

## Essay IV

### Marriage and Family as a Way to God: Part I

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*The ordinary acts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.*

— Thomas Moore

*If we as individuals, relinquish our attachment to self-supremacy and open our hearts to the awesome simplicity of spiritual truth, all of our endeavors. . . can become deeply spiritual acts.*

— Gerald May

### Marriage as Sacramental Gift

Marriage is a sacrament — the sixth of the seven sacraments. Sacraments, to use the simplest of definitions, are outward or visible signs of inward invisible grace. For the contemplative devoted to the spiritual life, the sacraments are windows through which the unseen realities of God may be glimpsed, and through which the light of God's mysterious presence shines into this world . The sacraments provide a physical means to a spiritual end. To say, therefore, that marriage is a sacrament is to say that marriage is a way to God. I am, however, not speaking of marriage merely as a religious rite or ceremony, but as a continuing way of everyday life that is pure gift.

The gift, or grace, that God gives in the sacraments is the gift of God's own-self. Grace is the presence of the Holy Spirit working in us, transforming us into the likeness of Christ, inspiring us in gratitude, joy, and understanding; strengthening us in patience, endurance, and everything good. "Grace" derives from the Greek word, "*charis*." In secular Greek, "*charis*" was related to "*chairo*," meaning "to rejoice." As far back as Homer it denoted an extraordinary

“attractiveness” or "excellence" in an individual that the Greeks thought could only be explained as a gift of the gods. Marriage is meant, then, to be experienced as God's favor, blessing, and loving-kindness which leads two people not only into an ever deeper and more fulfilling intimacy with each other, but with the God who enfolds them in the mystery of divine union.

The story of "Water Into Wine," John 2:1-11, whatever else it may mean, certainly is a sign that marriage is a sacred gift to be received with both profound reverence and exuberant joy.

The story as you probably remember goes like this:

*On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

*"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."*

*His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

*Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*

*Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water; "so they filled them to the brim.*

*Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."*

*They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said,*

*"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." What*

*Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

If this pericope is read for information only, rather than with an openness to its transformative dimension which "surprises with joy," then its sacramental celebration of marriage as a way to God will likely be missed.

Here is what I mean. When, for example, we read this text focused not only on the element of miracle, but on miracle as that which violates or sets aside the laws of nature, as that in which God "makes possible what is impossible," rather than as an event in which God is somehow involved; and, as that which, whatever its actual particulars, astounds and in the wonder and joy of that astonishment becomes a sign pointing to the mystery of God, we will fail to grasp or enter into the "supernatural" character or sacramental reality of marriage.

Notice in passing, do not fail to observe, that the stone jars in this story normally contain water used in purification rituals. When Jesus finished doing whatever it is he did, they contain wine. A perfect symbol for the sacred chalice of the Last Supper in which the wine represents the blood of Christ that purifies our souls. And, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." All of this at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

### **The Longing and Fulfillment of Intimacy**

Whatever individual differences there are in our experience of marriage and family, it is there that we all hope to find our yearning for loving intimacy fulfilled. Intimacy occurs when what is deepest within us touches and is touched by what is deepest within another. Intimacy is the sharing of life from its most mundane to its most extraordinary events and moments. Sharing household chores, changing diapers or caring for a child, discussing our uneventful day, paying bills, taking a walk together, shopping, a kind or encouraging word, a gesture of affection may

all seem inconsequential but are significant over time in building intimacy; as are, the larger and more dramatic moments and events of our days and nights — life threatening illnesses, catastrophic injuries, shared values and faith, lived fidelity, acute crises, bitter sorrows, exuberant happiness, great successes, devastating failures and those moments of decision when "two paths diverge in a yellow wood." Intimacy comes when we share a long journey together.

### **Knowledge**

Intimacy is a way of knowledge. When Scripture uses the verb "to know" for coitus, as it repeatedly does, it is not fumbling for a euphemism, it is saying something utterly profound about sexual union. The popular evangelical writer Francis Schaffer observed that "animals mate but people meet." And this meeting, this encounter, between two persons at the deepest level of their being is knowledge, it is enlightenment, and it is literally "love-making."

It is not without major significance, then, that the Bible uses the word meaning "to know" for both human copulation and wide awake awareness or consciousness, of God. Indeed, biblically this experiential knowledge of God is life, and joy, and peace, and everything good.

