



Welcome to our Eucharistic Celebration

The Twenty-Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

October 7, 2018

St. Mary of the Assumption Parish

Today's Themes in Scripture

In the Gospel, Jesus is approached by the Pharisees who ask him about divorce. Their questions were meant to test him. The Pharisees knew that Moses had permitted divorce on the grounds of indecency. If a man found his wife to be “indecent,” he could write up a bill of divorce and send her away. In the absence of any specific definition of “indecent,” Jews held many opinions about permissible grounds for divorce. In Jesus’ time, women had no right of divorce for any reason, but the vagueness of Jewish law allowed husbands to dismiss their wives for almost any reason.

Jesus did not contradict Moses or the Law. The Law was necessary because it brought order and justice to people with hard, rebellious, and sinful hearts. To answer their question about divorce, Jesus reminded them of Genesis, which revealed what God intended.

In the Genesis story, God created man but knew he should not be alone. Since none of the lesser creatures was a suitable partner for the man, God created woman. Because man and woman were created as equals, they were capable of a union that transformed them into a living whole (one flesh). Once joined, their union takes precedence over all other relationships, even parents. Their union allows a mutual, self-giving love that provides for the fulfillment of their deepest human need. This is a gift of God. It reflects the nature and unity of God, who exists in the mutual, self-giving love of the Trinity.

Jesus affirmed that the joining of a man and woman could not be undone even if human law allowed it. He cautioned that if a man (following the Law of Moses) divorces his wife, he breaks the law of God and commits adultery if he remarries. Because Genesis portrayed the union of man and woman as a union of equals, Jesus affirmed that a man and woman were equally responsible for upholding their union. Therefore, neither could a wife divorce her husband and remarry without breaking the law of God.

Even his disciples seemed to find this teaching difficult, but Jesus never flinched from presenting the ideals of God and the better way of the kingdom he came to proclaim.

Sunday Readings and Background

Reading I: Genesis 2:18-24

I will make a partner for him.

- The creation story in Genesis 2 portrays God as searching for an equal partner for the human.
- Only a creature that shares the same flesh will be a fitting partner.
- The union between man and woman is so central that they long to reunite in the one flesh they share.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps. 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

May the Lord bless us all the days of our life.

Reading II: Hebrews 2:9-11

They are all brothers.

- In Jesus we see the true nature of God.
- Today’s second reading points out that Jesus accepted death for the sake of all.
- Jesus is the perfect leader because he shared in our weakness and suffering.

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Let the children come to me.

- In response to the Pharisees question about divorce, Jesus compares the passage in Deuteronomy, which is simply a concession to human weakness, to the creation story in Genesis, which emphasizes the indissolubility of marriage.
- Jesus presents the ideal of the marriage bond to stress the truth that in him, sin has no power in the world.
- In the final passage of today’s Gospel, Jesus proclaims that the kingdom belongs to those who receive it as children.

Reprinted with permission. LifelongCatechesis.OSV.com



Made for Each Other

What we have learned from Charles Darwin and the anthropologists who seem pretty certain that human beings first emerged in Africa — or maybe Greece or Bulgaria — does not nullify what Genesis has to teach us about the meaning of creation and human life. The ancestors from whom we have inherited the mythological tales of Adam and Eve had no interest in scientific evolution or the missing link. They passed on the stories to share their understanding that God created in order to share life, as St. John would later say, life in all its abundance.

When asked about divorce, Jesus cited the Genesis creation stories to explain that, as symbolized in the relationship of marriage, human beings were created for one another. Jesus talked about Eve and Adam in reply to some Pharisees whom he described as people suffering from a noxious case of cardiosclerosis — popularly known as hardness of heart. They were prodding him to make a pronouncement about how a man could legally get rid of a wife he had ceased to find sufficiently attractive or useful. The teachers of the day held opinions that ran the gamut; some allowed a man to divorce his wife only in the case of infidelity while others gave him the go-ahead if she cooked poorly or ceased to please him.

But like everyone else who challenged Jesus to a debate, those poor guys had not done enough homework to know what they were getting themselves in for. First, although some of their ilk enjoyed criticizing Jesus' background, they may not have considered the implications of bringing this question up to a teacher whose father had considered divorce when his mother was pregnant with him. Those hapless enquirers unexpectedly got off to a very bad start.

In reply, Jesus took their shared family history back to the very beginnings, to God's original plan in the creation of humanity. He quoted the two different stories in which Genesis described human origins, highlighting a central point of each of them. When Jesus quoted "God made them male and female," everyone who knew their Bible verses would have finished the sentence, "in the divine image." Genesis 1 clearly states that human beings, male and female, are made in the image of God. Jesus then recited the statement from Genesis 2 about the man leaving father and mother to cling to his wife. That statement recalled the whole story in which God declared that humans were not made to be alone; they belong to one another.

The upshot of Jesus' teaching went far beyond the question the Pharisees posed. Jesus' statement that a divorced and remarried man was committing adultery against his spurned wife sounded absurd to people in a society in which the woman was effectively little more than property to be handed from father to husband. The ideas Jesus proposed about fidelity and equality were so far beyond their religious and cultural imaginations that Matthew who could quote Jesus as saying that people should pluck out an eye if it caused them to sin, tamed this saying by giving an exception and simply avoided the question of equality.

In case the reader did not understand what Jesus was getting at, immediately after the discussion of divorce, Mark recorded the incident in which the disciples incited Jesus' ire by trying to keep little children from coming to him. Those disciples, hyper-aware that anything that seemed to lessen Jesus' dignity reflected on them, must have been doubly mortified by Jesus' reaction. Jesus deflated their petty pretensions by holding, blessing and praising the needy children and then claiming that they were the example to follow.

Mark does not give us the collection of sayings that Matthew presented in the Sermon on the Mount. Nevertheless, in this and other instances he presents Jesus as the master teacher of the true meaning of the law. When his examiners brought up the question of divorce, Jesus turned it into a discussion of the dignity of each person and the fact that human beings are made for loving one another as truly as we are made to love God.

Today the same situation continues to play out with a host of contemporary characters. The Gospel insists that no one, not a displeasing spouse, not a helpless child, not an immigrant, not even a criminal, is dispensable.

Written by Sr. Mary McGlone, CSJ.
Reprinted with Permission.
Celebration Publications, October 2018.

This will be the final Liturgy Aid for St Mary of the Assumption Parish. We hope that you have been blessed by this offering of your Parish Pastoral Council. We also hope that you will continue to take advantage of the many resources that are available to learn about the Sunday Scriptures. May God's Word continue to bless and guide you on your journey of faith.

Final thanks and gratitude to Laurie Exler and Kevin Kelly for their considerable, unsung roles in support of the Liturgy Aid. God bless!