

Today we celebrate Valentine's Day. One of the things I remember when I was in school was the little candy hearts called sweethearts that sayings on them. Some of the phrases I remember were "Be Mine," "Sweet Pea," and "True love." I suspect that today they have different sayings like "Text Me" or "Tweet Me." Only the God Lord knows what they will say 20 years from now.

Our first reading continues to draw from the beautifully rich verses from the opening pages of Genesis. For the first time in the narrative we hear that something is "not good." In chapter 1, we hear the phrase "And God saw that it was good," repeated after each day. Now, we hear that it is "not good" that man is alone.

Therefore, God creates a suitable partner for the man. But before doing so, he creates the animals and various birds of the air. In doing so, God slowly reveals to the man that he is created for communion.

As man each looks at each animal, he must be thinking, "That's nice, but this won't be a suitable partner." Consequently, he experiences aloneness – solitude. We can imagine that his heart aches because none of the animals enable him to enter into communion.

Therefore, God puts the man into a deep sleep and takes one of his ribs and forms the woman. Using poetic language here, there is a lot being said. First, notice that the Lord God does not take a foot bone to form the woman. This would symbolize that the man is somehow superior to the woman. Nor does He take a piece of man's cranium, which would indicate that the woman is superior to the man.

Instead, he takes a rib, which is close to the heart. The idea is that the woman is essentially created from the heart of the man. Just as the rib protects the heart, so the man must protect the woman with his heart.

After the man sees the woman, we get the sense that he almost "loses himself" in great joy. It's as if he is saying, "Oh my goodness, she is beautiful!" I heard a talk a couple of years ago where the speaker said that God created things from the least complex to the most, and from less beautiful to the more beautiful. If true, this means that a woman is more complex than a man, but she also more beautiful! None-the-less, what we have in these verses is the institution of marriage. We see that as part of the created order, marriage has characteristics that cannot be changed.

Namely, we see the following about marriage: it is **heterosexual** (one man, one woman), **mutually supportive** (suitable partner), **permanent** (the man clings to his wife), **total** (symbolized by the phrase "one body" or "one flesh"), **vulnerable** (naked/without shame), and **procreative** (be fruitful and multiply).

May each of us pray for those in the vocation of marriage and family! Our hope and prayer is that all couples will live according to God's plan in order to rebuild our culture and evangelize the world.