

A law is a rule for the actions of members of a community which help the community to work well. Therefore, a quality of a good law is that no one should be held to that which is impossible: everyone should be able to understand and follow. If something were impossible, it means an action is unable to be done, to occur, or exist under any circumstance. To experience and respond to God's love - especially that which is found in a marital relationship of husband and wife, both are forms of love that are very possible and entirely worthwhile.

The Church is aware there are different realities of conjugal relationships within the world and among cultures which observe various degrees of public commitment. Like Christ her teacher, the Church holds out for the very best for everyone under her care, directing each person and all couples to the relationship which will bring the deepest satisfaction and the highest of happiness. It means also that it does not and will not prevent her from accompanying those who may find themselves at a different stage in this life or in a relationship which may need assistance or even correction; if you are on the path toward an alignment with God's will and genuine human fulfillment, there is further goodness and hope to be discovered, together.

Among many couples, sadly there may be a misunderstanding of what Marriage is and can be. There is particular concern for those people who distrust marriage due to the many difficulties experienced in our society, or due to the challenges that are merely anticipated within the marriage bond; however, these couples and families should not dismiss or give up on marriage as a way by which to publicly commit, express their love, and grow in relationship. For her part, the Church can re-introduce and re-present the many positive elements, genuine promises, and valuable benefits to be found within the stability of a marriage. Too often these greater aspects are overshadowed by negative misperceptions, and that is as unfortunate as it is unfair. This persistent message of the Church on the immense purpose and value of strong marital relationships requires gentle humility to hear and good faith to follow. The Church will seek always to offer her witness of the Truth to those entrusted to her care. Every good teacher understands each student to be at a different level of learning, and yet, they also believe how each student can and should belong within their classroom. Similarly, the Church maintains that every person may be at a slightly different level of moral ability, yet all people belong within her pastoral care, deserving her attention and encouragement. What the Catholic Church can do to assist individuals and affirm couples collectively is the overall work of Christ and therefore becomes the main message of *Amoris Laetitia*.

It must be noted that for anything challenging or a rule to be followed, there is a difference between defiance and weakness. Defiance means knowing and being able to do something, yet remaining unwilling. Whereas weakness suggests a willingness to do something, while perhaps remaining unaware or unable. Defiance or weakness is a choice based on your attitude, and your attitude is what determines the human acceptance or rejection of the Truth. A person with an attitude of arrogance prevents any receptivity due to closing off one's heart and mind. Whereas a person with the virtue of humility is able and open to a deeper understanding of the rule and the Truth. Encouragement in growth and affirmation of a person serves as an invitation to know, become better able, and remain willing to experience the authentic joy that comes from a healthy and mutual love.

Chapter 8 reminds us of the difference between the simple following of rules and the genuine spirit which animates and directs them. We must seek to possess a proper attitude if we are to know the joy of God's love in this life. Perhaps a verse from the humble prayer of St. Francis can be borrowed:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.*

*O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love...*

It is the second verse which is the most helpful with our subject. If we can console another, then can we be healed; if we are willing to understand another, then shall we ourselves be better understood; if we choose to love another, only then shall we feel an authentic love in return. To understand the love the Church encourages, we must understand that the focus begins - not with ourselves, but first with others.

The main message of Chapter 8 is to share hope in the face of difficulty or despair. Effectively it is written to help us understand that no person nor any couple is held to a standard that is impossible; as we can believe, so we are to be. It must be remembered that it is only *with* Christ that all things become possible. And if Christ's law on marriage reflects that of God's love, it is the absolute best law by which we are all invited to live and follow as individuals and couples, together.

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