

May 2006

Marriage: A Broken Image?

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Recommended Citation

Frate, Jeff (2006) "Marriage: A Broken Image?," *Verbum*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol3/iss2/3>

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Marriage: A Broken Image?

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I am to sacrifice for her all that I am, but if only for her, then I will lie before her dead, and she before me (as in Romeo and Juliet). I cannot give all that I am because our bodies get in the way, the medium and frustration of our union. I cannot unzip myself from my skin; my bones give the underlying form through which I am known. If I lay my life down solely for her, she cannot help me to rise, and I cannot take it up again."

MARRIAGE: A Broken Image?

By: Jeffrey Frate

“No life is creative except to the degree that it is consecrated... To refuse to give my life in some extreme circumstances would be, not to preserve it, but to mutilate it. It is as though sacrifice were its very fulfillment, as though to lose it were the means of saving it.”

(Gabriel Marcel)

“Husbands lay down your life for your wives, just as Christ laid down his life for the church.”

(St. Paul)

I am to sacrifice for her all that I am, but if only for her, then I will lie before her dead, and she before me (as in Romeo and Juliet). I cannot give all that I am because our bodies get in the way, the medium and frustration of our union. I cannot unzip myself from my skin; my bones give the underlying form through which I am known. If I lay my life down solely for her, she cannot help me to rise, and I cannot take it up again.

The union of marriage is a broken image, not fallen or corrupt, but unsatisfied; a union of two bodies, which impede the oneness of the souls; I am, and she is; like reaching out to touch the hem of Christ's robe, I reach out in fear, harboring the thought of condemnation.

Is there a union of consciousness? Could I be fully present to her in mind? It seems hopeless, because my mind is barely one with itself, it is polyvalent; a succession of events without any eternal present; all I can offer her is fragments; ashes of then and burning now.

Unity is unconditional love, eternal presence; it is a way of being that has so little to do with time; it is to lay life down in the flames of martyrdom, to be a holocaust indefinitely; but for whom? Only for the One who could give my life back again; or else love is only suicide.

Sacrifice is to God alone; if I am to lay my life down for my wife, Christ must be there, in her, to give me my life back again from the dead.