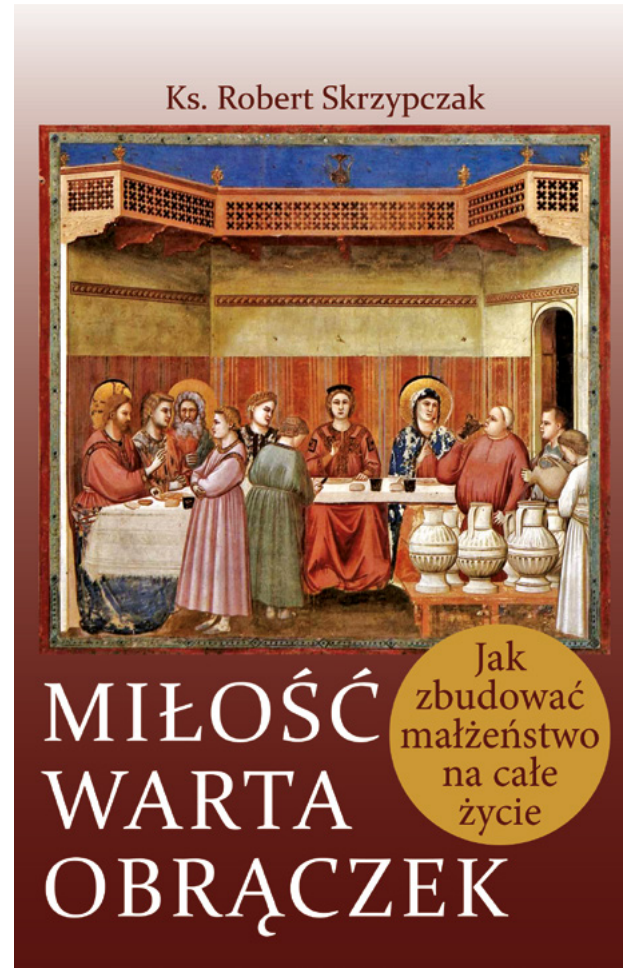


A Love Worthy of a Ring



How to build a marriage that lasts a lifetime

Father Robert Skrzypczak is a philosopher and theologian who has the ability to speak about difficult issues in a way that is clear and easy to understand. His latest publication, *A Love Worthy of a Ring*, is no different. It deals with one of the biggest problems in modern Western society, namely the crisis in the institution of marriage, as evidenced by the rapid year-after-year increase in the divorce rate, together with the increasingly common practice of unmarried couples cohabiting. The author attempts to arrive at the causes of this state of affairs and concludes that today's problems stem from a lack of appreciation for the sacramental dimension of marriage. The joining of a man and a woman is no longer considered a life-long covenant and the mutual offering of oneself, devoid of any self-interest. Instead, it is turning into a contract with a get-out clause, or just another type of civil agreement, a business proposition. Increasingly common pre-nuptial agreements are also evidence of mutual suspicion and lack of trust at the very start of relationships.

According to Father Skrzypczak, the fundamental source of this crisis of marriage is secularism. This word is frequently treated as a cliché in descriptions of Europe's spiritual condition, but it is nevertheless a true reflection of the real lives of real people. At the heart of the issue is whether people see the actual presence of God in their own lives: in their marriages, families, and interactions with others. Father Skrzypczak invites us to discover a lost image – the image in which we were created: a relationship to which we were called; a love which triumphs over any obstacle, crisis, or suffering; even death. He finds such an image in marriage. This is not some unattainable ideal, but rather – as the author shows us – a reality experienced today by many of the married couples with which he is acquainted.

Grzegorz Górny, translated by Daniel Wiśniewski

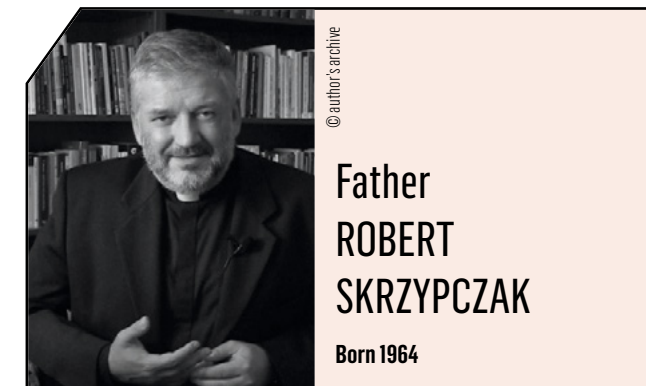
Relationships with parents, important as they are, must, after marriage, be thought through and transformed. This also applies to relationships with friends and, furthermore, married couples need to pay specific attention to their relationships with their children, which sometimes can risk turning into something exaggerated and exclusive. It is not healthy for a son or daughter to start dominating the entire emotional consciousness of their mother or father, thereby eliminating the other parent who becomes, so to speak, less important, if not downright dispensable. (...)

It would be appropriate finally to attempt to answer the following question, regardless of how absurd it sounds: Is it possible to commit adultery with your own wife? Jesus identified the roots of this sin as occurring when someone gazes lustfully at a woman or man. The commonly accepted interpretation of this teaching leads us to believe that this relates to a man gazing at a woman who is not his wife, corresponding with the content of the ninth commandment prohibiting the coveting of your neighbour's wife. However, Jesus did not say, "he who covets someone's wife" or "a woman who does not belong to him", but rather, "he who looks at a woman". (...) Since Jesus does not specify which woman he is talking about, it could mean any woman, including somebody's own wife and, as John Paul II explained, "This is what adultery committed in the heart consists of. Man can commit this adultery in the heart also with regard to his own wife, if he treats her only as an object to satisfy instinct." Saint Augustine added, "But if the two are not alike in such sin, I boldly declare either that the woman is, so to say, the husband's harlot, or the man the wife's adulterer".

In no way is this about demonising the eroticism of someone's body and the feelings of attraction towards that person, but rather it is striving to achieve an integrated eroticism, taking into account all of a person's qualities, not just their sensuality. The utilitarian approach, therefore, truly deserves to be condemned, since it rejects the other's identity, requiring them to be treated exclusively as an object for one's own personal gratification or ambitions. It is not permissible for someone to be treated like this, and this is no less true for the opposite notion, as a "machine" for making children. An open attitude to procreation in a marriage is important, however it cannot be allowed to become one of the reasons to be attracted to somebody. This would be the "negation of the value of human sex, of the masculinity and femininity of the human person, or at least to their mere toleration in the limits

of the need delimited by the necessity of procreation". In either of these two scenarios, the unique and specific qualities of a husband or wife would be damaged.

Excerpt translated by Daniel Wiśniewski



Miłość warta obrączek. Jak zbudować małżeństwo na całe życie [A Love Worthy of a Ring. How to Build a Marriage that Lasts a Lifetime]

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Books published (selection)

Kościół jako Niewiasta, 2001
Kościół misyjny według Jana Pawła II, 2005
Pomiędzy Chrystusem a Antychrystem, 2010
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Awards

TOTUS TUUS Award (2013) – awarded by the Work of the New Millennium Foundation for the promotion of Pope John Paul II and Christian values