

Ordinary 30C 2016

I Have Kept the Faith

In today's second reading, Saint Paul writes: "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith." The great Apostle wrote these words from prison, toward the end of his life, shortly before his death. Comparing the Christian life to an athletic contest, he looks back at his life, and he tells us that has finished the race, and now he is reaching the goal that is Christ. He has been faithful and true to the faith that was handed on to him. He has kept the faith.

These words help us understand what it means to be a Christian, a follower of Christ. They remind us that the Christian life is a like a contest in which we must struggle to reach the finish line that is life in Christ. They remind us to remain faithful to community of faith and preserve the faith that has been handed on to us.

But today, on this day when we are celebrating the marriage anniversaries of all those who were married in the months of September, October and November, I want to apply these words to the Sacrament of Matrimony. Some of you are at the beginning of your married life, others are in the middle of your married life, and still others are coming to the close of your married life. Indeed, you may have already lost a spouse through death. But wherever you are on the journey of marriage, your marriage is a kind of contest in which both of you, husband and wife, are striving together to reach the goal of marital unity in Christ.

It is not easy to achieve this goal when so many forces militate against marriage. It is not easy to attain this goal since it is always easier to go our own separate ways than to sacrifice for one another. And so, there are times when, for different reasons, that marriages fail.

But when marriage succeeds, it presents the church and the world with a wonderful example of Christian love. It presents us with an example of two people who witness to and reflect the unselfish love between Christ and the Church in their married life. For, just as Christ loves the Church, and the Church loves Christ, so husband and wife love each other. And because they love each other in this way, they proclaim the gospel to the world by the way they live their married life.

It has been a privilege for me to see the strong married love of so many people in this and other parishes. For, while I am deeply aware that no marriage is perfect, and that every marriage has its special challenges, I am continually edified by the way in which the married couples I have met throughout my ministry have loved and sacrificed for each other and for their children, providing me and others with a living example of the love that exists between Christ and his Church.

If you remain faithful and true to each other, you will be able to apply the words of St. Paul to your own married life: “We have competed well; we have finished the race; we have kept the faith.” May the Lord, who has begun a good work in your marriage to bring that good work to completion!