

GENESIS 39:1-4, 6c-9 HONORING MARRIAGE – HONORING GOD

¹ Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

² The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, ⁴ Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

^{6c} Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

⁸ But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Joseph demonstrates a fundamental truth pertaining to being a child of God. It is a lesson to which leaders in the Church need to pay closer attention. To dishonor marriage is to dishonor God.

Marriage is the first relationship established among human beings (Genesis 2:24). Throughout Scripture God employs marriage as the metaphor for the relationship between him and his people. In Revelation, the Church is described as the bride of the Lamb (19:7). Marriage is the sacred vessel through which God gives humankind the opportunity to participate in his work and nature. Procreation, sacrificial love, a unity of persons, and covenant fidelity are all characteristics of the marriage ideal and God's relationship with himself and humankind. As such, marriage is also a witness of God's nature to the world.

From the biblical witness we know that God takes marriage very seriously. The fallen world in which we live is our "Potiphar's wife." She takes the form of intimate conversations with those who are not our spouse, self-centeredness, dominance or abuse, pornography, easy divorce, emotional separation and infidelity. The images and temptations to devalue marriage are legion, whether we are married or not, but with Joseph we need to stop and ask the question: "*How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*"

Lord Jesus, whether I find myself in this life single, married, divorced or widowed, strengthen my understanding of marriage and my resolve to hold it up as a sacred vocation. May all my relationships be defined over and against marriage, so that I might honor marriage and by doing so honor you. Amen.