

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time Yr. B

The setting for today's Gospel is Jesus in the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan where the subject of divorce and remarriage comes up when Pharisees ask a question. There was already debate among them on what were the grounds for divorce. The strict interpretation held by the *Shammai* school was for sexual infidelity or adultery; whereas the *Hillel* school held a more lenient interpretation – allowing divorce for even minor things. So when some Pharisees (Mk 10:2) put a test question to Jesus about the lawfulness of divorce, perhaps they hoped he would deny the reality of divorce and suffer the wrath of Herod Antipas who had already executed John the Baptist for his preaching on marriage and divorce? (Mk 6:18) Both Herod and his unlawful mistress Herodias had abandoned their spouses so as to remarry. John had condemned their union in the same region Jesus is now.



Jesus replies 'What did Moses command you?' The Pharisees are referring to Dt 24:1-4, 'she has not pleased him and he has found some impropriety of which to accuse her; he has therefore made out a writ of divorce for her and handed it to her and then dismissed her from his house.' Jesus points out that while Moses had permitted divorce because of Israel's stubbornness after the Exodus, and answers them from Genesis as seen in our first reading: 'And the man [rather enthusiastically] said: "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She is to be called Woman, because she was taken from Man." ' (Gen 2:23) It tells of what God had commanded from the beginning as gift, namely, a unity of one man and one woman created one for the other, made in the image and likeness of God, to be united in an exclusive, indissoluble life together – where divorce and then getting remarried is not permitted. It applies to both men and women as both are from God. Sexual distinction is willed by God so as to reproduce the human race. (1:28)

It is noteworthy that Marriage in the Bible is one of the primary metaphors of God's love for his people, a symbol of his everlasting covenant with them beginning with the first couple, Adam and Eve as a communion of persons, and ending with the "wedding feast of the Lamb" at the culmination of history in Revelation 19:7-9 ~ The angel said, 'Write this, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb," ' and he added, 'These words of God are true.' The Church, joined as she is to Christ by Baptism is a present reality, (Eph 5:22-32) which will reach perfection in heaven. In between, we have the examples from the prophets and from the apostles and evangelists such as Paul telling the Corinthians "I gave you all in marriage to a single husband, a virgin pure for presentation to Christ." (2 Cor 11:2) Then there's the perennial teaching of the Church to guide us. (CCC 757, 1601-1602, 1612, 1641-1642)

The second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews links to the other as we see here (2:11): "For consecrator and consecrated are all of the same stock" which reaffirms the teaching so far: that we are all from God, that men and women (though not the same) are equal and by being one in Christ are all saved as individuals each in his or her respective calling in life. Looking at this from the marriage angle we see the point of it, namely, man and

woman are both created by God and can live a sacramental life together because they are both of God equally and, when they marry, live out that covenant relationship in God.

The “marriage does not matter” statement is something that is very far from the truth...it matters because God instituted it...[for] the future of Church and society, and...because the gift of life come from the love of spouses...[and] because husbands and wives are enriched by their intimacy with one another. Marriage is a gift that keeps on giving. (From an article by Laurika Nxumalo in *Patheos* ~ <https://bit.ly/3ETaVnM>)

In much of our modern culture with our fallen world as the starting point, marriage is seen as something only on the human level – as just any two people making a commitment to one another which may simply be broken if it doesn’t work out. Many such couples do not want to have children in a marriage because it complicates the marriage. There’s no concern for any God given unity to the human race to be found here! Even simply to state the truth about how Holy Scripture and our Catholic tradition and other Christian traditions view marriage is highly offensive to many people. For example, recently in Finland a Christian MP has been interrogated by the police for the third time over her traditional views on family and marriage ~ <https://bit.ly/39N80yQ>

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