

To Love Is to Will the Good of Others

May 2018

[Married love] is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment.

(Humanae vitae no. 9)

Reflection

In our modern times there is great confusion about what it means to love another. Romantic love is portrayed as based primarily, if not entirely, on emotional highs and a feeling of intense attraction for the other. For many, then, when these feelings or attractions change, as they often do, the relationship ends.

Our Catholic tradition offers a different understanding of love: that to love is to “will the good of another.” For Blessed Pope Paul VI to say that married love is “above all, an act of the free will,” means that love is not only emotion or feelings of affection towards one’s spouse, rather it is choosing to “will the good” of one’s spouse in all times and circumstances. Love, in the view of the Catholic Church, looks beyond changing emotions and attractions to *will* – to choose – the good of the other.

What does it mean for spouses to choose the good for one another in everyday married life? How can you choose the good for others in your life, even when emotions or feelings fluctuate?

Intercessory Prayer to Blessed Pope Paul VI

God our Father,
fill all married couples
with your love.

Give them the grace
to love one another every day,
living out their promise to love,
to “will the good” of one another
in good times and bad.

Help them to imitate your
freely given, sacrificial love,
that they may choose each day
to give of themselves,
reflecting your love for us
when you sent your Son to
die for our sins.

We ask this through the intercession of Blessed Pope Paul VI,
and in the name of Christ our Lord,
Amen.

