

# THE AGE OF NO-FAULT DIVORCE, THE JEWELER’S SHOP, AND THE NEED FOR NATURAL MARRIAGE

*Marianna Orlandi, Ph.D.*<sup>†</sup>

“... because man will not endure in man forever and man will not suffice.”<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Saint John Paul II understood the heart of men and women, old and young. He understood love, romantic love, and our need for it. He understood the importance of human sexuality and anticipated our times of deep and unsettling existential loneliness, even amidst a contemporary obsession with love and romance. Rather than an era of happy marriages and triumphant loves, Wojtyła saw that many are perennially surviving with broken hearts—or at least trying to. It is not only in his more mature works, such as *Theology of the Body and Love and Responsibility*, but also in his earlier production as a young playwright, particularly in *The Jeweler’s Shop*, that Wojtyła uncovers the striking truth that the hearts of men and women cannot be satisfied where marriages are grounded on anything short of the eternal.

In this paper, I examine the marriages he portrays in the play, underscoring what each story tells us about the intrinsic limits of human love. Carrying a very profound—and perhaps even prophetic—message, this sixty-year-old play still speaks precisely of the struggles and illusions spouses face today in the “age of no-fault divorce.” Wojtyła points to the insufficiency of an idea of marriage grounded on transient feelings and

---

<sup>†</sup> Dr. Marianna Orlandi is the Executive Director and Director of Academic Programs of the Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture. She is an Italian attorney (University of Padua), holds a joint Ph.D. in Law (University of Padua & University of Innsbruck), and was a 2019-2020 fellow with the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University.

1. KAROL WOJTYŁA, *THE JEWELER’S SHOP: A MEDITATION ON THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY, PASSING ON OCCASION INTO A DRAMA* act 1, sec. 5, para. 9 (All the quotes from the play are taken from the English translation by Boleslaw Taborski, 1980. The author used the 1992 English edition, by Ignatius Press.).

forgetful of its sacrificial dimension. He anticipates the tragic consequences that broken marital promises inflict on children of divorce, an effect which is now confirmed by social science. Today's broader culture assumes that whether marriages will last or not is a matter totally left to human decisions, be they based on feelings or on religious principles. As Wojtyla wrote: regardless of what current laws or culture affirm, nothing can ever be undone.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than advocating for a data-driven change in marriage and divorce laws, I let the stories of this play show our human need for "natural"—and therefore permanent—marriage. This is a call which is far greater than simply societal demand, individual choice, or religious command. It is a transcendental imperative of our eternal and relational souls: we are made for more. A marriage grounded on what Wojtyla calls the "personalistic principle"<sup>3</sup> implies that a spouse's value is totally independent from the couple's shifting compatibilities and emotions. When viewed in this way, a marriage is indissoluble by its very nature. Such is the only understanding of marriage that is consistent with our human rights culture: where individuals are always subjects and never objects of another's use, pleasure, or fulfillment.

## INTRODUCTION

"*Captatio benevolentiae*." Since the beginning of literature, we know of this rhetorical technique, meant to capture the benevolence of the audience. The next few lines, however, are far more than a rhetorical attempt: they are a confession and an important opening statement.

Before anyone reads the following pages on marriage, on divorce, and on what—I believe—St. John Paul II tried to tell us about them all with this little play, I would like to specify that I am neither a marriage specialist, a theologian, a social scientist, or a psychologist. Furthermore, I am not even married. Yet, I feel fully equipped to talk about these issues. I am a legal scholar who studied marriage, both in its Civil and Canon Law dimension, at Padua Law School. During the past few years, I explored its natural law

---

2. KAROL WOJTYLA, LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY 214-15 (H.T. Willetts trans., Ignatius Press 1993) (1980) ("[A] man and a woman who have lived as husband and wife within the framework of a valid marriage are joined in a union which only the death of one of them can dissolve. And the fact that one or even both of them may cease in course of time to want this does nothing to alter the situation: their change of mind cannot cancel the fact that they are objectively united as man and wife.").

3. See *id.* at 40-44.

tradition, working as a teaching assistant for Professor Robert P. George at Princeton. Currently, I work for a social science research institute whose core mission is to support and promote research on the status of the family and provide evidence for its beneficial effects on all its members, as well as on the broader culture. Nevertheless, the main reason I am compelled to talk about our current crisis in love and marriage is that I am a child of this generation: a child of divorce. I witnessed firsthand the truths and lies about marital love that this play uncovers, all of which our current culture is often unwilling to acknowledge. Yet, in this play, I see a way forward.

In this play, I glimpsed at a marriage that stands on solid ground. At the same time, I recognized the wounds and struggles that, being born and raised in a broken family, I carried with me well into my late thirties—wounds which, as my work with young students testifies to every day, are now very common.

Currently, the fear of getting married is omnipresent. It is often stronger in individuals who are themselves children of divorce—social scientists argue that they seem less likely to get and to stay married.<sup>4</sup> But as sociology and personal experience confirms, whatever happens in a community touches all its members.<sup>5</sup> If your neighbors get a divorce, your own child might come to doubt marital love as well. If your friends sign prenuptial agreements, you might be tempted to do the same. The laws that reshaped marriage and divorce played a pedagogic role in our lives and so did the legion of bad examples and narratives that populate culture and media.

Yet our current crisis of marriage has a much deeper root. It did not originate in the availability of divorce but preceded this “freedom.” A wrong understanding of marriage and of marital love paved the way for and necessitated the enactment of laws that fail to do justice to the differences that pass between all sorts of amicable bonds and the institution of the natural family.

Thanks to Wojtyła’s play, I felt better able to access the hearts of my own parents and was invited to wonder what it was that their marriage lacked. Shortly after finishing the work, I called my father and asked him a question about his love for my mother and about his decision to leave us.

---

4. NICHOLAS H. WOLFINGER, UNDERSTANDING THE DIVORCE CYCLE: THE CHILDREN OF DIVORCE IN THEIR OWN MARRIAGES 3, 44 (Cambridge Univ. Press 2005); *See generally* Nicholas H. Wolfinger, *Beyond the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: Do People Replicate the Patterns of Marital Instability They Grow Up With?*, 21 J. FAM. ISSUES 1061 (2000).

5. Rose McDermott et al., *Breaking Up is Hard to Do, Unless Everyone Else is Doing it Too: Social Network Effects on Divorce in a Longitudinal Sample*, 92 SOC FORCES. 4491, 513 (2013).

For once, my father, a lawyer and great orator, could not answer me. *The Jeweler's Shop* prompts us to look at and to question our realities and stories from a deeper perspective.

In this play, finally, St. John Paul II indicates some of the reasons we get marriage wrong, including in the more conservative circles, where willpower seems to be a substitute rather than a supporting structure for charity. The play's characters mirror the way society thinks about marriage—as a somewhat superfluous human endeavor, one which we may not need to live happy lives and thus can abandon whenever we do not find it fulfilling. My work at the Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture has given me the privileged chance to talk with young students who do not necessarily belong to the mainstream culture. These students believe in marriage, want to start a family, and are aware of the sacrifices that this will involve. Nevertheless, they are the product and heirs of what I call the “age of no-fault divorce,” one in which marriage is no longer a foundation and a “natural” passage. It is instead a capstone.<sup>6</sup> Marriage comes—if ever—after one has been educated and settled down. It is an accessory, a cherry on top of a well finished cake that alone could already satisfy our hunger for love.

