

## The Battle of the sexes

*A man had been in a public telephone booth for half an hour. He seemed to be very bored. Though he held the receiver to his ear, he made no attempt to speak. At last, a member of the crowd outside, exasperated with waiting, opened the door and asked abruptly. 'Are you speaking to anybody?' The silent one replied, 'Yes, I'm speaking to my wife'*

In the book of Genesis God said: it's not good for man to be alone'. You could be alone even in marriage if the relationship is on the 'slippery slope' and going nowhere.

The effects of original Sin don't make it easy for men and women to understand each other either. When God is excluded, there is a temptation to concentrate overly on the physical and overlook the fact that bodily intimacy is also a sign and pledge of spiritual communion. It's not something purely biological.

Couples co-operate with God in bringing new life into the world. This is a noble calling. It is part of the nature of spousal love that the couples are always open to the creation of new life. This is what elevates marriage to the level of a sacrament with a sublime dignity. When Jesus welcomed children in today's Gospel, I'm sure he was encouraging married couples to accept children lovingly as a gift from God and not see them as a burden or an accident.

Sacramental marriage is based on the Paschal mystery when Christ laid down his life for love of us. Married people lay down their lives for each other. Every time married couples come to Mass they are in a real sense renewing their nuptial vows and the priest is renewing his ordination promises. His spouse is the church community.

We say animals reproduce but humans procreate. It's the design of the creator that procreation should take place within marriage when husband and wife become one through physical and spiritual intimacy. It is also beneath their dignity for babies to be designed outside the womb in the laboratory. They have a right to be conceived in the context of a loving spousal union. Babies conceived in a petri dish or fathered by an anonymous donor can so easily be regarded as commodities and not as persons. The fertilised embryo is often discarded, for instance, if

considered unsuitable. Here man is acting against the natural law and without reference to his Creator.

Divorce is fairly widespread in our society where husband and wife don't manage 'to become one' at least in the biblical sense. They become estranged. In God's plan the genders complement each other in the physical, psychological and spiritual sense. But that is even questioned today in some quarters. Some would reduce the role of male and female to a mere function, interchangeable at will. In this case the complementary nature of the genders ceases to be based on anthropology, but purely on function. Blurring that distinction only leads to confusion and undermines marriage. Jesus came to raise marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. Based on the Paschal mystery, the love of husband and wife will, albeit dimly, be a reflection of God's undiluted love for all his creatures.

## Questions

1. *Why are there more people living alone than ever before. Are they too scared to commit themselves to marriage or long term relationships? Discuss*
2. *Since sex has become progressively divorced from procreation is it any wonder that divorce is endemic and marriage is on the wane.*
3. *How can the Church be more instrumental in redeeming the vocation of marriage?*
4. *Has a militant type of feminism destabilised marriage?*