

Thursday 9th Week Ordinary Time June 8, 2017 St. Agnes Church

As I prepare couples for the Sacrament of Marriage
it is my responsibility to discern whether they understand and are ready for
the practical consequences of marriage to each other.

Spouses cannot do as they please.

They cannot continue a previous lifestyle of being unaccountable.

They cannot remain irresponsible, reckless in their choices, heedless of the other's wants and needs.

I am naturally limited in fulfilling this responsibility
for I can't see into a person's heart.

I can only assume that what I see on the outside

is congruent with what a person is thinking, feeling, experiencing on the inside.

Sometimes, even after I do my best to uncover and challenge attitudes
that work against a healthy marriage,

an unpleasant truth is revealed after the wedding has taken place
and married life has proceeded along its path:

it is discovered that a person has gone through the motions,
has done all the right things,

i.e., all the external indications show

that the proper attitudes of love and truth and honesty and integrity are present...

but internally, in the heart, in the soul, in the conscience,

these attitudes and dispositions were really absent from the beginning.

All along the person deceived the outside world.

For example, someone with a homosexual orientation enters a conventional marriage
in order to establish and maintain the appearance of being "normal" in society.

There is aversion to consummating the marriage.

After four, six, eight months confrontation brings the truth to the surface.

One of the underlying realities of the Christian life
is discerning whether we understand and are ready for
the practical consequences of being in a loving relationship with God.

All the external signs can indicate the proper attitudes of love and truth and honesty
but are we just going through the external motions

and in truth, the internal experience of love is absent.

The best example of this is found in the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' time.

They fulfilled all the external requirements of the law but their hearts were far from God.

Their understanding of love was distorted.

One possible indicator, as exhibited by these Jewish leaders,
that love is not what it should be in a person's heart,

is the over-exaggerated importance given to external conformity

coupled with the condemnation of those perceived to be non-conformists,

with little interest in, and even aversion to, discerning what's in the non-conformist's heart.

The Old Testament prophets and then Jesus himself
proclaim that inner value is placed above external conformity.

The surface is less important than what runs deep within a person's heart, soul, conscience.

Those who have true knowledge and understanding of God and experience God's love in their hearts
will champion the cause of the poor and needy, will stand against the oppressor,

will oppose everything that is against the will of God.

These are some of the practical consequences of being in a loving relationship with God
that are listed in the Scriptures.

Today's prayer: "O Lord, reshape my heart, my soul, my conscience according to the love found in the
heart of Jesus Your Son. Amen!"