Marriage is now seen as a capstone and an “accident,” I believe, for two main reasons. First, being born in the age of no-fault divorce, we assume that our marriages may not last forever, regardless of whom we marry. Divorce is free and available to all, regardless of the reason. As a result, no one wishes to invest a whole life on marriage, let alone ground one's entire future upon it. On a more profound level, since the '50s, what some have called the *soulmate idea* of marriage<sup>7</sup> became the aspirational model shared by conservatives and progressives alike, at least in the West. When thinking of marriage, most of us now think that there is such thing as *the right one*:

---

6. See MARK REGNERUS, *THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE* 37 (2020) (Ch. 2: From Foundation to Capstone). As the author indicates, referencing Andrew Cherlin, the fact that marriage is perceived as a capstone rather than a foundation “means that marriage is now something individuals aspire to, rather than something a couple enters in order to help them fulfill their aspirations.” *Id.*

7. As per Professor of Sociology Bradford Wilcox's definition, the soulmate model of marriage “assumes marriage's primary function is to build and sustain an intense romantic or emotional connection that should last only as long as it remains happy, fulfilling, and lifegiving to the self.” W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soulmate Marriage R.I.P.*, INST. FOR FAM. STUD. BLOG (Mar. 30, 2020), <https://ifstudies.org/blog/soulmate-marriage-rip>; Sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin similarly spoke of a transition from the “companionate” to the “individualized” idea of marriage taking place around the 1970s, when the focus of the relationship went *from role to self*. See ANDREW J. CHERLIN, *THE MARRIAGE GO-ROUND* 87–88 (First Vintage Books ed. 2010) (2009).

another human being who could make us fully happy (be it because of our mutual feelings, or because of the spouses' shared religious beliefs). We believe we can and should wait until we find him/her or else we should remain unmarried. In other words, even before the introduction of no-fault divorce, our culture had already lost sight of our very nature: a relational and sexually complimentary anthropology that demands permanent and generative commitment.

I believe this little play suggests humans do not get married merely because *we want to*, but rather because *we need to*. *The Jeweler's Shop* speaks to the mistaken assumptions about marriage (e.g., that they are accidental, temporary, self-centered)<sup>8</sup> that are typical of our age and then illuminates the right way forward. With this play, Karol Wojtyła tells us all that divorce is an illusion, regardless of what the law allows or forbids, because nothing can ever be undone. He also shows us that our inevitably imperfect marriages are the sole way to find that real Love which we all hunger for. As a legal scholar, I suggest that the laws on marriage and divorce should change not so that families can be made stronger or children can be better off, but rather because the indissoluble nature of marriage as the union between a man and a woman is a reality that precedes the law. The current need for marriage, in its permanent dimension, is a demand of our anthropology, a request of our immortal and relational souls.

Precisely like every other fundamental *right*, the institution of marriage is neither a concession nor an entitlement, but the acknowledgment of a human reality. Yet differently from any other right, marriage is a reality—and a right—that perfects our individual selves.<sup>9</sup> What Wojtyła philosophically defends in “Love and Responsibility,” and poetically tells us in this play<sup>10</sup> is that love and marriage, like every other right, must rest on the

---

8. On the preferability of an institutional understanding of marriage over a soulmate approach from a policy perspective see W. Bradford Wilcox, *For as Long as Our Love Shall Last: How the Soulmate Myth Makes Marriage Less Stable and Less Happy*, INST. FOR FAM. STUD. BLOG (May 20, 2020), <https://ifstudies.org/blog/for-as-long-as-our-love-shall-last-how-the-soulmate-myth-makes-marriage-less-stable-and-less-happy>.

9. In this light, we may also understand the celibacy of Catholic priests: “Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes it and confirms it. Marriage and virginity or celibacy are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the covenant of God with His people.” Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio [Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World]* ¶ 16 (1981).

10. On the relation between the two works, see GEORGE WEIGEL, WITNESS TO HOPE: THE BIOGRAPHY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II 140 (1999), describing *Love and Responsibility* as: “[a] philosophical

“personalistic principle,”<sup>11</sup> according to which every “person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end.”<sup>12</sup> Marriage gives us the unique opportunity to live this principle in “its positive form” too, which as Wojtyla tells us, “confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.”<sup>13</sup>

### THE JEWELER’S SHOP: THE BACKGROUND

It was 1960 when *The Jeweler’s Shop* first appeared in writing, published in the Polish Catholic monthly *Znak* (“*The Sign*”), under Karol Wojtyla’s literary pseudonym Andrzej Jawien.<sup>14</sup> By this time, the author was already the auxiliary bishop of Kraków. This little-known play, however, was not a first in Wojtyla’s literary career.

Long before becoming a Pope, and even before discerning a religious vocation, young Karol had a deep interest in letters and theater.<sup>15</sup> Since his childhood in Wadowice, he participated as a lead actor in school plays which he also helped direct. Later, as a student in Kraków, he was a member of three theater groups and eventually founded, with his friend Dr. Mieczyslaw Kotlarczyk, the Rhapsodic Theater.<sup>16</sup> Theater was a central outlet for Wojtyla’s thoughts and meditations. By his early twenties, the future Pope

---

complement to the issues he explored dramatically in *The Jeweler’s Shop*, it exemplified Wojtyla’s conviction that one could only get to the truth of things by a variety of methods.”

11. See WOJTYLA, *supra* note 2, at 21-44. This principle, central to the philosophy of the future Pope, presumes that “[a] person is an objective entity, which as a definite subject has the closest contacts with the whole (external) world and is most intimately involved with it precisely because of its inwardness, its interior life.” *Id.* at 23. As a consequence, “every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right.” *Id.* at 27 (emphasis added).

12. *Id.* at 41.

13. *Id.*

14. See generally WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1.

15. For the fullest account of the extraordinary life of an extraordinary man see, in particular, WEIGEL, *supra* note 10.

16. Mieczyslaw Kotlarczyk, whom Wojtyla met in the early 1930s, taught him a style of performance called “the Living Word,” rooted in traditional Polish songs and poetry. In the summer of 1941, Kotlarczyk went to Krakow. Wojtyla and his friends helped him start the underground Rhapsodic Theater: “a theater that will be a church where the national spirit will burn,” a theater that “embraced the theatrical minimalism of long, static monologues and epic poems.” See Joe M. Ruggier, *The Poetry of Karol Jozef Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)*, HYPERTEXT (Apr. 9, 2005), <http://www.thehypertexts.com/Karol%20Wojtyla%20Pope%20John%20Paul%20II%20Poet%20Poetry%20Picture%20Literary%20Bio.htm>.

had already composed three poetic dramas on biblical themes—*David*, *Job*, and *Jeremiah*—along with a Polish translation of *Oedipus*.

