

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year B: Gen 2:18-24; Ps 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16
October 3, 2021
Fr. David Pignato

The readings for this Sunday's Mass are obviously about marriage, and they invite us to consider the truth about marriage and the role that marriage plays in God's plan of creation.

In the first reading, from the Book of Genesis, we heard the account of how God created the institution of marriage, by creating man and woman as complementary companions for each other, who become "one flesh" in a natural union. This is why the Church teaches that marriage is a natural vocation – a vocation from our very nature. "The vocation to marriage," the Church teaches, "is written in the very nature of man and woman as they come from the hand of the Creator" (*Catechism*, 1603). This means marriage is a fundamental part of God's plan of creation – it's part of the divine blueprint, you could say, for the world.

In the Gospel passage we just heard, Our Lord Jesus affirmed this great truth about marriage when He quoted Genesis and said, "*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.*"

Jesus then went on to affirm the second great truth about marriage, which is that marriage is an *indissoluble* union, a union meant to last *for life*, a union that ends only at the *death* of one of the spouses, as the marriage vows state. Jesus said, "*Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.*" And to emphasize this truth, He explained, "*Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.*"

So, if a marriage is valid, it's indissoluble, which means it ends only at death. A marriage may fail, as many sadly do, but if it is valid, it does not end in God's eyes until the death of one of the spouses. This is why it is forbidden to divorce and remarry, unless the first marriage was invalid. And that's why the Church has a whole, detailed annulment process to investigate the validity marriages.

As all husbands and wives know, marriage is not easy. No marriage is perfect, and every marriage requires constant self-denial and sacrifice. A

successful and happy marriage requires each spouse to be committed to growth in maturity and virtue. And to assist spouses in this great effort, Christ raised the natural institution of marriage to a sacrament for Christian spouses, so that He can provide divine assistance to them through grace. Many Christian spouses readily admit that they need grace from God in order to persevere in their marriage vows. This is why it can make a great difference in a Christian marriage if both spouses are committed to sanctifying their lives by staying close to Christ in the sacraments. It is Christ who teaches spouses how to love each other and to make the sacrifices that marriage requires.

As you know, the truth about marriage taught to us by Christ, including the indissolubility of marriage, is one of the most controversial truths of our times. It's one of the most rejected truths that Christ taught, and it's one of the matters on which the Church faces the most opposition. Even many within the Church don't really believe that marriage is indissoluble, especially when it becomes difficult. In addition, our society and our laws have moved away from the truth about marriage, to define marriage as the union of any two consenting adults, which is dissolvable for any reason or no reason at all. But we must always remember that what God teaches remains true and never changes, even if it is not recognized and accepted by the world. The question for us is whether *we*, who consider ourselves followers of Christ, accept this teaching and are willing to defend it.

We should remember, too, that there's a lot at stake in whether the truth of marriage is defended. Since marriage is part of God's blueprint and design-plan for creation, the world and our society will be very different depending on whether this truth is recognized and accepted. The health of our culture and, most importantly, of our children, depends on this truth. Where there are stable, faithful and happy marriages, society is stronger, culture is healthier, and children are happier. *So much* depends on the acceptance of the truth about marriage.

We know that marriage, which is meant by God to be a source of love and support for spouses and children, is sometimes, sadly, a cause of great heartache and sorrow. And spouses of failed marriages need our support and care, especially if they try to remain faithful to the truth about marriage. There are many people who admit that they are still married in God's eyes, even if they are abandoned by their spouse, or if it becomes necessary to separate from their spouse because common living becomes too dangerous or unhealthy. In these sad cases, we in the Church should be ready to assist and support those who are trying to remain faithful to the truth about marriage. They give the world a great witness to the truth that God teaches, and they inspire all of us to remain faithful to God's teachings, trusting that the truth of God will bring us to everlasting life.