

24.8.70

4.9.72

3.9.73

RHK-CHA-E-2

Eph 5²¹⁻³² (Nissel p 666)Pater (Russ. Lit.)
RS 264

[ANGELUS]

466 Nissel

[The 2nd scripture reading at Mass yesterday] from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, [was] an important passage about Christian marriage. I suppose possibly, at first sight or hearing, it may strike people who are very conscious of women's rights, equal pay and such-like, as being rather ^{typically} anti-feminist — the first part of it anyway. St Paul's advice and exhortation to wives. But, apart from the fact, which is sometimes overlooked, that St Paul wrote in quite a different cultural background from our modern western one, a deeper, calmer look at that passage will reveal a much fuller view of marriage than the simple confrontation or contrast of men and women. Maybe it's the bald statement that wives shd. submit to their husbands in everything that makes many women dislike St Paul and give him the reputation of being unsympathetic and anti: but evidently he didn't appear that way to people who knew him personally, and he had a number of women and husbands-wives among his close followers and friends. The view of marriage he puts forward is certainly a demanding one, leaving no room for any selfishness, insisting on the complete union between two Christians, modelled on the total love of Christ for His people. It's not, perhaps, a view of Xtn. marriage wh. has received its due prominence in the ordinary concern & teaching of the Church about marriage in the recent past, tho' this is now changing... the Catholic Church seems to have got itself a reputation of looking at marriage as almost solely concerned with producing children. Even yet, there remains a lot of work to be done in formulating a really satisfactory theology of marriage — and this passage from St Paul's letter to Ephesus is a key one for any attempt at this. Both for those who are married and for anyone who wants

to understand this intimate sacrament, St Paul needs to be read, meditated on and prayed about. We accept that marriage is a sacrament: it's because of this that the Church is involved in the lives of two of its members, that the ceremony takes place in a church with the parish priest or his delegate present — but it's not this that makes a sacrament out of what is also a natural human institution. Particularly today, when there are so many difficulties in married life and so many attacks both subtle and direct on the whole institution of marriage and the family, even apart from its Christian aspect, we all need a greater awareness and understanding of the sacrament, the presence and activity of Christ, His life & love. And especially people who are themselves married Christians and can give witness to the rest of society of what the sacrament is. St Paul interpreted the formula given in the book of Genesis about the natural union of a man and a woman in marriage as a sign of the love of God for mankind, and more specifically of the union between Christ and His Church, His members, whom He chose and purified in the sacrament of Baptism — and this marriage-imagery is a fairly common one in the Bible to express the relationship between God & the people He makes His own. But St Paul then goes further — having seen marriage itself in this context, he then gives a new view of what marriage is between Christians, based on the fact of Christ's love and union with His people, which is the core of the Christian message. It is because of this union that Christ is involved in the wedded union of ~~the~~ Xtn. man and woman, that there is a sacrament, an effective sign and cause of grace, God's love growing and developing in the lives of two people who love each other totally. Be our prayer today

Let's reflect a little on this, and also pray for all those who have difficulties in their married life, that they may be able to see and understand the presence and action of Chr. in the sacrament their lives shd. be. For a prayer in music first, listen to a record of Victoria: Soudant - Coels

MUSIC - PRAYERS.

In a Chr. marriage,

it is because they love each other, and in so far as they love each other, that husband and wife are bringers of the life and love of Chr. to each other, and to their children. Few marriages really reach the total completeness of Chr.'s love and self-giving for His church, or the intimate union between Him and His people in the family of God - not surprisingly, for this is beyond the scope of human power and natural limitations. But it is this union & love that Christian couples share and shd. be able to show to others in their way of living. It's a big demand & responsibility, and it involves all of us, married or not, who are followers of Chr. Do we think of this, pray about it often enough, pray for people, including our own friends, who are getting married? The modern obsession with sex isn't any help to young people in love, and all the modern talk about marriage & society can't be much help either. There are so many crazy ideas, so many popular causes, so much special pleading on matters which ultimately concern both the family & society today, that we need to get our priorities straight, our views in tune with God's plan: we need to pray & reflect on the whole meaning of marriage and the Chr. sacrament; and to pray too for those who are in love and plan to marry, that their love may grow as deeper unselfishly for the rest of their lives.

RHK
NEP-II
ARGO 124