

7<sup>th</sup> October 2018 (27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Genesis 2:18-24; Psalm 127(128); Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16.

**They are no longer two, but one body.**

Jesus is asked about his teaching regarding marriage. The Old Testament law 'allowed' the man to release his wife from the contract of marriage. The Old Testament text reflects an understanding that the woman is an object acquired by the man and that could be disposed of if she did anything wrong. The man was always the master and the subject of the discussion. In his answer Jesus does two things: he firstly re-claims the original understanding of the marriage relationship and then declares that husband and wife are equal. (Both husband and wife commit adultery if they divorce one another!)

In his response about marriage, Jesus quotes the book of Genesis, a passage we read in today's first reading. The two creation stories we read in the first book of the bible are a beautiful reflection on marriage. In Genesis 1:27 we read that God created man and woman in his own image and likeness, both are created equally. In the second story, the one we read today, we are told that while man and all animals are created from the soil of the earth, woman is created from man.

When God created the universe and humanity – and God was pleased with what he saw – man and woman were created as one. This reality is reflected upon both in verse 1:27 and also in 2:21-23. Woman is formed from man's rib and is hence one with him. In a way this oneness in body is destroyed through sin. When man and woman eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, they no longer act as one but start accusing one another; now they are also ashamed of each other and have to cover up and hide from each other!

In today's gospel reading Jesus is encouraging us to return to the original purpose of creation. He insists that 'from the beginning' humanity was created man and woman and that together they are called to be in the image and likeness of God. Jesus has come to propose a new creation, he invites us to start anew. In the relationship between husband and wife in marriage, creation is completed and sin is overcome. What started as one body becomes one within marriage, man leaves his family of origin and is united to his wife becoming once again one body.

In marriage, man and woman become an image and likeness of God, they help each other live and experience God in one another; they lead each other into holiness. They also become co-creators in God. With God they complete creation – what started as one body is now once again one body – but they also participate in God's creation through their children. Moreover marriage places man and woman in a period in time when sin did not exist, in a way marriage reverses the effects of sin, returning creation to its original state.

It is not a coincidence that the gospel text moves immediately to speak about children. It is not easy to understand and live Jesus' concept of marriage as God wanted it in the beginning. We still suffer and live the effects of sin in our life. We can only move forward and accept God's plan if we approach God like little children. In Jesus' time children were considered useless, as they could not help in the daily needs of the household and had no social status. Only if we approach life from this type of simplicity, accepting everything as a gift, can we live the ideals of the new creation proposed by Jesus.

Fr Mario