

Take-Home 13. When the Cross Comes

From the Beginning

What We Found

1 Corinthians 13 describes love's concrete practices, and a striking number of them are things love refrains from doing. That part of the list is tested most when we are provoked. It describes year eleven, not a wedding day.

Scripture is full of marriages that suffered, and it never presents suffering as proof of failure. In several of the passages we read, the couple never received an explanation.

In sickness and in health is already in the vow. The consent itself will not need renegotiating, though practical arrangements may rightly change. What is needed is knowing where the help is.

The bond is permanent, and no one is obliged to remain in danger. The Church recognizes legitimate separation while the bond remains, and permits civil divorce where it is the only way to secure protection or the care of children.

Forgiveness releases a debt and is commanded. Reconciliation takes two people. Restored trust is earned over time. The absence of consequences is not part of any of them.

When your spouse is grieving, offering yourself as compensation is well meant and does not work. Sit with them instead.

Mary at the cross is not fixing anything and is not being spared. Remaining present at something you cannot fix is not failure. In that passage the center is Christ's self-offering, and Mary's faithful presence is a profound witness of persevering love.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: STS. LOUIS AND ZELIE MARTIN

Louis and Zelie Martin married in 1858, had nine children, and buried four of them. Zelie ran a lace business and carried much of the family's income, and died of breast cancer in 1877 while the children were young. Louis raised the surviving daughters, suffered a severe decline in his final years, and died in 1894. They were canonized together in 2015, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux.

They are here because they answer the suspicion that holy marriages are the ones that go well. Four dead children, a business, a long illness, and a widower's decline. The Church looked at that and said: this is what a holy marriage looks like.

Historical summary. Canonized together in October 2015.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. MONICA, WITH A NECESSARY QUALIFICATION

St. Monica prayed for the conversion of her husband and of her son for decades. Her son, St. Augustine, records in the Confessions that her husband was difficult and that she persevered, and that both were eventually baptized.

Augustine also reports counsel she gave other wives about enduring difficult husbands, and the Church today does not counsel anyone to remain in danger. What is worth taking from St. Monica is the perseverance of her prayer across decades, not a model for handling a violent household.

Confessions, Book IX, on Monica and Patricius.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH ON SEPARATION

The Church's law holds that spouses are to maintain their common life unless a legitimate cause excuses them, and it recognizes such causes: adultery, subject to the conditions of canon 1152, grave danger of spirit or body to a spouse or to the children, and conduct that makes common life too hard. In urgent cases a spouse may act on their own authority.

The bond remains and neither is free to remarry. Nobody is required to stay in the house.

Summary of the Code of Canon Law, canons 1151-1155.

Live It This Week

- **Name your two people, and tell them.** Call the two you would ring at two in the morning and ask them, out loud, to be those people. Most will say yes and be honored that you asked.
- **Full financial disclosure this week.** Every debt, every loan, every obligation, both directions. Sit down with actual numbers rather than summaries.
- **Write down where the help is.** Your parish's number, a counselor your parish recommends, and the domestic violence hotline. Put them in both your phones now, while nothing is wrong.
- **Read Revelation 19:6-9 before the last session,** and read Ephesians 5:31-32 one more time alongside it.

BEFORE THE ALTAR

This week. Make full financial disclosure to each other: every debt, loan, and obligation, with actual numbers. Then put three phone numbers in both your phones while nothing is wrong: your parish, a counselor your parish recommends, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-7233.

Also. Name the two people you would call at two in the morning, and actually ask them.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:7

Before next session: Read Revelation 19:6-9 before the last session, and read Ephesians 5:31-32 once more alongside it.

Catechism: CCC 1615, 1642, 2383, 2842-2845. Code of Canon Law, canons 1151-1155.