

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The fifth precept of the Church is "to contribute to the support of the Church." At this season of Lent, I would like to draw your attention specifically to the "Bishop's Annual Appeal" (now called The Catholic Appeal of South Carolina). You should already have received a mailing from the diocese about this worthy cause, and this week at Mass may also pick up an envelope and brochure about the appeal.

The Catholic Appeal of South Carolina funds the Bishop's work for many worthy causes across our diocese. Here at OLR we would like to direct your Lent almsgiving to the Catholic Appeal of SC. We will have a final push for this again at Advent at the end of the year.

The sixth precept of the Church is to obey the church's laws of matrimony. The church's laws concerning marriage are simple in principle, but complex in application. The simple principle is that a Catholic marriage is between one Catholic man and one Catholic woman and the union is for life. All sexual relations outside marriage are forbidden. There. You can't get much simpler than that!

However, life is messy, and love is messy and while the principle is simple the application is not. Catholics want to marry non Catholics. Marriages break down. People want to re-marry. Couples live together before marriage. People get involved sexually outside marriage. The Church is there to help couples live within the marriage law of the church. If a marriage breaks down the tribunal exists to help them examine whether the marriage was valid in the first place. If it was not a decree of nullity may be granted.

Like the other precepts of the church, the sixth precept is there for our protection and guidance. Love is difficult and marriage is a great sacrifice. The Church protects the precious, beautiful, and delicate sacrament of marriage by mandating that Catholics live within the fullness of the sacrament--not just obeying the law of the Church, but using the law as a way to understand the whole teaching of the Church about human sexuality, marriage and life.

Our contemporary society tramples on marriage and considers the Catholic rules on marriage to be out of date, irrelevant and harmful. The Church, on the other hand, sees the sadness, loneliness, and heartache that the modern sexual free for all causes and calls men and women to share in the beautiful sacrament of marriage as the only way to a lifelong, loving, and happy relationship.

Each Catholic is obliged to uphold the church's teaching on marriage because this sacrament can only be upheld with the cooperation of the whole community. This means each one of us must lead chaste lives. We must discourage living together before marriage. We must support and strengthen marriages that are in trouble. We must encourage and develop strong, loving relationships. We must teach our children the principles of Christian love and true masculinity and femininity. This is the work of the

whole church, and our happiness, and the happiness of our children and families depends on it.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker