

## Second Sunday after Epiphany

### THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

But this commandment is aimed directly at the state of marriage and gives us an opportunity to speak about it. First, understand and mark well how gloriously God honors and praises this estate. For by His commandment He both approves and guards it. He has approved it above in the Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother.” But here He has (as we said) hedged it about and protected it. Therefore, He also wishes us to honor it [Hebrews 13:4] and to maintain and govern it as a divine and blessed estate because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others. He created man and woman separately, as is clear [Genesis 1:27]. This was not for lewdness, but so that they might live together in marriage, be fruitful, bear children, and nourish and train them to honor God [Genesis 1:28; Psalm 128; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4].

Therefore, God has also most richly blessed this estate above all others. In addition, He has bestowed on it and wrapped up in it everything in the world, so that this estate might be well and richly provided for. Married life is, therefore, no joke or presumption. It is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness. For marriage has the highest importance to God so that people are raised up who may serve the world and promote the knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, to fight against wickedness and the devil.

I have always taught that this estate should not be despised nor held in disrepute, as is done by the blind world and our false Church leaders. Marriage should be regarded as it is in God’s Word, where it is adorned and sanctified. It is not only placed on an equality with other estates, but it comes first and surpasses them all—emperor, princes, bishops, or whoever they please. For both Church and civil estates must humble themselves and all be found in this estate, as we shall hear. Therefore, it is not a peculiar estate, but the most common and noblest estate that runs through all Christendom. Yes, it extends through all the world...

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

So we have covered the entire Sacrament, both what it is in itself and what it brings and profits. Now we must also see who is the person that receives this power and benefit. That is answered briefly, as we said above about Baptism and often elsewhere: Whoever believes the words has what they declare and bring. For they are not spoken or proclaimed to stone and wood, but to those who hear them, to whom He says, “Take, eat,” and so on. Because He offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received except by faith. This faith He Himself demands in the Word when He says, “Given ... and shed for you,” as if He said, “For this reason I give it, and ask you to eat and drink it, that you may claim it as yours and enjoy it.” Whoever now accepts these words and believes that what they declare is true has forgiveness. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, since he allows it to be offered to him in vain and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at everyone’s door, yes, upon his table. But it is necessary that you also claim it and confidently view it as the words tell you. This is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this Sacrament worthily. Since this treasure is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be received and made ours in any other way than with the heart. Such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the fist. Fasting, prayer, and other such things may indeed be outward preparations and discipline for children, so that the body may keep and bring itself modestly and reverently to receive Christ’s body and blood. Yet the body cannot seize and make its own what is given in and with the Sacrament. This is done by the faith in the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it. This may be enough for what is necessary as a general instruction about this Sacrament. What may be said about it further belongs to another time.

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