As the original title of *The Jeweler's Shop* equally reveals—“*A Meditation on the Sacrament of Matrimony, Passing on Occasion into Drama*,”—theatrical plays were integrated into Wojtyła’s pastoral ministry, particularly through witnessing to that message of Love that is at the center of the Catholic faith.<sup>17</sup> What the subtitle may not convey—and where the sacramental reference might even be deceiving—is the quality of this theatrical work.<sup>18</sup> Anyone reading it will recognize that the *Jeweler's Shop* is far from a clumsy clerical attempt to do theater. The plot is simple yet rich and unexpected. The circumstances are ordinary and exceptional at once. The protagonists are convincingly real people,<sup>19</sup> as are their everyday thoughts, desires, and deepest fears. Their diversity, moreover, gives different readers a variety with which to identify. Of course, the author uses this play to speak of a Christian God too and the pivotal role that His absolute Love plays in marriage and human existence.<sup>20</sup> Yet, these stories speak of needs, desires, and fears that anyone may comprehend, regardless of religious background.

During the war, Wojtyła’s theater performed underground and was a vehicle for the young man and his friends to fight the cultural battle against evil. For them, literature was a powerful weapon against the occupying power of Nazi Germany which prevented the Polish people from thinking for themselves and instead fueled hatred, ideology, and violence by means of burning books, canceling the local culture, and silencing academic and laymen speech.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps something similar might be true for us today, most especially when talking about marriage.

---

17. Peter Casarella, “*The Proper Weight of Love*”: *What Can We Learn From John Paul II’s The Jeweler’s Shop?*, 38 COMMUNIO INT’L CATH. R. 621, 623 (2011) (“[H]e was nonetheless schooled in drama and used these skills as a means to portray the human condition in the light of Christian revelation. . . . Blessed John Paul II entered the stage of the world and transformed into an altar.”).

18. In 1988, the play became a movie, *LA BOTTEGA DELL’OREFICE* (Alliance Entertainment 1988), directed by Michael Anderson, with Burt Lancaster and Olivia Hussey.

19. Casarella, *supra* note 17, at 625 (“His characters are not meant to be formless abstractions but also not meant to exude the rawness of human emotion. There is a fine line here between presenting types . . . while also offering a precise, almost clinical portrayal of the depth of the human spirit. In philosophical terminology, he is practicing a phenomenology of the inner life.”).

20. *Id.* at 625–26 (“The characters profile what it means to be human when being human is understood first and foremost as having a link to eternity.”).

21. *Id.* at 622 (“Partaking in the theater under the threat of repression was part of a larger struggle to create what George Weigel calls ‘zones of freedom.’ In 1958 Karol Wojtyła referred to the presence of a

In our times, there are truths about the family, marriage, and human love that academia is not only unwilling to defend but in some instances directly and openly attacks. We are told that children do not need to be raised by their biological parents. Women—if they are admitted to still exist—are told that they can and should postpone giving birth and instead pursue career plans. There is little or no attention paid to the reality of their biology. Most significantly of all, we are all told that marriage is an entirely human institution and one that can be shaped, bent, and transformed as much as we please.<sup>22</sup> We are told that its endurance rests on the strength of our feelings and emotions, which we should always follow. The voices of the play’s protagonist, however, with their poetical dialogues, might still be able to convey a message about love, marriage, and our transcendental need that is deeply true and cuts through the common lies of our day and age.

#### THE PLAY’S COUPLES AND THEIR HUMAN LOVES

Three short and intense acts compose the play: “*Signals*,” “*The Bridegroom*,” and “*The Children*.” They all develop through a series of fascinating and rather extravagant “monological dialogues.” With the sole major exception of the mysterious Adam—who directly addresses Anna in the second act—none of the actors speak to each other. This lack of direct communication, however, should not be read as the expression of an intrinsic and inescapable incapacity of men to truly connect. Relationships are central to Christian anthropology, as well as to a play that is wholly centered on the value and meaning of marriage. Rather, these out-of-sync conversations remind us that even though spouses eventually become “one-flesh,” there is still something of them, something unique and irreplaceable *in* each of them, that remains a mystery to the other, which only God is able to know, to love, and to fulfill.

---

theater in Poland that tested the regime and spoke for the people as ‘the fundamental trial of strength.’”) (footnotes omitted).

22. On this premise, our society fought for the legal recognition of same-sex marriage as “marriage,” indistinguishable from the union of a man and a woman. As sociologist Regnerus noted, however, if we undermine “any of its four central supports [totality, permanence, fidelity, and children], marriage will recede . . . [b]ecause such cultural, political, and legal moves are the only obvious social construction here. The core of marriage is a stable reality.” REGNERUS, *supra* note 6, at 82.



A. *The Signals*

Teresa and Andrew are the protagonists of the first act. They are a young couple planning their marriage. They begin by individually telling us the story of falling in love with each other. Teresa was aware of her love more immediately, almost out of a deep knowledge that preceded her. Andrew returned this love far more slowly, for he needed to overcome the temptation to follow his senses, which originally led him in the wrong direction. Though he avoided Teresa at first, he finally chose her in an effort to look for a beauty that would outlast his emotions.

When once or twice I tried following [emotions], I met solitary islands. This made me think that beauty accessible to the senses can be a difficult gift or a dangerous one; I met people led by it to hurt others—and so, gradually, I learned to value beauty accessible to the mind, that is to say, truth.<sup>23</sup>

Teresa and Andrew soon meet the mysterious jeweler,<sup>24</sup> the man who will sell them their wedding rings. In a few, short, and memorable lines, which in the play are repeated by Andrew, the jeweler poetically and yet clearly indicates to us all the value of the marriage and the meaning of its indissolubility:

The weight of these golden rings . . . is not the weight of metal, but the proper weight of man, each of you separately and both together. Ah, man's own weight of man! Can it be at once heavier, and more intangible? . . . This rift, this tangle, this ultimate depth—this clinging, when it is so hard to unstick heart and thought. And in all this—freedom, a freedom, and sometimes a frenzy of freedom trapped in this tangle. . . .<sup>25</sup>

The first act echoes men's and women's desire to get married and their wish to do and to create something that will last, deeper than their own lives. Through the second and the third acts, we discover that Teresa and Andrew's love overcomes death itself. A hint of *how* limited and mortal human beings

---

23. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 25.

24. Some scholars and commentators (B. Taborski, J. Pomianowski) see the jeweler as a representation of Divine Providence, and we read that Wojtyla does not call God by name in his plays. See Francesco Giuseppe Fornari, *La spiritualita' del matrimonio nella bottega dell'orefice*, PONTIFICIA UNIV. GREGORIANA 2012-2013, at 18.

25. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 37.

might accomplish such an everlasting love comes in the Chorus sequence at the end of the act:

How can it be done, Teresa, for you to stay in Andrew forever? How can it be done, Andrew, for you to stay in Teresa forever? Since man will not endure in man and man will not suffice. Body—thought passes through it, is not satisfied in the body—and love passes through it, Teresa. Andrew, seek a harbor for thought in your bodies while they last, seek the harbor for love.<sup>26</sup>

A harbor must be found. Husband and wife must move beyond each other to find something as everlasting as their own souls. This is what makes marriages last. What, where, or who that harbor is, however, is not yet revealed.

### B. *The Bridegroom*

In the second act, the love story is radically different. Anna and Stefan, the second protagonist couple, did precisely the opposite of what the Chorus suggests. Like Andrew and Teresa, they fell in love and married. They stayed married and had three kids, but they became deeply unhappy. Indeed, these spouses grew so distant from each other that one of them is totally absent from the stage. We hear only the voice of Anna, who epitomizes the woman unsatisfied with her marriage and tempted to leave it all behind. And we hear from Adam, a mysterious figure who speaks to her with prelapsarian wisdom and seems to read into human hearts.<sup>27</sup> Stefan, Anna's husband, is silent—absent from the stage and Anna's heart.

Reciting what sounds like a contemporary mantra, Anna wonders if her marital struggles aren't just inevitable and whether perhaps natural disillusionment, at some point, will strike us all. Isn't her notion the same dissatisfaction that everyone feels in the day-to-day routine of marriage? She tells us that her husband Stefan holds the same belief. Aside from this agreement, however, their distance is radical. Her union with Stefan rested exclusively upon their mutual and total reliance on each other, without a

---

26. *Id.* at 41.

27. It is hard not to see Adam as a representation of the same Karol: the mentor, spiritual director, and friend of the Środowisko, the group of friends that grew around and with the future Pope. P. Casarella writes that "Adam, 'spokesman and a judge,' represents the inward voice of conscience and the better judgment of the rest of humanity." Casarella, *supra* note 17, at 634.

safer harbor. Having lost this reliance, Anna felt empty.<sup>28</sup> For a while, she toys with the idea of finding her lost happiness in another man, imagining a future with a second or a third love. She cannot accept that Love is different from what she did or had with Stefan. At the same time, she believes that love is capable of more than what she is left with, that love may last forever, and that it may satisfy all her emotional needs. Be it an intuition or a mistake, she does not yet know. She wonders whether she should not just follow her feelings as they evolve. Ultimately, she decides not to leave her husband. What stops her, however, is neither the use of reason, laws, or tradition. It is not the unavailability of divorce, nor is it the fear of becoming “a casual woman.”<sup>29</sup> What stops her is an encounter with two ethereal men: Adam, and, once again, the mysterious jeweler.

To the latter, she goes wishing to return her wedding ring, but after weighing it on his scale, the jeweler tells Anna that he cannot take it back. Her ring is worthless because her husband is alive.<sup>30</sup> Adam appears in Anna’s history unexpectedly but provides a providential encounter.<sup>31</sup> After listening to Anna’s story, which is nothing more than a series of charges against her husband,<sup>32</sup> he shares with her the simple truth: Leaving Stefan would not make her life any better.

---

28. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 48 (“It was as if I had become unaccustomed to the walls of my interior—so full had they been of Stefan that without him they seemed empty. It is not too terrible a thing to have committed the walls of my interior to a single inhabitant who could disinherit myself and somehow deprive me of my own place in it!”).

29. *Id.* at 59.

30. *Id.* at 52 (“Your husband must be alive—in which case neither of your rings, taken separately, will weigh anything . . . My jeweler’s scales have this peculiarity that they weigh not the metal but man’s entire being and fate.”).

31. Fornari, *supra* note 24, at 17 (“Ci limitiamo ora a sottolineare la puntualità delle sue apparizioni . . . quante volte, nella vita, la presenza di una persona—familiare, amico, o anche perfetto sconosciuto—e le sue parole sono capaci di aprirci nuovi orizzonti, svelarci prospettive nuove, addirittura suscitare in noi un movimento di conversione che ci orienta nuovamente a Dio, a riconoscere la sua presenza e la sua azione, magari in circostanze in cui lo avevamo perso di vista.”) (“*I would merely underline the timeliness of his appearances . . . how many times, in life, the presence of a person—a family member, friend, or even a complete stranger—his words are able to open up new horizons, reveal new perspectives, even provoke a conversion trend within us that directs us once more towards God, towards the recognition of his presence and action, perhaps in the midst of circumstances where we had lost sight of Him.*”) (English translation of Fornari’s work).

32. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1 at 54 (“[A] monologue, really . . . Fact followed fact, charges against Stefan. I was sure of the truth of my judgments. But I also talked like a woman about the inner crack in love, about the rift and the wound which hurts.”).

Why do you wish to sell your ring here? What do you want to break with this gesture—your life? . . . The thing is not to go away, and wander for days, months, even years—the thing is to return and in the old place to find oneself.<sup>33</sup>

Directly addressing the human illusion that marriage might not be forever and challenging our desire to cut ourselves off from eternity and live in the moment, he remarks:

Ah, the curse of the next moment and all the moments that follow, moments through which you will look for the way back to the moment that has passed, to have it once more, and through it—everything.<sup>34</sup>

These words may be obscure to some, but their truth should be quite intuitive for anyone who did try to start all over again. Regardless of how hard we try, our brain, our emotions, even our skin remembers the love we once had. We remember how we thought that it could be *forever*. Were we wrong then? Adam doesn't think so.

Another young man appears on the scene and Anna is incredibly attracted to him. Adam describes him as the Bridegroom. Some wise and some foolish virgins appear on the scene, echoes of the Gospel story. The first ones are awake, on their way to buy more oil and refill their lamps; the other ones are sleeping and unprepared to meet the bridegroom when he passes by. Anna is clearly dozing off in her love and not looking for a way to refill her own lamp, in other words to nourish her own heart and love for Stefan. Yet she desperately wants to be ready for the Bridegroom. In a striking moment at the end of this second act, the Bridegroom appears to Anna with the face of Stefan, her earthly spouse.

The eternal Love that our hearts long for cannot be found outside of marriage. It must be found exclusively within. To deserve it, one does not need to change the object of his or her love by finding a different spouse. Rather, we need to love the spouse we have more than we already did. The truth of marriage that Wojtyla suggests is then the same one for religious and for lay people alike: to die to ourselves and, in the dimension of sacrifice, to

---

33. *Id.* at 55.

34. *Id.* at 61.

deserve and to find that unlimited love that generated us and that we all desire to find and enjoy once again.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the course of human history, men understood that there is no greater love than the one that dies for the sake of another, as Greek heroes did long before Jesus. But if everyone, believers and non-believers alike, *understands* sacrificial love, and if we are all moved by it, there is no reason to settle for less. When spouses promise each other eternal love, what they truly mean and expect is a love that involves sacrifice.

In the play, Adam helps Anna to understand that the forever she dreams of depends on eternal Love.

