



**Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Rapid City**

TWENTY FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME: CYCLE B 2012  
**Celebration of Marriage Mass**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cathedral

September 16, 2012

Welcome to all of you, but especially the couples who have gathered here this morning to celebrate their love for their spouse and renew their marriage vows. What a joy to be with all of you!

Today we rejoice with many couples present here who are celebrating major anniversaries of married life: 6 couples celebrating 25 years, 4 couples celebrating 50 years, 65 couples celebrating 51-59 years, 11 couple celebrating 60-66 years... And the couple celebrating the most years with us today is ***Kenneth and Dorothy Kulbel, celebrating 67 years***; Congratulations to all of you. You have been richly blessed.

All of you are a great sign of what God has intended for married life. The grace of the sacrament of marriage is what has sustained you over these many years, in good times and in bad.

As we all know, this beautiful sacrament of Marriage is under attack today from many sides.

1. People choosing to cohabitate instead of getting married is an attack on marriage.
2. Attempting to redefine what constitutes a marriage is an attack on marriage. The push toward gay marriage in this country is an attack on the sanctity of marriage, not to mention an attack on what it means to be male and female.

In the end, when marriage is under attack, then the family is under attack as well. In our secular society, it doesn't seem to matter if there isn't a father AND a mother in the family to raise children. It seems it is just fine if there are two mothers or two fathers. Single parent households are almost the norm these days because of divorce or the father (or the mother) has abandoned the family and is nowhere to be found. Our children need two parents, a father and a mother.

When our nation's leaders publicly speak out in support of same-sex marriage, we clearly know where this is headed on a national level. It may be just a matter of time where this will be the law of the land. This clearly is not good for our country and we must fight against this. Even more true is that this **social and sexual experiment** is destroying our society and directly opposes the common good of all people.

In the Gospel today, Jesus reprimands Peter because he is stuck in his worldly thinking. Peter is **duped by the ideals of society**, by the thinking and desires of the people of his time. In other words, he was thinking in terms of his society's expectations of a Messiah – kingly, royal, rich, powerful, and so on. Peter's response to Jesus when speaking about his death was one of wanting to protect him because humans normally think in terms of protection and safety.

You can't blame Peter for trying to save his master from pain and death. But there is more involved here than just a devoted disciple's desire to protect the teacher he loves and follows. Peter could not connect the cross and suffering with kingship/messiahship. THIS ROCK OF THE CHURCH HAD BECOME AN OBSTACLE, [a *skandalon* in Greek] a stumbling stone. He is speaking the language of the "Father of Lies." The "great lie" is that the Christian life can be lived without the cross – without suffering love.

Peter was offering Jesus an escape from the cross — an easy way out. He wanted to protect Jesus. And then Jesus says, "Get behind me." Peter was called Satan... a name meaning *Adversary*. That's why Peter's ideas were not God's ideas... they were adversarial.

Satan/Adversary is anyone or anything which deflects us from the way of God.

Satan/Adversary is any influence which seeks to make us turn back from the hard way which God sets before us.

An Adversary is any power which seeks or tempts to make our human desires take the place of the Gospel way of life.

At the heart of discipleship is suffering. The cost of being called out into the world as a bearer of Divine Love will be opposed even to the point of death. In a world gone wrong, divine love will meet with resistance... because the Adversary will always be opposed to this divine love. There is the cost of discipleship.

We human beings so often think in terms of self protection, safety and avoidance of pain. God thinks relentlessly in terms of love... even when that love entails suffering.

The same holds true for those who want to redefine marriage and denigrate it as a sacrament. They are thinking in worldly ways and not as God does. They are allowing the Adversary to deflect them from the ways of God. An Adversary is any power which seeks or tempts to make our human desires take the place of the Gospel way of life.

The gay marriage agenda, at its core is self serving, where human desires are taking the place of the Gospel way of life. The Adversary is alive and well.

Marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman is a *sacrament*. This means that the bond between husband and wife is a visible sign of the sacrificial love of Christ for his Church. As a sacrament, marriage gives spouses the grace they need to love each other generously, in imitation of Christ.

The love between a husband and a wife involves a free, total, and faithful mutual gift of self that not only expresses love, but also opens the spouses to receive the gift of a child. No other human interaction on earth is like this. This is why sexual intimacy is reserved for married love – marriage is the only context wherein sex between a man and a woman can speak the true language of self-gift.

On the other hand, sexual behavior between two men or two women can never arrive at the oneness experienced between husband and wife, nor can these acts be life-giving. In fact, it is impossible for two persons of the same sex to make a total gift of self to each other as a husband and a wife do, bodily and personally. For this reason, **such sexual behavior is harmful and always wrong**, as it is incapable of authentically expressing conjugal love – love which by its nature includes the capacity to give oneself fully to the other and to receive the other precisely as gift in a total communion of mind, body and spirit. Therefore, no relationship between two persons of the same sex can ever be held up as equal or analogous to the relationship between husband and wife.

The Catholic Church cares about marriage because marriage is a fundamental good in itself and foundational to human existence and flourishing. Following the example of Jesus, the Church cares about the whole person, and all people. Marriage (or the lack thereof) affects everyone. Today, people all over the world are suffering because of the breakdown of the family – divorce, out-of-wedlock childbearing, and so on. Marriage is never just a “private” issue; it has public significance and public consequences.

The sacrament of Marriage, like the Christian way of life, is designed to be counter-cultural because the Gospel is counter-cultural. Those who promote marriage according to societal standards and ways will see it change as the whims and winds of society change.

A marriage void of God leads to a family void of God, which leads to a society void of God. A secular, hedonistic society will eventually cave in on itself and cease to exist as we know it. It will implode, destroying everything on which this country was founded.

If society really cares about its children and its future, we must do all that we can to protect the sanctity of marriage in our country. Marriage is the root of the family and the family is the root of our nation.

“A committed, permanent, faithful relationship of husband and wife is the root of a family. It strengthens all the members, provides best for the needs of children, and causes the church of the home to be an effective sign of Christ in the world.” (U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love: A Pastoral Message to Families*)

Our secular world seeks only worldly wisdom, and for selfish gain. That is why marriage is being attacked today. Archbishop Dolan prayed at the conclusion of the Democratic National Convention: “**Show us anew that happiness is found only in respecting the laws of nature and of nature’s God. Empower us with your grace so that we might resist the temptation to replace the moral law with idols of our own making, or to remake those institutions you have given us for the nurturing of life and community.**” Let us all continue to pray for this.

The future of our country, our families and our children is counting on us. As we continue with this Eucharist today, may we all be given the vision to see where the Adversary tempts to make our human desires take the place of the Gospel way of life.

May all of us be given the grace to stand strong when our culture is weak and to be a strong voice in this fight to protect the sanctity of marriage and the family. Amen.