



By Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

# The Power of Matrimonial Love

*Deacons and their spouses must give themselves to each other in sacrificial love*

The communion of love and life between God and spouses in marriage is more than just communication, a simple exchange of words.

Through the cross, God establishes a covenant — an exchange of persons — with and between deacons and their wives in the Sacrament of Matrimony. In this relationship, God gives himself to us freely and completely.

When deacon couples open their hearts to his love and mercy, when they make themselves vulnerable before the giver of all gifts, when they can share with God the deepest parts of who they are, then they are giving themselves to him in return.

This is the promise that is made in the matrimonial vows: a reciprocal exchange of unconditional love, life, intimacy and communion where each spouse makes a complete and total gift of themselves to each other in a love that is free, faithful, total and fruitful.

It is a love that gives everything, a love that holds nothing back. Jesus held nothing back of his love for us from the cross, and deacons and their spouses must give themselves to each other in a sacrificial love that always seeks what is best for the other. This, in essence, is the Eucharistic aspect of interpersonal communion.

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones / and flesh of my flesh; / This one shall be called ‘woman,’ / for out of man this one has been taken” (Gn 2:23).

His exclamation “at last” is like a sigh of relief. It shows that he has been waiting with great anticipation and longing for her.

He recognizes in her person the unique gift of femininity that, in an earthly sense, completes, perfects and compliments his masculinity — that she is “being of my being.”

He appreciates the depth of her greatness by proclaiming, in essence, “She is the greatest of my bones. She is the greatest of my flesh. She is the greatest part of who I am.”

He acknowledges her feminine genius by recognizing that she was taken out of man, that she is the last act of God’s creative ac-

tivity. “Woman” reveals that she analogously points to God’s “inner life,” where God exists in an eternal interrelationship of love.

According to Pope St. John Paul II, “In God’s eternal plan, woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root. The order of love belongs to the intimate life of God himself, the life of the Trinity” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, No 29).

“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body” (Gn 2:24). The man and the woman are seeing each other the way God sees them; they are looking at each other through God’s eyes. It’s almost as if the woman looks at her husband and says to him, “My source,” and the man looks at his wife and says to her, “My self.” That is a covenant relationship.

For my brothers who have lost their wives and are widowed, you carry within your hearts the treasured memories of your life together.

Remember and cherish the words of love and wisdom shared by your wife during her life. Your wife was the heart of your home and family, and the love she carried within her flowed from the very heart of God himself.

She shared that love in so many ways, especially in her tireless commitment to your family. Nurturing you with patience, gentleness and understanding was her way of letting you know that her heart was always open to your love.

Your experience of the joys and struggles of married life can be an invaluable help to the Church, especially for couples who are preparing for marriage and those who are struggling in their marriages. Never feel that, because your wife is gone, you cannot witness to the power of matrimonial love.

The Church needs you! **TD**

---

DEACON HAROLD BURKE-SIVERS serves at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Portland, Oregon.