

RECENTLY A YOUNG CATHOLIC ACQUAINTANCE came to me wanting to know how my marriage had lasted for more than three decades, while so many of her friends' marriages were breaking up. Although I recognized she was initiating a conversation with a rhetorical question, I still felt a moral obligation to remind her that marriage is a sacrament and that marriage is about sacrifice. We sacrifice the lesser, for the greater.

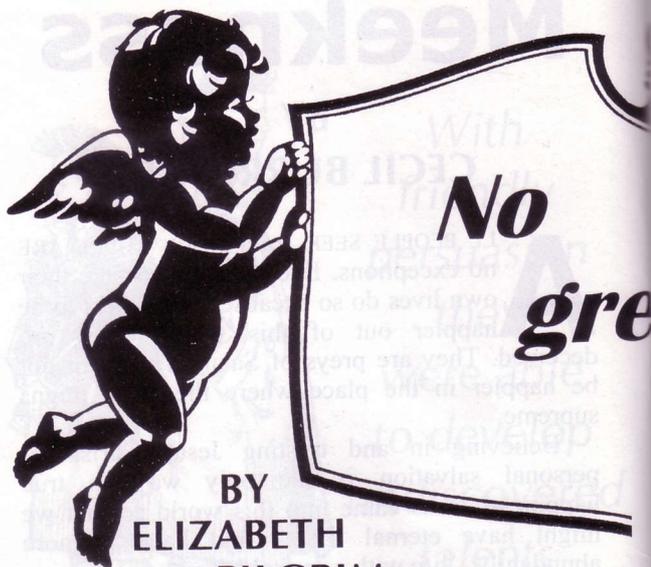
A few days later, I noticed that someone had posted a letter on the Internet to a famous motivational speaker, who in the last twenty years or so has attained celebrity status. As I read the letter, I learned that this celebrity had divorced his wife and remarried. The person writing the letter was seeking an explanation as to what had happened, because as he was becoming famous this celebrity often spoke highly of his first wife and children in the anecdotal content of his books and seminars. I was also able to read the celebrity's reply to the letter online.

As the letter opens, I couldn't help but notice that the celebrity was first addressing his larger audience, those individuals who had bought his books and tapes and attended his seminars, but then he got down to explaining why he got divorced and remarried. His response acknowledges it was difficult but he claims that it came down to vision and values. He explained that when a couple's vision of the life they want in the future no longer matches – that they should divorce rather than stay together, because otherwise what results is two compromised lives. *This celebrity's explanation is a perfect example of a secular rationale for divorce.*



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The ongoing conversations on the Internet regarding the celebrity's response about why he divorced and remarried made for interesting reading. People expressed disappointment and disillusionment over what they seemed to see as the moral failing of someone they had previously looked up to and admired. They now perceive individualism as the celebrity's highest value. In essence, he is saying that individuals should base their thoughts and actions on a belief that what they want in the future is paramount, and if a spouse does not agree, they should dissolve their union. They should agree to disagree. *I got the impression from the disappointment expressed by the celebrity's audience that they were waking up in regards to the false promises of secularism.*



BY
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PILGRIM

We learn in the gospels that Jesus calls us to be faithful, not successful. While it seems that these words of Our Lord refer to personal ambition and a crass materialism, by extension, it also includes anything in our hearts that would objectify another human being, for the way we live is the way we love.

You might say that in response to my acquaintance's rhetorical question and the now divorced celebrity, I am still reflecting on the extent to which it seems secularism is successfully employing the media to conquer our society and just how far it is diverging from Catholic teaching. Valentine's Day, as *the media encourages us to celebrate it*, seems to exemplify this secular and materialistic notion of love *with its emphasis on buying material things to give as gifts to the beloved. The media associates red with love and sex, rather than with the Sacred Heart of Jesus,*

February 14th is the feast day of Saint Valentine, patron saint of lovers yet the two Saint Valentines recorded in the third century were not associated with romantic love, but with martyrdom, which is not romantic, but agape love, which is also known as "brotherly love". Brotherly love is the unselfish love of one person for another without sexual implications. It is that love on the part of Christians for other persons, corresponding to the love of God for humankind. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for his brother, just as Jesus, the Son of God, did for all humanity.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "This is the path of charity, that is, of the love of God and of neighbour. Charity is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving: "Whoever seeks to