

The musical, “Fiddler on the Roof,” opened on Broadway in 1964 and ran until July 1972. Most of us probably didn’t see the Broadway play but I’m guessing that more than a few of us saw the screen adaptation that was released in 1971.

“Fiddler on the Roof” is the life-affirming story of Tevye, a poor milkman whose love, pride and faith help him face the oppression of turn-of-the century czarist Russia. The story, though, centers on Tevye’s family...and his marriage to Golde.

One of the most memorable songs from the Broadway show and movie is a little bit of dialogue between Tevye and his wife Golde in a song entitled “Do You Love Me?”

Tevye: Do you love me?

Golde: Do I what?

Tevye: Do you love me?

Golde: Do I love you?

With our daughters getting married and this trouble in the town,

You're upset. You want out. Go inside. Go lie down.

Maybe it's indigestion.

Tevye: Golde, I'm asking you a question. Do you love me?

Golde: You're a fool!

Tevye: I know. But do you love me?

Golde: Do I love you?

For twenty-five years, I've washed your clothes,  
Cooked your meals, cleaned your house,  
Given you children, milked the cow.  
After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?

Tevye: The first time I met you was on our wedding day. I was scared.

Golde: I was shy.

Tevye: I was nervous.

Golde: So was I.

Tevye: But my father and my father said we'd learn to love each other.

So, now I'm asking, Golde...

Tevye: Do you love me?

Golde: I'm your wife!

Tevye: I know. But do you love me?

Golde: Do I love him?

For twenty-five years, I've lived with him,

Fought with him, starved with him.

For twenty-five years, my bed is his.

If that's not love, what is?

Tevye: Then you love me?

Golde: I suppose I do.

Tevye: And I suppose I love you, too.

Together: It doesn't change a thing, but even so,

After twenty-five years, it's nice to know.

That beautiful song succinctly captures the meaning of the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony that Saint Paul, in his Letter to the Ephesians, describes as “a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.” The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony...whatever else it may be...for a Christian is a way (we call it a vocation...a calling from God) to proclaim the Gospel...the Good News...of Jesus Christ. That no matter what...no matter our daughters getting married, trouble in this town, washing clothes, cooking meals, cleaning house, milking the cows, living together, fighting together, starving together...God will not abandon his church. God will not abandon us!

This is the essence of the love that we talk about in marriage and it is a human reality because first it is a divine reality. This is what we celebrate today with all married couples throughout the world on this World Marriage Day in the Catholic Church. We celebrate that commitment of 2 disciples of Jesus Christ to proclaim in their marriages...to their families, their friends, the entire world...that God is ever-faithful, ever-true, ever-loving, ever-merciful, ever-forgiving...because those are the real things that make a marriage: faithfulness, truth, mercy, forgiveness...in another word, love.

In today's Gospel, the man with leprosy approaches Jesus to ask for healing. Jesus is not afraid to reach out to touch one considered to be “unclean” by everyone in the community, even though this carried the risk of having the community consider him to share in that “uncleanness.” Today, the truth about marriage as

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B  
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World Day of Marriage

the lifelong union of one man and one woman is not always popular in our contemporary society, but it needs courageous witnesses whose faith is stronger than public opinion. Today, we honor you married couples who are the courageous witnesses of God's plan for humanity's salvation and, today, we join with you in this prayer:

*Almighty and eternal God, You blessed the union of married couples so that they might reflect the union of Christ with His Church: look with kindness on them. Renew their marriage covenant, increase Your love in them, and strengthen their bond of peace so that, with their children, they may always rejoice in the gift of Your blessing. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*