

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 26
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Thoughts on the Sacraments Holy Matrimony (2)

*T*here is a lot of talk these days, especially in highly industrialized and urbanized societies, that the Institution of marriage is in crisis. I'm not sure that's the case, but it can't be denied that in those societies, attitudes towards marriage have changed a lot in my lifetime even within the Church. One could write several books on this topic, but I'll confine myself to one point, which I think lies at the heart of the matter: how we've come to view the purpose of marriage,

Regarding the first, if you look at the marriage rite in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer still the official standard of the C of E you'll see that the purposes of marriage are three: first, procreation and raising a family, second, control of one's passions; and third, companionship and mutual support.

The emphasis here is on procreation – which is one would expect in a world where infant and maternal mortality rates were quite high. The happiness of the couple, their compatibility etc. was last.

In most modern Prayer Book rites (including ours) the order has been

shortened and reversed! First and foremost is the spouses' "mutual joy" and support; then, if God wills it, children. Controlling the passions quietly disappears. Again, the 'demotion' of procreation to second place reflects the real changes in society at large: infant and maternal mortality are at a historical low, most of a child's education no longer takes place in the home, in our consumerist society, raising children has become quite expensive and so on,

But how we understand the purpose of marriage largely determines the 'shape' of marriage which renders a lot of our previous teaching on marriage at least open to question, such as the indissolubility of marriage, gender roles within the family, the bans on birth control, and termination of pregnancy, exclusive monogamy ... and I could go on and on, but I'll just leave you with a question?

So, is marriage in crisis or is it just changing with the times? Is the Church caving into modern society when it reflects these changes,? Or is it meeting people where they really are, ministering to them within their 'natural habitat' so to speak?

What do you think?

SAINTS:

Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria. 27 June.

Cyril was born in Alexandria and was first heard of as a young priest. He succeeded his uncle as Patriarch in the year 412 and began his great defence of the classical doctrines of God the Holy Trinity and of Jesus Christ as a unique and single Person within the Trinity. His chief adversary was the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, who taught that the Christ was both the Jesus who was made flesh in one of his Persons, the Human Person, and also the one who was Divine, a separate Person within the Godhead. The Nestorian party thus rejected the description of Mary as 'Theotokos', God-bearer, and also rejected the papal ruling that they comply with the orthodox views of Cyril. The Council of Ephesus was convened in the year 431 to rule on the matter and eventually gave its full support to Cyril, making the word Theotokos the touchstone of Christian orthodoxy. Cyril's writings give clear and unequivocal statements about the Real Presence of Christ in the eucharist and the position of Mary, the Theotokos, within the doctrine of her Son's incarnation. Cyril died at Alexandria in the year 444.

Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons. 28 June. *Teacher of the Faith.*

Irenæus was probably a native of Smyrna, born in about 130. As a boy, he had heard Polycarp preach, who had in turn been a disciple of the apostle John. Irenæus is thus one of the important connections between the apostolic Church and the second century. He studied at Rome, and later became a priest at Lyons in Gaul, succeeding as bishop upon the martyrdom of his predecessor in 177. He contended against the mythological, unhistorical beliefs of the Gnostics, giving positive value to the full humanity of the incarnate Christ, and affirmed the public teaching rôle of the episcopate to combat false doctrine. He is honoured as the first great Catholic theologian, one who drew upon the emerging traditions of East and West. Irenæus is believed to have been martyred in about the year 200.