

## **How Do We Rate? (February 15<sup>th</sup>—6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A)**

Today we celebrate the last day of National Marriage Week. For those that are married, we know that sometimes humor has to be a vital part of our successful marriages. I wanted to share a couple of marriage jokes with you today.

### **Might Be The Wine Talking...**

*A couple are sitting in their living room, sipping wine. Out of the blue, the wife says, "I love you."*

*"Is that you or the wine talking?" asks the husband.*

*"It's me," says the wife. "Talking to the wine."*

### **That's Flower—With a "W"**

*On the first day of our marriage retreat, the instructor talked about the importance of knowing what matters to each other.*

*"For example," he began, pointing to my husband, David, "do you know your wife's favorite flower?"*

*David answered, "Pillsbury All Purpose."*

As we know, marriage plays such a vital role in our world today. Good, healthy sacramental marriages can lead to strong families. Strong faith filled families can instill in the hearts of their children a life of love and service, maybe even a life of vocational service to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

But marriages, like other relationships in our lives, takes a constant effort in order to keep the relationships growing and strong. Our relationship with Jesus Christ, also takes effort to insure that we are growing closer to him each day of our lives.

In the First Reading today from the book of Sirach, the author states that God puts in front of us things to choose. He uses the choices of fire and water, life and death and he reminds us that we must choose wisely. It reminds me of the Indiana Jones movie "The Last Crusade" when they get to the point of the movie where the old guard says that the two guys must choose which cup they think is the Holy Grail. The first one chooses one and then drinks from it and dies right on the spot. The old guard says, "He chose poorly".

I think of the times in life that we as Christians choose poorly, whether it is in our marriages or relationships with Jesus or others, that cause our relationships to suffer.

During an outdoor retreat, we asked men to rate their marriages on a scale of 1-10. The lowest number depicting that their marriage is on the verge of collapse and the highest number meaning that they just arrived home from their honeymoon and things could not be better.

I will tell you that I have never seen anybody rate their marriage a 10. We then ask the men to text their wives that evening and ask them for a score. We talk about the difference in the scores the next day. One day, a leader of a group told us that he went home after a retreat and asked his wife, what would it take for you to rate me a 10 in our marriage. The wife share with him some of her thoughts and he told us that he was diligently working to try to achieve that.

In the Gospel today, Jesus lays out a number of different directives and commandments in his teachings. Why? To make us just feel bad that we are not fulfilling them? Let me suggest to you that Jesus is challenging us through this Gospel to take some time to look at our lives and our relationships, both with Jesus himself and with others, and to see where we can improve.

He talks about our relationships with our brothers and sisters and how we need to work out our differences. He talks about our marriage relationships and how we need to be better when challenges come along the way. He talks about things that cause us to sin and he encourages us to get rid of those things.

So today, I challenge you to think about your choices in life, especially when it comes to your relationships, whether it is with Jesus, our spouses, our families or our friends. I would like you to pick one relationship and rate yourself on a 1-10 scale with that relationship.

I believe that this upcoming season of Lent, which starts on Wednesday, is a great time to think about that and hopefully take the effort to work on those things that Jesus outlines in the Gospel for us today.

I hope you all can achieve a higher rating on your relationship, with Jesus and with all those for whom we love.

**God's Blessings**

**Deacon Jim**