Love is not adventure. It has the taste of the whole man. It has his weight. And the weight of his whole fate. It cannot be a single moment. Man's eternity passes through it. That is why it is to be found in the dimension of God, because only He is eternity.<sup>36</sup>

Adam speaks of marriage as a sacrament, as *matrimony*: an image of our love for God and of His love for us. We love and are loved imperfectly in this world, especially in our earthly marriages.<sup>37</sup> In them we sacrifice in imitation of God's perfect love for us. He shall come again soon, Adam says, and He will suffer for our lack of love, if that is what He finds.<sup>38</sup>

The Chorus closes the act with yet another hint about why marriages today do *not* last. It has nothing to do with laws, product of men; rather, it arises from the spouses' forgetfulness of both the need for a safer harbor, as well as of love's sacrificial dimension:

---

35. It might be interesting to note here that in the Church's tradition, as expressed by Leo XIII, the "sacrament of marriage existed ever amongst the faithful and unbelievers." As he further explains, in his Encyclical on Christian Marriage, *Arcanum Divinae*, "[i]n the minds of all of them it was a fixed and foregone conclusion that, when marriage was thought of, it was thought of as conjoined with religion and holiness. Hence, among those, marriages were commonly celebrated with religious ceremonies, under the authority of pontiffs, and with the ministry of priests. So mighty, even in the souls ignorant of heavenly doctrine, was the force of nature, of the remembrance of their origin, and of the conscience of the human race. As, then, marriage is holy by its own power, in its own nature, and of itself. . . ." Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum [Encyclical Letter on Christian Marriage]* ¶ 19 (1880).

36. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 60.

37. Casarella, *supra* note 17, at 633 ("Wojtyla remains a realist. No one can experience in marital love the perfect love of God. But the objective fact of communion with our Creator is the final and most comprehensive norm for taking stock of both love and marriage.").

38. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 55 ("Passing, he touches the love that is in them. If it is bad, he suffers for it. Love is bad when there is a lack of it.").

Foolish virgins, O foolish virgins, no one can strike a flame from water . . . the water has drunk the flame and the lamps are out. Two lamps are out. One didn't give flame to the other. One didn't give oil to the other. Didn't give its wick.<sup>39</sup>

### C. *The Children*

In the third and final act, our attentive playwright points out how our personal understanding of love and marriage and the way we handle our human struggles have consequences that go far beyond ourselves. Our experiences and actions will inevitably shape our children for better or for worse, in addition to shaping the culture at large. It is fitting that in the third love story, Christopher and Monica are respectively son and daughter of Teresa and Andrew and of Anna and Stefan.

Christopher is a young man who seems to have learned quite well what love is. He seems to be ready to take Monica as his wife even amidst the actual, physical *absence* of his father. Andrew died when the child was young. As Teresa says, however:

Andrew did not die in me, did not die on any front, he did not even have to come back for somehow he is.<sup>40</sup>

Speaking of her son, the widowed mother adds that “in him” her husband’s love for her has endured. Christopher acknowledges the permanence of such love,<sup>41</sup> as does Monica, his girlfriend:

Your father went away and died, and yet the union remained—you were its spokesman, the love passed to you . . . You said that your father had gone and never returned, and yet he has remained, Christopher—not like my father, and not like my mother.<sup>42</sup>

Monica did not lose her father nor mother in a material way. Nor do we read of a divorce happening between her parents. As she tells us, and as Anna revealed in the previous act, her parents have simply become strangers

---

39. *Id.* at 67.

40. *Id.* at 72.

41. *Id.* at 74 (“Father remained in Mother, when he fell somewhere at the front . . .”).

42. *Id.* at 75-76.

to each other.<sup>43</sup> Yet it is Monica, not Christopher, who doubts love at its roots and remains skeptical about its endurance.

The true orphan of the play is not afraid of love. Notwithstanding his troubled background, he is not afraid of starting a family. It is Monica, the *spiritual* orphan, who is tempted to run away from commitment. What hurts children, we read in the play, is not the end of love that comes with that of our earthly *life* (and it is not even divorce *per se*). It is “the lack of love” that hurts, Adam says, and current research confirms the depth of this wound.<sup>44</sup>

In this short but most meaningful act, we ultimately witness the wedding of the young couple, a sign that fears, wounds, and troubles can all be overcome by love. At the same time, we are left with some very important insights on today’s troubled marriage world.

Through Monica’s lack of experience with a love that implies trust and abandonment, we recognize the poisonous fruits of a sentimental understanding of marriage, a perspective she inherited from her parents. The soulmate ideal of marriage, in other words, not only cannot condemn divorce but it also carries a pedagogy of fear and distrust. Furthermore, when—as it is common in our current culture—the permanent nature of marriage is considered not constitutive but rather accidental, when it is viewed as a matter left to our own decision and choice, when no one is told that true love implies and demands a sacrificial dimension that must be willfully embraced by its participants . . . then children like Monica are not only afraid of abandon-*ment*, but of abandon-*ing* too. Having learned from her mother that love is a feeling, she explicitly wonders about her own love for Christopher and whether it could and will last:

[W]ill it not come to an end? One day will you not leave as my father has, who is a stranger at home; shall I not leave, like Mother, who has become a stranger? Is human love at all capable of enduring through man’s whole existence?<sup>45</sup>

---

43. *Id.* at 75 (“My parents live like two strangers, the union one dreams of does not exist.”).

44. “There are numerous studies showing that compared to divorce, death has minimal consequences for offspring marital behavior. . . . [M]y own analyses of two different national data sets showed that bereavement doesn’t really make a difference when the affected children become marriageable adults themselves. Ultimately this isn’t a big deal, given that relatively few modern marriage-age adults experience the death of a parent while growing up.” Nicholas H. Wolfinger, *New Research on the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce*, INST. FOR FAM. STUD. BLOG (Jan. 24, 2017), <https://ifstudies.org/blog/new-research-on-the-intergenerational-transmission-of-divorce>.

45. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 75.

Listening to her words, we certainly recognize the fear of marriage that overcame most of those born after the '70s (*"what pervades me now is the feeling of love—but I am also pervaded by a feeling of the future, and that is fear"*),<sup>46</sup> most especially but not exclusively held by children of divorce. Her words were mine, as were her fears.

Christopher himself is afraid<sup>47</sup> and wonders about the permanence of their love too, confirming that marriage is difficult for all, but he has the clarity to realize that there is no way around it. He finds the strength to act upon his reasoned feelings for Monica and rather than becoming a slave to his own weakness, he resolves: *"We must go together from now on, Monica . . . Love is a constant challenge."*<sup>48</sup>

This final story and in particular the young couple's interaction with the mysterious jeweler contains a further important lesson for today's social conservatives and marriage advocates. Like a fairytale, the act ends with the festive reunion of all the play's characters on the wedding day of Christopher and Monica. Anna and Stefan confess their respective guilt—they regret the harm that their lack of love has caused to each other and to their daughter, and they seem willing to try again. As Teresa notes, however, Christopher and Monica did not care much about the jeweler or his shop.

It is not our fault that we read nothing in his eyes; and he said little—things we knew anyway. So do not be surprised, Mother, that his words left no trace (things we knew anyway—we did not sense greatness),<sup>49</sup>

says Christopher. Monica, similarly, confesses,

He [the jeweler] did not bring us closer to anything. All the beauty remained in our own feeling. He did not widen or narrow anything . . . I was absorbed by my love—and by nothing else, it seems.<sup>50</sup>

---

46. *Id.* at 75.

47. *Id.* at 76 ("I sometimes wake at night . . . I ask myself, if I could take your freezing hands, warm them with my hands—a unity will emerge, a vision of new existence, which will embrace us both. Will it not die later, though? I struggle so for hours, unable to sleep till morning, tempted to escape somewhere—but I can't anymore.").

48. *Id.* at 76 (emphasis added).

49. *Id.* at 80.

50. *Id.*



Perhaps, Teresa's fear for the children's lack of interest in the "rings" and hence in the sacrament, comes from her understanding that no matter how strong one's feelings, how solid one's moral principles are, or how steadfast one's will power is, human love will not last.<sup>51</sup> Human love will not be an image of the love we long for if it is not grounded on the Love that overcame death itself. Teresa ultimately wonders with hope when that mystery of love will begin for these children too—when Love will be stronger than fear:

[A]fter all, they have their own thoughts . . . They will come back here, they will certainly come back. They have simply gone to ponder for a while: to create something, to reflect the absolute Existence and Love, must be the most wonderful of all!<sup>52</sup>

#### THE AGE NO-FAULT DIVORCE AND THE NEED FOR NATURAL MARRIAGE

Monica's fears and wounds along with Anna's unhappiness in her marriage are great examples of the *age of no-fault divorce*, where feelings reign and nothing is forever. It is, however, time to say a little more about this age, pointing to some of its main characteristics and to the way natural marriage reprimands them.

When speaking of the "age of no-fault divorce," I refer to the era that started in the late '70s, when this form of divorce was progressively introduced into most western legal systems.<sup>53</sup> Hitherto, divorce was difficult to obtain, even in places where it was legally permitted, unless the other spouse agreed to it or had committed a marital offense. After the sexual revolution both in Europe and in the United States spousal "incompatibility" became instead a sufficient "no-fault" ground to end a marriage with no further need to prove adultery, abuse, or any other statutory cause for termination.<sup>54</sup>

---

51. On the reality of a culture of "indifference" towards God, typical among young Christians, see also Casarella, *supra* note 17, at 639-40.

52. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 90.

53. See generally MARY ANN GLENDON, *ABORTION AND DIVORCE IN WESTERN LAW* (1987); ALLEN M. PARKMAN, *NO-FAULT DIVORCE: WHAT WENT WRONG?* (Routledge 2018) (1992).

54. W. Bradford Wilcox, *The Evolution of Divorce*, 1 NAT'L AFFS. 81, 83 (2009) ("In 1962, as Whitehead points out in her book *The Divorce Culture*, about half of American women agreed with the idea that 'when there are children in the family parents should stay together even if they don't get along.' By 1977, only 20% of American women held this view."); with reference to the U.S., see PARKMAN, *supra* note 53, at 1; for an international analysis see GLENDON, *supra* note 53, at 63-111.

As a first consequence, the age of no-fault divorce implies that what keeps spouses together is *compatibility*, promises and commitments. Marriage is not permanent in and of itself. Divorce laws no longer ameliorate a tragedy but offer a way to regulate the future lives of people who have changed their minds and hearts. Consistent with the trend of our modern times, family and divorce laws reflect rather than guide our human emotions and deeds—and we all seem to take this for granted.

Secondly, as mentioned previously, since anyone can now get a divorce, people enter this basic human institution with a constant lack of trust in the other person. Conservatives included, it is often considered a good idea—and great parental advice—not to become fully dependent on the other spouse: to keep separate bank accounts, complete a prior education, preserve an independent career, etc.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, marriages are less frequent, happen later in life, and fewer children are born within them.

The broad acceptance of divorce led to an increasing number of children born in broken homes and a cultural attempt to underestimate or deny its detrimental consequences on the family and society.<sup>56</sup> Having become willing to justify our own marital failures, or those of our friends and relatives, we have stopped telling children that healthy homes and intact families are the best place for them.<sup>57</sup> A variety of family structures have increasingly come to be considered interchangeable, resulting in more and

---

55. “In contrast to the old reputation for hounding adult children about marriage, parents today—many of them survivors of the divorce generation—counsel patience. . . . Father Jose Leon, a priest who has observed three decades’ worth of students on the Pamplona campus of the University of Navarra, thinks parents pressure their young adult children to unnecessarily delay marriage. . . .” REGNERUS, *supra* note 6, at 179.

56. Think of the difficult reception of the 1965 Moynihan report, which linked the problems of the black community to the destruction of the family, asserting that fatherlessness was the root cause of the increasing disparities between black and whites. See generally Touré F. Reed, *Why Moynihan Was Not So Misunderstood at the Time: The Mythological Prescience of the Moynihan Report and the Problem of Institutional Structuralism*, NONSITE (Sept. 4, 2015), <https://nonsite.org/why-moynihan-was-not-so-misunderstood-at-the-time/>. See also DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, U.S. DEP’T OF LAB., *THE NEGRO FAMILY: THE CASE FOR NATIONAL ACTION* 13, 16, 33 (1965). Today, similarly, anyone questioning the “new family structures” does so at risk of her own career, including when such criticism is based on pure data. See, for instance, the criticism directed at Professor Mark Regnerus’ New Family Structures Study, in 2012. Matthew J. Franck, *Mark Regnerus and the Storm over the New Family Structures Study*, PUB. DISCOURSE (Oct. 30, 2012), <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/10/6784/>.

57. This culture of denial is the natural result of the mistaken idea that there are, and that there can be, “new” moralities. As J. Budziszewski writes, however, “[t]he foundational principles of right and wrong can be neither created nor destroyed by man; therefore, the only way to defeat the natural law is to make it cannibalize itself. Put another way, there are no new moralities, but only new perversions of the old one.” J. BUDZISZEWSKI, *WHAT WE CAN’T NOT KNOW: A GUIDE* 201 (Ignatius Press 2011) (2003).

more children lacking a father figure. Silence about the dangers of a fatherless society<sup>58</sup> and fear of being suddenly abandoned have both become new norms. Girls like Monica are everywhere. With the notion that marriage is not forever, it has now come to be seen as not much different or better than cohabitation. This paradigm is where we find ourselves today, with historically high numbers of singles and historically low numbers of married couples.<sup>59</sup> Economic<sup>60</sup> (and emotional)<sup>61</sup> problems follow.

Aware of such dramatic consequences, which the social sciences help us detect, a vast number of scholars have dedicated their work to defending the traditional understanding of marriage and rejecting the no-fault divorce mentality. While sociologists and economists uncover the unpleasant effects of family breakups,<sup>62</sup> legal scholars and philosophers defend the comprehensive, exclusive, and permanent nature of marriage as the most

---

58. A recent systematic review of 48 empirical studies on single-parent families and adolescent crime concluded that “the results suggest that growing up in a single-parent family and adolescent involvement in crime are related since a large majority of the studies shows a positive relation between single-parent families and the level of crime.” Janique Kroese et al., *Growing Up in Single-Parent Families and the Criminal Involvement of Adolescents: A Systematic Review*, 27 PSYCH., CRIME & L. 61, 69 (2021). See also W. Bradford Wilcox, *The Distinct, Positive Impact of a Good Dad*, ATLANTIC (June 14, 2013), <https://www.theatlantic.com/saxes/archive/2013/06/the-distinct-positive-impact-of-a-good-dad/276874/>; W. Bradford Wilcox, *Sons of Divorce, School Shooters*, AM. ENTER. INST. (Dec. 16, 2013), <https://www.aei.org/articles/sons-of-divorce-school-shooters/>; Emilie Kao, *The Crisis of Fatherless Shooters*, HERITAGE FOUND. (Mar. 14, 2018), <https://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/commentary/the-crisis-fatherless-shooters>.

59. In an article written in 2022, it was noted that “about 50.2 percent, or 124.6 million American adults, [were] single; in 1950, that number was 22 percent.” Kent E. Fillingier, *Current Trends in Dating, Marriage, and Parenting*, CHRISTIAN STANDARD (July 1, 2022), <https://christianstandard.com/2022/07/current-trends-in-dating-marriage-and-parenting/>. Furthermore, even though the “number of married couples in the U.S. has increased in the past few decades, this could very well just be due to population change, since while the U.S. population has been increasing, the marriage rate has decreased significantly since 1990.” Erin Duffin, *Number of Married Couples in the United States from 1960 to 2021*, STATISTA (Sept. 30, 2022), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183663/number-of-married-couples-in-the-us/>. In Italy, “[i]n 2019, the country registered 3.1 marriages per thousand individuals, roughly one union less in comparison with the figures from a decade ago.” *Marriage Rate in Italy from 2002 to 2020*, STATISTA (Nov. 2, 2021), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/568092/marriage-rate-in-italy>.

60. See generally W. Bradford Wilcox, *Two Is Wealthier Than One: Marital Status and Wealth Outcomes Among Preretirement Adults*, INST. FOR FAM. STUD. (Dec. 1, 2021), <https://ifstudies.org/blog/two-is-wealthier-than-one-marital-status-and-wealth-outcomes-among-preretirement-adults->.

61. See generally Alica Bucher et al., *Together Is Better: Higher Committed Relationships Increase Life Satisfaction and Reduce Loneliness*, 20 J. HAPPINESS STUD. 2445, (2019).

62. MARK REGNERUS, *NEW FAMILY STRUCTURES STUDY* (2012); Robert P. George & Yuval Levin, *Family Breakdown and Poverty: To Flourish, Our Nation Must Face Some Hard Truths*, 15 EDUC. NEXT 30, 31-32, 34-35 (2015).

natural and the best of all human institutions.<sup>63</sup> Against “revisionism”<sup>64</sup> and against the idea that marriage and its qualities are nothing more than a social construct, these authors have delineated what they call the “*conjugal* view of marriage”: “*of its essence, a comprehensive union: a union of will (by consent) and body (by sexual union); inherently ordered to procreation and thus the broad sharing of family life; and calling for permanent and exclusive commitment, whatever the spouses’ preferences.*”<sup>65</sup>

The arguments against divorce, however, are now predominantly focused on the procreative nature of marriage and on the benefits that intact families have over children and for society at large.<sup>66</sup> While this research is all true and good and alone offers sufficient ground to advocate for a change in our family laws and in our attitudes towards divorce, *The Jeweler’s Shop* bolsters these empirical findings with poetic argument.

As anticipated in the introduction, *The Jeweler’s Shop* speaks of the relevance of grounding marriage on the *personalistic norm*, which teaches that the human person is a good to be loved and never to be used, regardless of the circumstances. This *personalistic* approach opposes the *utilitarian principle*, which stipulates that what is good and proper always depends on the particular and accidental consequences of every action, apart from any unchangeable moral truth. As such, utilitarianism is unable *per se* to absolutely condemn anything, including homicide.<sup>67</sup> The personalistic approach, on the other hand, condemns each violation of human rights and dignity. Furthermore, it condemns the habit of sexually—or emotionally—using another person for personal pleasure not just for the dramatic,

---

63. See generally SHERIF GIRGIS, RYAN T. ANDERSON & ROBERT P. GEORGE, WHAT IS MARRIAGE? MAN AND WOMAN: A DEFENSE (2d ed. 2020).

64. As per Girgis, Anderson, and George’s account, *id.* at 1-2, the “revisionist” view of marriage “has informed the marriage policy reforms of the last several decades. It is a vision of marriage as, in essence, a loving emotional bond, one distinguished by its intensity—a bond that needn’t point beyond the partners, in which fidelity is ultimately subject to one’s own desires. In marriage, so understood, partners seek emotional fulfillment, and remain as long as they find it.” *Id.*

65. *Id.* at 3, 6 (emphasis added).

66. In *On the Meaning of Sex*, Professor J. Budziszewski highlights the meaning of marital vows, which clearly signify that marital love is neither an emotion nor a feeling, but a commitment of the will. See J. BUDZISZEWSKI, ON THE MEANING OF SEX 69-71 (2012).

67. Most modern liberals acknowledge the limits of utilitarianism and developed alternative political theories to justify the intuitively just prevalence of individual rights over collective interests (Rawls, with his “veil of ignorance,” Dworkin, deriving rights from an abstract general right to “equality”). On the shortcomings of these theories, and on the need to ground individual rights on a proper understanding of the human person see, among others, SAMUEL GREGG, ON ORDERED LIBERTY: A TREATISE ON THE FREE SOCIETY (2003).

measurable consequences of such behaviors but far more deeply for their radical and original incompatibility with the commandment of love. In the romantic realm, the “use” of another individual is not limited to casual sex (“hook-ups”). All sorts of committed relationships, including marriage, may be or become a form of use whenever what keeps people together is the transient benefit/advantage of the relationship, rather than a decision to sacrifice one’s own pleasure *for the sake of* the other.

In other words, while Wojtyla’s book *Love and Responsibility* shows the roots and consequences of a personalistic approach to love, sexuality, and marriage in theory, *The Jeweler’s Shop* portrays these truths *in action*. The story of Anna and Stefan tells us that marriage is indissoluble because it otherwise becomes that framework “within which a man and a woman obtain sexual pleasure, and not a durable union of persons, based on mutual affirmation of the value of the person.”<sup>68</sup> Indissolubility is a “necessary consequence of the command to love, understood, as we have understood it all along, as an embodiment of the personalistic norm.”<sup>69</sup>

If the personalistic norm requires that we never treat the other—our spouse—as an object, then indissoluble marriages must be the norm rather than the exception in a world committed to the universality of human rights. The premise of human rights theory is the belief in the innate and equal dignity of every man and woman ever born, regardless of their nationality, status, faith, etc. Human dignity ought to prohibit anyone and any government from treating humans as objects and/or a means to an end. The no-fault divorce mentality and the soulmate model of marriage, however, imply the objectification of the other and of ourselves. These trends imply that love is grounded on how the lover *feels* about it, rather than on the recognition that the beloved is as inestimably valuable as oneself and that his or her value remains unchanged if or when our love for them has faded away. In a coherent system of human rights, marital love must move beyond transient feelings. Aside from the hard cases of abuse or neglect which of course may constitute just reasons for divorce, the marital bond should last *till death do us part*, regardless of anyone’s creed.