*This is what the Lord says:*

*“Let not the wise boast of their wisdom*

*or the strong boast of their strength*

*or the rich boast of their riches,*

*but let the one who boasts boast about this:*

*that they have the understanding to know me,*

*that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,*

*justice and righteousness on earth,*

*for in these I delight,”*

*declares the Lord.*

— Jeremiah 9:23-24, NIV

*For you granted the Christ authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

— John 17:2-3, NIV

From the perspective of Judeo/Christian spirituality, then, knowledge and wisdom are profoundly relational — personal. Love is a way of knowing. Abraham Maslow, the most frequently quoted psychologist in the twentieth century, posited this same connection between love and knowledge more scientifically in writing of a way that transcends the limits of empirical objectivity: "But I propose another path that is, in the sense of greater perspicuity, of greater accuracy of perception of the reality out there outside ourselves, outside the observer. It comes originally from the observation that loving participation, whether as between sweethearts or as between parents and children produced kinds of knowledge that were not available to nonlovers." Maslow thought that this was further evidenced by the ethological literature —the study of animals in their natural environment.

Saint Paul is clear on this point with The Corinthians who were intensely occupied with themes of wisdom and mystical theology. His argument can be outlined like this:

1) No one really knows the *thoughts* within a person, except the spirit which is in the person (1 Corinthians 2:11).

2) No one knows the *thoughts* of God except the Spirit of God who searches the depths of God and knows the thoughts of God (1 Corinthians 2:10,11).

3) The unspiritual person does not accept the things taught by the Spirit of God, to the "natural" person such things are foolish, for what is spiritual can only be grasped spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:14).

4) The spiritual person, having been taught the *thoughts* of God by the Spirit of God, is wise and understanding, and appraises everything; for he or she now possesses "the mind of Christ" (2:13-16).

5) The spiritually immature within the Christian community are discernable by their obvious loveless attitudes (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

6) True wisdom "boasts" only in that "we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God (1 Corinthians 3: 18-19, 21,23).

What I would suggest now is that you stop here and read chapters two and three of I Corinthians. Then come back and re-read this short outline, holding in mind the simple definition given earlier of intimacy as an encounter between two persons in which what is deepest within one touches and is touched by what is deepest in the other. Such intimacy is love and wisdom and knowledge. It is communion. It is two becoming one. It is what we all dream of, all hope for — to be known, understood, and loved. It is total fulfillment.

### **Marriage as Spiritual Practice**

Marriage is a spiritual practice, and like all spiritual practices is meant to lead to a deeper and more intense communion with God, a larger consciousness of the presence of Divine Mystery, a greater experience of the One who is Love (1 John 4:7-21). The key biblical text is, of course, Ephesians 5:31-32: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church." That is, Christ and the church, are a profound mystery in that they are not

two but one. In the same way husband and wife are also a great mystery in that they are not two but one.

This "mystery" is perhaps best understood by resorting to what is known as inaugurated eschatology, which very basically says the kingdom of God is already here, but will not be fully consummated until Christ's second coming. Consequently, Saint Paul can refer in the same place to how we wait with sharp anticipation our future adoption as the children of God; and, yet, are even now in this very moment already the children of God (Galatians 4:1-7, 28). Inaugural eschatology is a way of explaining this mysterious paradox of "the already and the not yet." At their wedding ceremony a couple enters the state of one becoming one.

To reiterate, then, marriage is the spiritual discipline or practice of union with Christ by husband and wife continuously discovering how to live into this union with each other. The specific and principle dimensions of that practice are stated in Ephesians 5. Because verse 27 is so problematic for contemporary men and women I am going to do a very quick exegesis of the chapter as it relates to Christian spirituality in general and to marriage as a spiritual discipline in particular. Here are the verses as translated in the New American Standard Bible — one of the more literal if somewhat wooden translations — followed by my comments:

**Verses 1-3:** *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

**Comments:** Fundamental to Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths: (1) Life is suffering. (2) Suffering is due to craving, desire, or attachment. (3) Letting go of attachments brings freedom from suffering. (4) Following the eight fold path teaches how to let go, and extinguishes desire and its suffering. Islam has the Five Pillars: (1) Faith in Allah as the one God. (2) Ritual Prayer

five times daily. (3) Charity, paying the tax to help the poor. (4) Fasting during Ramadan. (5) Pilgrimage to Mecca. And Judaism has the Ten Commandments: (1) Worship Yahweh alone. (2) Do not make idols. (3) Do not take the name of the Lord in vain. (4) Keep the Sabbath holy. (5) Honor your father and mother. (6) Do not kill. (7) Do not commit adultery. (8) Do not steal. (9) Do not testify falsely. (10) Do not covet. And Christianity has the Two Great Precepts: (1) Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. (2) Love those around you as you love yourself; indeed, love others in the same way Christ loves you (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34). Jesus says that the entire Old Testament hinges on these two precepts. The final test of Christian authenticity is love. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). And Saint Paul taught the earliest Christians that every ethical principle and every moral imperative is rooted in and grows out of these two precepts (Galatians 5:14). And here it is again in Ephesians. The essential mark of Christian spirituality, of the contemplative life, is to be *imitators* of God, "walking in love as Christ walked in love," loving as God loves (1 John 4:7-12; Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 17:22-18:4; John 17:1-13). I would suggest that you pause again. Read each of these passages along with Philippians 2:1-11 — read them slowly, thoughtfully, meditatively. Don't read them thinking about married life, but rather with regard to what is essential to the *beatific vision*. This, I think, is good preparation for understanding our problem verse in Ephesians 5. When you are ready begin again here.

**Verses 3-5** *But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous person, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

**Comments:** Here Paul addresses the problem of the self-absorbed life — the life of the person who is determined to get what he or she wants when they want it regardless of what anyone else thinks, feels, wants or needs. New Testament Greek scholar William Barclay defined "*pleonexia*" as an "accursed love of having," which "will pursue its own interests with complete disregard for the rights of others, and even for the considerations of common humanity." He labels it an aggressive vice that operates in three spheres of life:

- In the material sphere it involves "grasping at money and goods, regardless of honor and honesty."
- In the ethical sphere it is "the ambition which tramples on others to gain something which is not properly meant for it."
- In the moral sphere, it is "the unbridled lust which takes its pleasure where it has no right to take it."

Here in this text the Apostle Paul identifies it as idolatry. In this instance Paul is thinking of idolatry in the same way as the modern theologian Paul Tillich who asserted that whenever anything other than the truly Ultimate becomes one's ultimate concern, that is idolatry. It is, normally, also polytheism, the worship of many gods, which is the corollary of idolatry. The heart and mind becomes filled with complicated, and at times competing, drives, passions, and ambitions. Paul seems to have this in mind when he advises against coarse jesting and unfitting talk. The Persian wisdom teachers said, it is not good to talk or joke about what is not allowed. What they meant is that there are ways of talking about base things that fix them in our mind, nourish their development, and lead to their enactment. What is being discussed is that purity of heart without which we cannot see, or experience the reality of God's presence and peace (Matthew 5:8); or, as Paul states it here, "No impure, self-serving, or greedy person, who is

actually the same as an idolater, has any share in the kingdom, in the spiritual reality of God."

Soren Kierkegaard said with both simplicity and profundity, "Purity of heart is to will one thing."

**Verses 6-14:** *Let no one deceive you with empty words. for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says,*

*“Awake, sleeper,*

*And arise from the dead,*

*And Christ will shine on you.”*

**Comments:** *"Werde was du bist."* "Become what you are" — the "fruit of the Light of Christ."

Your daily work of love no matter how seemingly small or undramatic illuminates the darkness of this world. Become what you are, children of God seeking to know and practice the wisdom of God. Live, then, with hearts awake to the mystery of the ages which is Christ in you, live in awareness of the peace, power, and presence of God. Learn to live intimately. *"And Christ will shine on you."*

**Verses 15-21:** *Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making*

*melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*

**Comments:** To live in wisdom is to buy back, to redeem, to make the most of or fully appropriate our time. The image of someone buying up or cornering the market on something is at play here. But that is a rather strange way to talk about time. This is explained by the fact that in the Greek there are two words for time, *Chronos* which is clock and calendar or chronological time, and *kairos* which refers to the opportune moment, the decisive moment, the right moment as when fruit ripens on a tree and is ready to be harvested, it could be thought of in terms of a phrase used in the Hippie Movement — *kairos* is "harmonic convergence." Perhaps for this reason it is used in the New Testament to refer to something like a new or different order of reality. M. Robert Mulholland Jr. in his book *Shaped by the Word* makes this pertinent observation:

We find Paul in many places (Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5 are among the clearest of all) using *kairos* as though it had something to do with the very context of Christian existence in the world. In some sense Paul seems to be indicating that Christians, as they live their lives in the world, are living in an order of being that was inaugurated in the incarnation of Jesus and will be consummated at his return.

