

**Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 7, 2018**

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

**First Reading: GN 2:18-24**

The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name.

The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh.

**Responsorial Psalm: PS 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6**

**R. (cf. 5) May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**

Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored.

**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table.

**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**

Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**

May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**

**Second Reading: HEB 2:9-11**

Brothers and sisters:

He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering. He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers."

**Gospel: MK 10:2-16**

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?"

They were testing him. He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?"

They replied, "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

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**INVITATION TO PRAY**

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

**Proclaim the Scriptures out loud**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

**INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Since the publication of Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* there has been a lot of theological discussion about a very important doctrinal issue; that of Catholic divorce and civil remarriage and how to relate these couples to the Church and to the Eucharist. I believe people holding various positions on these questions would agree on one thing, and that is the need to help reduce the number of divorces taking place as we move forward. Pre-marriage cohabitation, and post-marriage divorce is rampant today like never before, endorsed and promoted by a culture that is both anti-God, and anti-marriage.

We should not be surprised that marriage is under attack, for out of all of life Jesus chose marriage as the image that best illustrates his relationship with those he died to redeem. So in a very real sense Christian marriage is an icon of Jesus Christ. An icon is a visible representation of an eternal truth. Consequently, when a Christian couple's marriage is constant and true in spite of life's difficulties and storms, people will look at them and conclude that Jesus' love is also constant and true. Conversely, when two Christians give up on their partner either out of selfishness, or from despair, and dissolve their marriage, people will look at them and conclude that Jesus' love is also dissolvable. That is why we must stem the tide of failed marriages, even while we extend arms of grace and love to those who have experienced divorce.

Surprisingly, the place to stem the tide is not merely with marriage counseling, though that is vital and important for couples currently in the midst of problems. We must stem the tide by changing the cultural mores regarding marriage and divorce prior to dating, engagement, and marriage. Someone has said, "healthy people make healthy marriages." This simple statement strikes at the heart of the problem. Unless each individual in the marriage partnership, is independently committed to following Jesus Christ at all cost, and committed to life-long growth in Christ and practical application of his truths and character to their life, it is doubtful that a healthy Christian marriage will ensue. For marriage unites two imperfect individuals, who bring into their marriage not only their assets and gifts but also their faults, flaws, and woundedness. Only Christianity provides the values, principles, and the power to live as one ought to live in a godly relationship between two imperfect people.

Consequently, to stem the tide of divorce we must begin by being and developing life-long disciples through Christian formation. By being a life-long disciple we ourselves will be on a positive growth curve of spirituality, learning to live as we ought to with our mates, and with the people in our world. This by itself becomes a powerful teaching example to the coming generations. However, we need to go a step further by encouraging and inviting our children, family, and friends to join us in a life of discipleship and formation. Marriage is too important as a sacrament and sign of Jesus' love to allow its meaning to degenerate into a temporary, meaningless arrangement.

"This is where Christian marriage differs from non-Christian marriage. For Christians, marriage like all of life, is not simply concerned with what we personally can figure out, but should be concerned with re-configuring our beliefs and behavior to conform to what is Christ's good and perfect will, rather than our own opinion.

"The best preparation for being a godly husband or wife is to major on being the kind of person to whom God would gladly entrust in marriage the life of one of his choicest sons or daughters. Individuals who devote their life to following God and growing as his disciple and who cultivate a heart devoted to pleasing Christ in all things will be wonderfully prepared to take on the responsibilities of being a godly spouse."

\* Celebrating Life Together, by Rich Cleveland, (page 18).

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**INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

First Reading

1. How does the Genesis passage help to define loneliness?
2. What does “leaves” one’s parents and “cleaves” to one’s wife mean to you?

Second Reading

3. What can we learn about dealing with our mate’s imperfections from Jesus’ example?

Gospel Reading

4. What did Jesus mean when saying that divorce was allowed by Moses because of their hardness of heart?
  
5. What are the positive reasons why people should avoid divorce?
  
6. Describe what you feel should be the Christian’s attitude toward divorce. Toward marriage.
  
7. How does the quality of our marriage either open the door for our children to come to Jesus, or hinder their coming to Him?

**INVITATION TO ACT**

*Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.*

**CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.*