

## **27<sup>th</sup> Sunday, Year B: Gen 2:18-24; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16**

Every great religion has sacred stories which account for the beginning of creation and the human race. The Book of Genesis has two stories of creation. We have just heard the second account of creation in our first reading this morning. Marriage truly captures the original completion of the total human person in one body. The original vision of unity and completion is what Jesus points to in our Gospel today.

In this Gospel text, some Pharisees ask Jesus if it was against the law for a man to divorce his wife. When Jesus asked his interrogators what Moses commanded them to do in the case of divorce, they replied that Moses permitted them to. The Jewish law of old permitted divorce to the male partner provided that he provided a safeguard for the girl by issuing her a writ of divorce. This frees the lady to remarry again if she chooses. Divorce then was a man's prerogative. A woman could sue, asking the court to compel her husband to divorce her. There little or nor argument about the grounds for divorce. The two Jewish schools of thought had different opinion on the circumstances upon which divorce could be said to be legal. The school of Shammai interpreted "adultery" as the only grounds for divorce. The school of Hillel allows divorce due to trivial causes, etc. Divorce was very common in Jesus' time. Marriage offered little security to a woman who could be dismissed at her husband's whim. Jesus seeks to change all that. Jesus recalls God's original plan for marriage revealed in Genesis, that a man and a woman be united in an indissoluble bond. This is the norm for every catholic marriage. Jesus fought to protect women of his Jewish era from being a disposable possession of their husbands. Our time is perhaps not very different from Jesus' time. Crisis still rocks marriage unions and relationships.

Experience teaches us that even with the best of intentions and in the best of marriages, things do terribly go wrong. People do make mistakes. Infidelities do happen. Hurts do take place. Spouses do become victims and oppressors. Endless silences do happen. Marriage do collapse. There are legions of instances all around us to demonstrate this. The issue of marriage is one that many ministers of the Gospel don't talk about today because it is increasingly complicated. One of the things I find interesting in Facebook of many young people is the expression "it is complicated". From my observation, one of the greatest tragedies of our relationships today is the absence of "real support from and connectedness to larger family members" or the near absence of family influence in marriages and relationships. Traditionally, one was not just married to his/her spouse but also to the entire family. It was so strict that one could not leave a relationship without the consent and support of one's family. In marriage the couple must be ready and willing to suffer and sacrifice for the sake of one another. Christ was deemed suitable for our redemption, so also a man and woman has to be ready and willing to sacrifice and give up personal preferences for the sake of each other.

In this community gathered for prayer at this Mass, there are a thousand untold stories. We can never imagine its varieties, depth and breadth. We rejoice with those who are coping well with the ups and downs of life. We identify prayerfully and in love with those whose struggles are quite severe and whose situations are little bit unbearable, including those whose efforts are not bearing the desired fruits. We pray that all may discover in this community and in our liturgies the understanding and compassionate face of Jesus. For Christ, no situation is beyond redemption. Perhaps we might usefully spend a few quiet moments reflecting on how we as individuals and as a community could better support the families of our parish. I know that something is happening already, but perhaps we can do more. St. Paul charges us to outdo one another in showing compassion.