This play tells us one more thing about the permanence of marriage that secular scholars may not mention, but that a future Pope could: as humans, we need marriage (the comprehensive and exclusive union of a man and a

---

68. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 2, at 212.

69. *Id.* at 213.

woman), and we need it to be permanent—because we naturally and unavoidably are both complimentary and eternal.

Stated differently, our need for natural and indissoluble marriage, rather than simply a need to “follow the science,” is the need to recognize our anthropology and with it our spiritual nature. As ensouled human beings, we wonder, dream, and write about the afterlife and hope to be happy and loved there too. Human beings, Wojtyla tells us, want and need a Love that is absolute, eternal, and capable of fulfilling us in every possible aspect of our being as only an omnipotent God can give.

[T]o love means to give life through death; to love means to let gush a spring of the water of life into the depths of the soul, which burns or smolders, and cannot burn out.<sup>70</sup>

In other words, we need our marriages to be forever because we need God’s love, which requires us to carry our own earthly crosses till the end. Marriage is forever not because of human laws but because we all were made for more.

Clearly such statements are hard to defend in today’s academic world, where nothing can be true unless it is wholly materialistic. Perhaps we still need theater to express these truths as was true when Wojtyla wrote them. Regardless of what our universities want us to think, however, it cannot be denied that human beings are more than just *rational* animals. After all we have the capacity for imagination and poetry. We understand Jesus’s love for the world and for each one of us—a love that passes through and demanded His death on a cross—*because* our souls are wired for a love like His. As Professor Budziszewski recently wrote:

[I]f for every natural desire there is some possible satisfaction—and if, as we have learned from experience, nothing within our natural experience can fully satisfy our desire, then doesn’t it follow by sheer logic that desire points beyond natural experience? That we must go, so to speak, out of this world?<sup>71</sup>

Our age’s “*need*” for the sacramental understanding of the indissolubility of marriage is a consequence of the fact that human beings cannot live

---

70. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 64.

71. J. BUDZISZEWSKI, HOW AND HOW NOT TO BE HAPPY 148 (2022).

happily and thrive in a legal system and in a culture whose institutions do not reflect their own anthropology. We are far more than our transient emotions and want to be ready for the Bridegroom, just like Anna.

#### A SOLUTION WITHIN THE PLAY

Since the laws on marriage and divorce will not change tomorrow, nor perhaps anytime soon, it is important for us to draw lessons from *The Jeweler's Shop* and to be the protagonists of the change: approaching marriage with the right mind and heart, regardless of what our states command and permit. As a start, we should then avoid the mistakes made by the play's couples. Quite clearly, we must reject contemporary emotivism, which leads to the failed marriage of Anna and Stefan (and to Monica's wounds). At the same time, we should make sure that our understanding of the permanence of marriage does not become a mere matter of rules and willpower, as it might be for Christopher and Monica who are unaware of the jeweler and of the importance of his rings. Ultimately, I believe that Wojtyła's solution for our troubled marriage world is to be found in the only truly happy—and yet tragic—story, that of Andrew and Teresa, the young widow.

As some might recall, the Chorus of the first act speaks of a need for a safer harbor for love and for our marital unions, a ground more solid than our mutual feelings and stronger than the other spouse—whose life is limited and whose feelings might also change. Andrew and Teresa seem to have found that safer harbor and yet they did not consult a natural law treaty nor a marriage therapist to get there. From what we read and know, they did not even need a priest to explain to them what marriage was about. All we know is that they both listened: to reality and to “the signals.”<sup>72</sup>

Andrew on the one hand seems to have found such a harbor in what I call “reality” by and while engaging in an honest search for truth. As he recounts, his juvenile mistake, the one which was keeping him away from Teresa, was the belief that emotions could be absolute and a merely human love could “surpass all.” His later happiness comes from accepting that what he had believed before was a lie—a common and fashionable one, perhaps, but still a lie. Both personal experience and the experience of those around

---

72. Casarella, *supra* note 17, at 629 (“The mysteriousness of the signals reminds us that Wojtyła's world is a semiotic world, a world of limitless signs, in which abstract characters are searching for concrete forms of solidarity that will allow them to transcend the transience of life.”).

him confirm that emotions do not last and that they can actually lead to hurt those around him. Andrew does not say that he chose Teresa out of a feeling, nor does he mention that he “loved” her. He rather avoided her, he resisted her. But something in him told him that he “ought to” choose her. Later in the story we discover that this kind of love, a love so distant from the Hollywood version of it that we commonly dream of, is able to overcome death itself. Andrew dies but his love remains in the widow and in their child.

Teresa similarly says that she “*felt that somehow I was the right one for him.*” She listened to a “signal,” a message, a “call?” Teresa knows that she could love Andrew and accepts this reality too. Rather than merely choosing him, she *takes him*. Once again, not emotions or burning passion, but intuitions of a common destiny bring them together in marriage. Furthermore, both Andrew and Teresa believed in the power of the jeweler and the meaning of their wedding rings. As Andrew tells us, they hesitate in front of his shop—a sign of their understanding that marriage is not an act that one can perform superficially or in the heat of the moment. As he further says, they know that those rings are a symbol not just of a human vow, but of eternity:

they will constantly act as a reminder of the past . . . and they will constantly open up the future, joining the past to the future.<sup>73</sup>

For those of us who have not been as wise or maybe as lucky as Andrew and Teresa and might have started our marriages on the wrong foot—paying little attention to the jeweler and to his rings—there is hope too.

Without a doubt, there is hope for the young Christopher and Monica, who might come back and realize the importance of the sacrament after being overwhelmed by their love for each other. And there is hope for Anna and Stefan too. For Anna, hope comes not so much from “faith” but from a decision. She needs to love her husband more than she already did. She needs to sacrifice by dying to herself for her beloved.

Through these examples and words I believe Wojtyla was showing us the way. Regardless of what current laws suggest, spousal love is more than a choice. There is no swiping left or right for a perfect match—matrimony is the acceptance of a reality that someone else has put in front of us and that we know to be right not simply because it is fulfilling, but because it was

---

73. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 1, at 33-34.



meant for us. Betrothed love, as Wojtyla writes elsewhere, is a complete and total paradox, it “is self-giving, the surrender of one’s ‘I’.”<sup>74</sup>

Indissoluble marriages are our way to show to the world and our Creator that we take the personalistic norm seriously and the commandment to love for what it was meant to be: do unto others what you want to be done to you. No one wants to be left alone.

---

74. WOJTYLA, *supra* note 2, at 96.