genesis.

The Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil

We all know the story.

But often we overlook THE CURSE that came from the garden.

God told Adam he is cursed to toil in the ground all the days of his life to create food.

And that he will have NO rest and that you will die someday for dust you are and to dust you will return.

But then he turns to Eve he said something.

I will make your pains of childbearing severe and with painful labor you will give birth to children and your desire will be for your husband and HE WILL RULE OVER YOU.

When God created them he created them co equal.

No one was ruling over no one.

But THE CURSE that came from the garden.

The legacy of original sin is that there will be a battle in marriage because both are fallen.

Whether it is the WOMENS' LIB movement or MALE CHAUVINISM there will be conflicts.

And CONFLICT leads to divorce.

And anyone who has been involved with this knows that brunt of suffering in this conflict and that division always falls on the children.

Now today has been a pretty tough show.

But, that is the nature of scripture.

Sometimes it can be tough.

And I am not standing in judgment.

But I will make the point that just as in the days of Jesus many of us take the COVENANT OF MARRIAGE way to lightly today.

So many of us treat it like a causal union that can be easily discarded if it becomes uncomfortable.

And if we ALL had the view that marriage was the WORK OF GOD and HIS WILL from the beginning we might incline ourselves to treat marriage with a little more REVERENCE and CARE.

And maybe work harder at marriage.

Because marriage IS work.

Two becoming one doesn't happen overnight.

I often say during a wedding that a WEDDING is A DAY ... but a marriage is for a lifetime.

I have never been married.

But when I talk to folks that have good marriages they all say it was work.

It did not happen overnight or in a vacuum.

It was one day at a time.

But through the difficulty and conflict, they ALWAYS knew that they were KID-A-SHEEN.

In other words they BELONGED to each other EQUALLY and they FOUGHT for that convent.

Now again, this has been a tough show because this is a tough issue.

I am quite confident that about 50 percent of my audience right now, has been directly impacted by this issue.

I am also fairly confident that they may be some people listening to me right now who might feel a sense of shame regarding this issue.

And if that is YOU, I refer you to John 1:9

If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteous.

The Sin of adultery that leads to divorce is no better or worse than any other sin for we are ALL in need of a SAVIOR.

Jesus went to the cross to pay a debt.

NOT for a debt that HE owed.

NO.

Jesus died on the cross for a debt WE owed but could not pay.

And if you are standing in the shadow of his cross he does not even see your sin.

No.

John says he will PURIFY US from ALL unrighteousness.

MY sin.

YOUR sin.

Our fallen nature.

ALL of those things that create our shame.

Our shadow.

Our secret self.

White as snow.

Think about that.

Standing in the presence, WHITE AS SNOW.