

For Better, For Worse

My country, Malta, and the Philippines are the only two countries in the world where divorce is not legally permitted. Recently the Maltese people were asked to vote in a referendum on the introduction of divorce.

The extensive discussions were a fresh reminder of the suffering of so many people whose marriage has failed. For those who are happily married, it was an opportunity to reflect on the fragility and preciousness of their love.

I have been married for only a few years, and I can honestly say they were the best years of my life. I hope that the future will be even better. But marriage is not a fairy tale, and we may not necessarily live happily ever after. My wife and I will most likely face more tests and harder trials than we had until now. We are also painfully aware of our fallibility and weakness. We are no better than other couples whose romance and joy turned into bitterness and heartache.

I am grateful to my parents for modeling what marriage and sacrificial love is all about. My father feared God, and for more than fifty years he endeavoured to fulfill the promise he made to his wife, 'to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part.'

My parents had their fair share of problems, but for a solution they never entertained the possibility of going their separate ways. They learned to solve their problems whatever it takes, to forgive and forebear one another, and to work hard for their family. Even when he was elderly and frail, my father cherished and tenderly cared for my mother until the Lord called him home.

Like my father, I want to live in sincere reverence to God. Marriage is not a human invention, but a divine institution. I believe that God had joined us together in one body, and therefore our relationship is more intimate and profound than any other. I cannot give more importance to my career or to any other interest. I cannot even place my children, whom I love more than life, before my wife. After God, my wife comes first.

I want to devote myself to my dear wife, to protect and provide for her needs, for God charged me to love her just as Christ loves his church. His love is amazing. Even when the church is unworthy and ungrateful, Christ loves her still. He loved her to the extreme, giving himself on the cross to secure her liberty and happiness.

In imitation of Christ, I cannot shy away from pain and sacrifice in the commitment and dedication to my beloved. Neither should it be difficult for me to be patient with her and to forgive her little mistakes, when I remember how Christ has forgiven and received me in his loving arms despite my manifold stupidities and sins.

My wife and I do not know our future, but we do know him who holds the future; He can also secure the vows we exchanged before him. If we remain close to him, we will remain close to one another.