When Paul says, "Fully appropriate for yourselves the *kairos*: (Eph. 5:16, Col. 4:5), he is saying that we are to fully appropriate for ourselves, to completely immerse ourselves, to totally consecrate ourselves, to unconditionally yield ourselves to this new order of being in Christ which God offers.

This new order is radically different than the old. See, for example, Matthew 20:25-27. It is not about hierarchies, and power and control, it is about helping, about compassion, about

exercising *hesed* (loving kindness). It is the antithesis of the self-centered, self-absorbed life. Alfred Adler thought that every human being needs a sense of power — the satisfaction that comes from knowing one has made a positive contribution to the common good of his or her family, church, or community. And the feeling that what one thinks, feels, and desires (or fears) means something to those with whom life is shared. When the individual instead feels powerless and discouraged at an early age, he or she may become mistaken about the goal of life, and neurotically conceive of power as control, or status, or getting attention, or revenge — hurting others in retaliation for the past hurts and humiliations of powerlessness. Charles Manson said that the words "Helter Skelter," written in blood at both murder scenes, referred to a time when each person would look into his or her own heart and take it out on everyone else. Rollo May said, "Powerlessness corrupts and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely." Sadly, it is power in its more neurotic forms which is most often manifested in Western culture, and which most often furnishes the context for interpreting this text.

A woman, a dear friend and member of a church we served, once asked me who was the boss in our family — me or Brenda? I answered that there really was no boss. "Well," she pressed on, "if a decision has to be made and you don't agree who has the last word, the final say?" "No", I said, "we just keep talking until eventually we reach a mutual conclusion." That did not satisfy her at all. So when our daughter came home from college, and we gathered for a church dinner, and were all sitting at the same table she asked our daughter: "Tell me. Who would you say is the boss in your family?" Our daughter thought silently for a long moment and then said, "I used to think Dad was the boss. But Mom makes most of the important decisions so I guess she is." With that our friend was satisfied. It is a satisfying answer because it follows the logic of this world. But the logic of the heavenly realm is harder to grasp. It is the sort of logic

which maintains that "the greatest is the one who is the servant of all." The highest is the one who has gone deepest. The "blessed" is the one who is poorest and weakest — the *anawhim*. And the fullest is the one who is most empty. I love Eugene Peterson's translation of Philippians 4:4-5, "Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, *revel* in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them." It is not so difficult to comprehend this with the mind as it is to understand it with the heart. More difficult still is to live it, but that is precisely what this verse is requiring.

The main thing that should now be noted is that when Paul urges the Ephesians to be in subjection to one another he is saying nothing at all different than what he has already said about what is absolutely necessary to Christian spirituality, about what is essential for knowing God, for seeing God, for becoming one with Christ. Communion with God grows as we love with pure hearts. To love is to serve and to serve is love, and this practice of love and service as one "thing" is mystical knowledge.

**Verses 22-24:** *Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

**Comments:** The English word "head," used metaphorically, is almost automatically assumed to mean "the one in charge or in authority;" however, the Greek term can also refer to the source of something — that which feeds or nourishes. Thus, Christ is the head of the church in that he feeds and nourishes it, and cares for it, and gives himself up for it. In fact, it is only in the context of Christ giving himself up for and nourishing the church that the husband in Ephesians can be said to be the head. The husband is to show love for his wife by remaining faithful to her alone,

by a willingness to sacrifice himself for her needs, by supporting her spiritual growth, and by seeing and respecting her as a person. The wife submits to her husband by being loyal only to him and no other man, by encouraging him, by working for what is in his legitimate best interest, and by being a true partner in the business of life (Proverbs 31:10-31).

It becomes even more difficult to read this verse in a flat one dimensional manner when it is recognized that the word translated as “submit to,” or “be subject to” is simply, due to the peculiarities of the Greek language, not in the text at verse 22. It has to be supplied by the translator trying to make good English sense. That is, in verse 22 the English word "submit" translates a Greek word that is not actually in the text. It does occur however in verse 21 which can, in part, be literally translated as: “submitting yourselves to one another in reverence to Christ.” Passages like the fifth chapter of Ephesians come originally from the Greco/Roman household codes. These were short statements of how to act ethically, or appropriately, or orderly in various relationships and settings – kind of like *All I Need to Know I learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum. I enjoyed Fulghum’s book, and suspect its very simplicity was helpful to a large number of people. Of course, Fulghum didn’t literally learn everything he needed to know in kindergarten, and Ephesians 5 is not an exhaustive treatment of marriage and family relationships. It has to be interpreted within its own written context and within the context of the light of Christ. To regard this passage as saying nothing more than that all future arguments between a couple will be decided by agreeing, in advance, that the one, based on gender, will always be right, reduces the text to a logical absurdity, and renders it too trivial to be of any consequence to the contemplative life.

