

A Love that is Free

September 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 the Second Vatican Council's pastoral document *Gaudium et spes*, we learn that it is Christ Himself who "fully reveals man to man" and "makes his supreme calling clear" (GS, 22). The Council Fathers go on to teach that "man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself" (GS, 24). In other words, we learn from Jesus what it means to be human and therein how to live and love authentically.

When looking at how to love in married life, we look to the example of Christ in his gift of self for His mystical Bride, the Church. Jesus in freely choosing to give His life for our salvation showed us the path to authentic love, which always includes a truly, freely chosen gift of self.

It is for this reason that Paul VI teaches in *Humanae vitae* that married love is "above all" an act of the free will, because when the love between a husband and wife is built on a model of living a complete and "sincere gift of self," of freely choosing every day to will the good of the other, that married love will be built on a solid foundation, so that it will be able "to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life" and to help the couple to grow closer to one another and to God (HV, 9).

How can we each better live a freely chosen gift of self for others in our daily lives? Are there areas we can grow in to better choose the good for the others in our families and communities?

Intercessory Prayer to Paul VI

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

Give them the grace
to love one another every day,
to live out their promise to love
in all times and circumstances.

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

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,

Paul VI, pray for us!
Amen.

