

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

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The Spirit of the Marriage Covenant

What is the Spirit of the marriage covenant? **Giving of oneself and belonging.**

Giving of oneself

The marriage covenant is a surrender of oneself, a gift of oneself. First of all, it is not an asking but a giving of oneself. This is the primary meaning of the marriage covenant: I give myself – as a husband, as a wife – and as a response I receive the gift of my spouse. In relation to the Virgin Mary it is childlike surrender, in married life it is a nuptial surrender.

This nuptial surrender is a radical overcoming of egotism. To love is to live centered on “YOU” and not on “ME (I)”. If one says: “I love you,” it may mean two different things. If there is true love, it means: “I love you and I want to make you happy.” The contrary means: “I love you so that you can make me happy.”

Authentic love is not renouncing one’s own happiness, but discovering that my greatest happiness is living to make the “other one” happy. It is God’s happiness: God is happy because He is always giving Himself to the other Persons of the Trinity and to us.

Man is called to find happiness similar to God’s happiness and that is the happiness of giving oneself, surrendering to others. To love is to always be there for “YOU” and only for “YOU”.

Belonging to another (consecrating oneself)

In the marriage covenant, we are asked for a total surrender, not a partial surrender. It is the surrendering of the whole person now and forever.

This spirit should encourage our marriage: a total and permanent surrender, and this creates in us an awareness of belonging and of consecration.

Our life is consecrated to someone and from that moment on there can be no loneliness. That awareness of consecration- that I do not belong to myself, but that I belong to another person - that is what our marriage covenant asks of us: I belong to my spouse now and forever.

We do not only journey together, share our entire life, are responsible for one another, but also that there is a mutual right. The other has a right to my love, my support, my time..... he/she has the right for me to strive to help him/her reach his/her personal realization, his/her happiness, his/her sanctity.

That awareness of consecration which is given to us in the marriage Covenant should be as strong as that of a priest or a religious who has consecrated himself/herself to God. Just as a priest or a consecrated person uses an external insignia – a habit, a cross – which is a reminder of that characteristic of belonging to someone, in the same way, spouses have that insignia.

This is the meaning of our **wedding ring**, our nuptial wedding band, our “covenant.” It is not an ornament, rather it is a symbol of belonging, or consecration.

The person who wears a wedding ring makes known his/her status of commitment, of being a covenant partner not only to a spouse, but also before other people. How important symbols are and what a great meaning this ring has! It reminds us of the love, presence, and fidelity of the spouse in every circumstance.

That which is renewed is lived anew. Therefore, the importance of **renewing** often our nuptial covenant of love! There are couples who renew their nuptial covenant of love monthly.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I seek to make the “other one” happy?
2. Am I aware that I am consecrated to my spouse?
3. Do I always wear my wedding ring?

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Translation: Carlos Cantú Schoenstatt Family Federation La Feria, Texas USA 090810.

<http://cmsms.schoenstatt.de/en/resources/periodicals/virtual-retreat.htm>