By now it should be clear that this passage has nothing to do with obsequious devotion. For the wife to be in subjection to the husband is no different than what it means for all

Christians to be in subjection to one another. Or, for that matter what it means for a husband to love his wife. It's all the same thing. "It is," someone said, "demeaning to the mysteriousness of the one flesh union between husband and wife to define it in terms of a hierarchy." It is demeaning because divine union pertains only between persons. Jordan and Margaret Paul stated the issue succinctly as a question in the title of their book: *Do I Have to Give Up Me to Be Loved by You?* To speak of becoming one with someone who has been reduced to a non-entity is meaningless..

**Verses 25-30:** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church<sup>l</sup> in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.*

**Comments:** By way of furnishing a larger context for this comment, I begin with a paraphrase and elaboration of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 — Saint Paul's description of what love is like:

**Love is patient** — "enduring the hard thing in such a way as to turn it to glory," appreciating and affirming life in the midst of suffering, waiting for the answer to unfold naturally like a cherry blossom.

**Love is kind** — food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, medicine for the sick, encouragement for the disheartened. It is gentle yet strong. It is sensitive, yet sturdy.

**Love is not jealous** — it is courageous, fearing no loss or separation. Love is not envious. It does not desire to possess.

**Love is trusting and confident** — poised. Love therefore is not boastful, arrogant or rude. It is as gracious as a welcoming host, and as appreciative as an honored guest.

**Love is not self-willed** — love forgoes its own rights for the sake of gaining rights for others. Love does not insist on its own rights if it harms or costs others their rights.

**Love knows we are as small as the things we allow to bother us** — love is, therefore, not easily angered by every inconvenience, by the little things that get in our way or annoy us.

**Love lets go of resentments rather than nurturing them** — it finds no pleasure in keeping track of what our enemies owe us for the pain they have caused us; and it finds no satisfaction when people act in ways that prove our negative judgments of them were correct.

**Love finds pleasure whenever truth, justice and goodness show themselves in anyone's life** — regardless of who that person is, or what the circumstances may be.

**Love sustains and supports everything that makes life worthwhile** — love believes that the center of everything is absolutely trustworthy and good; and, that "while the situation may not be trustworthy, God is. Love knows that no person or situation is ever beyond redemption, and is always open to being surprised by joy, by truth, by grace.

With this picture of love in mind, then, we are prepared to observe here in Ephesians 5:25-30 that husbands must love their wives with a love that is the same in kind and quality as that with which Christ loves the community of faith, the household of God, the church which is his own mystical body. He who loves his wife loves himself. How could it be otherwise if the two are one? The husband's love is, therefore, one that seeks to nourish everything good in her spirit, and cherishes her person as sacred. Notice that at the deeper level there is no essential difference between subjection and love. The entangling distinctions of power and authority often debated by Bible commentators are cultural in nature and primarily, denials to the contrary,

about willfulness, but with a deeper reading of Scripture in the light of Christ that all eventually disappears until only the guiding mystery of Christ's love remains.

**Verses 31-33:** *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*

**Comment:** In *A Brief History of Time* Stephen Hawking said we are very close to understanding how the universe was made, but if we knew why we would know the mind of God. A fascinating statement from an atheist, but apparently one who nevertheless appreciates the mystery that runs through the whole universe and holds the cosmos in cupped hands. It is the audacious claim of Christians that they do indeed have the mind of Christ; and to further assert in trembling reverence and humility that they therefore know why it was made. Christian experience, tradition, and Scripture all converge in trusting that the universe was created by Love, through Love, in Love, and for Love (Ephesians 1:1ff.).

### **Invitation to Communion**

So, verses 22-33 return us to the focal point of Christian spirituality — union, communion, sacred intimacy, a loving oneness that can only be described as holy. Placed before us is not a list of onerous marital demands, but an invitation to discover in marriage a way to enter into union with the mystical presence of Christ.