

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B2021

The readings of this Sunday talk about the reality of marriage. They show that God created man and woman so that they complete each other and share their lives in a union of marriage. They invite us to live the sacrament of marriage according to God's will and not according to human intention.

The first reading of the book of Genesis recalls the creation of man and woman at the beginning of creation. It shows that in order to bring the man out of solitude, God created the woman as his partner of life. It shows also that God has made things in such a way that man and woman live together and form one flesh.

What is behind this text is the idea that marriage is not simply a human institution, but rather has been created by God. It is a sacrament. There is also the idea that marriage creates a bond of unity between a man and a woman that nothing can destroy. The last idea is related to the truth that the desire of living together between a man and a woman is not just human, but comes from God.

This text allows us to understand the point of today's Gospel as Jesus talks about the question of divorce. First of all, the Gospel talks about the question asked of Jesus by the Pharisees about the legality of divorce according to Moses' injunction.

Then, it reports on Jesus' reaction affirming the indissolubility of marriage according to God's primary intention as expressed at the creation of the world. After that, it reports on the conversation between Jesus and his disciples and his explanation about the outcome of the divorce. The Gospel ends up with the narrative of Jesus blessing children brought to him and his invitation to the disciples that they might be like them.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the sacrament of marriage and its demands. First, what is a sacrament? A Sacrament is an efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church in order give divine life to God's people. To say that marriage is a sacrament means that it is a sacred and visible sign by which divine life is given to those who enter into covenant with God through it.

This distinction makes that marriage as human institution is not a sacrament, but a human commitment between a man and a woman in their relationship before society. Though it also may have its demands, nonetheless it has nothing to do with God. It is only when God enters into play, and those in covenant live according to God demands as expressed by the Church, that it becomes a sacrament.

As we have heard in today's readings, marriage as a sacrament can be traced back to God at the beginning of the creation. Because of that, marriage says something about God and his intention in creating man and woman. That is what the book of Genesis and the Gospel bring to our attention when they say that man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and the two become one flesh. Because God's intention is involved in it, the sacrament of marriage becomes the image of God who is one and undivided. Hence, the terminology "Marriage is indissoluble", "What God has joined together, no human being must separate", "Only death can separate the couple".

Where, then, do the divorce and all other forms of conjugal union accepted in society today come from? They come from the hardness of people's heart. In other words, the

Law of Moses allowing the bill of divorce was as an unwanted disposition, but tolerated by God because of hardness of heart and human immaturity.

The hearts of people, indeed, have become harder and harder today than it was at the time of Jesus. If at the time of Jesus it was just a question of a man divorcing his wife, today it is more than that; it is all about a man marrying another man or a woman marrying another woman. This is far away from God's vision and his intent as attested in the creation.

If you have some age, you can remember the hit of Franck Sinatra in 1969: "I did it my way". When people do things just their own way, they'll get it wrong. When people consider marriage just their own way, it ceases being a sacrament. It can only take many deprived forms as we have them today. Even the good Catholic people are contaminated by the spirit of our culture: they go to communion even when they have not contacted the Sacrament of marriage. This is an inversion of Christian values. Slowly and slowly, the spirit of the world is contaminating us. What was once a sin is thought not to be a sin anymore!

Let me say it again: marriage is forever. As Jesus has said so, today the Church says the same thing and will continue repeating it until the end of time! Indissoluble marriage is a reality which encompasses all of human history, from the creation to the moment Christ will return. It will be thus and not otherwise, for love is the strongest thing of all, even stronger than death! The love and grace of God are almighty and nothing can stop them. The man and woman who sincerely believe in the power of the grace of God will always remain firm in the love they have for one another!

For sure, conjugal fidelity has never been easy, but all human commitments fall in the same category. Where do you find an easy way to live ones' vocation? Nowhere! But, the drama today is that the permissive and hedonist culture in which we live has made things immensely more difficult.

I believe also that by bringing together in a same narrative the question of divorce and the incident of children to whom none can enter the kingdom of God unless he resembles them, Jesus wants to tell us that the healing of the sacrament of marriage comes about when the married couples strive to live their union with a heart of a child.

How is the heart of child? Full of innocence, openness toward the adults, especially those who provide for their existence, forgiving, powerless, non-resenting, dependent on the adults and, in the case of the kingdom, dependence on God alone. Those things can bring healing in a sacrament marriage and make it stand in spite of difficulties and hardships.

Like children, let us have confidence in the Spirit of God, who watched over the creation of man and woman, and let us allow ourselves to be led by this Spirit, who unites all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ in order to make us children of Mary!

Genesis 2: 18-24; Hebrews 2: 9-11; Mark 10: 2-16



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