

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 25
June 19, 2022

Thoughts on the Sacraments Part 5 Holy Matrimony (1)

Holy Matrimony is one of the sacramental rites that sanctify key moments in our lives. Baptism marks the entry on a person into the society of the Church; Confirmation (at least in Anglicanism) marks one's coming-of-age; Holy Matrimony the establishing of a family, a major event of most people's lives and finally, Unction of the Sick, that, though available for any sickness, is administered whenever possible at time of death.

Holy Matrimony is unique in that in the Western Church, at least, the spouses themselves are the ministers of the sacramental rite, not the priest or pastor. In fact, well into the Middle Ages, most people did not have church weddings as we know them today; marriage was seen as a largely secular affair, something agreed upon by the couple and their families and then celebrated by the whole community. At some point, the couple might go to the church to seek a blessing, but that was not essential to the process. This all gradually changed as the Church became more and more involved with the daily lives of the faithful, but the secular origins are reflected in the spouses' role as ministers of the Sacrament.

Also, of course, marriage is not an exclusively Christian institution; it is, and always has been, a universal one, and has taken many forms down through the ages. I think then it's important to distinguish between civil or secular marriage as such, and the sacramental rite of Holy Matrimony. The two obviously overlap, but are not the same thing. The Church can determine its own rules governing Christian marriage independent of the State and vice-versa.

(To be continued)

June 19. Psalm 63

Response: *O Lord, my soul clings to thee, thy right hand holdeth me fast.*

O GOD, thou art my God; * early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee, * in a barren and dry land where no water is.

Response: *O Lord, my soul clings to thee, thy right hand holdeth me fast.*

Thus have I looked for thee in the sanctuary, * that I might behold thy power and glory. For thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself: * my lips shall praise thee.

Response: *O Lord, my soul clings to thee, thy right hand holdeth me fast.*

As long as I live will I magnify thee in this manner, * and lift up my hands in thy Name. My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness, * when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips. Because thou hast been my helper; * therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Response: *O Lord, my soul clings to thee, thy right hand holdeth me fast.*

SAINTS:

Alban, First Martyr of Britain. 22 June.

Alban was a soldier in the Roman city of Verulamium (now St Albans in Hertfordshire) who gave shelter to a Christian priest fleeing from persecution, hiding him in his house for several days. Greatly influenced by his devotion to prayer, Alban received instruction from the priest and was converted. When the priest's hiding-place was discovered, Alban dressed himself in the priest's cloak and was arrested in his place. Tortured by the Roman authorities, Alban refused to renounce his faith. He was beheaded on this day, probably in the year 250, and so became the first British martyr. His shrine stands today as a place of pilgrimage in the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban.

Etheldreda, Abbess of Ely. 23 June.

Etheldreda, also called Audrey, was born in Suffolk early in the seventh century, a daughter of the king. She desired to commit her life to prayer and chastity and, after two arranged and unconsummated marriages, founded a religious house at Ely for both men and women, over which she ruled as Abbess. At her death on this day in the year 678, she was revered as a woman of austerity, prayer and prophecy.