

Homily of 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (10-07-18)

Today's readings address marriage and family which are two very important areas of our existence. Marriage and family issues concern every one of us since we all came into existence due to union of man and woman, and each one of us belong to a family.

The first reading is the story of how God created the first family. The reading concludes, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh." In the Gospel, Jesus repeated this line and added, "Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate." The first reading and the Gospel show that the Sacrament of Matrimony is the first of the seven Sacraments and that the institution of the family is the most important and the foundation of every other divine and human institution. Whatever affects the family, negatively or positively, affects human existence.

After creating the union of the man and woman, God did not create any alternative to such a union. The prophets did not provide alternatives. Jesus did not suggest any alternative. Instead, he confirmed the union of husband and his wife as God made it to be in the beginning. St. Paul in all his writings and teachings did not suggest any alternative. It means that the absence of an alternative to the union of man and woman is not an omission. God made it so. Human biology, physiology and reproduction system are naturally designed to enhance the union of man and woman.

But, we do not dismiss the reality in our world today that men and women have alternatives to what the readings of today present to us. The alternatives are recognized by some governments and some countries. This does not change the Catholic teaching on marriage which is based on the Bible. It is important that we know what the Bible says, and what the Church teaches. Then, we are responsible for the choices we make and we are accountable to God.

St. Francis of Assisi Church has a tradition of inviting to the front of the sanctuary couples who celebrate wedding anniversary for special prayers and blessing. By so doing, we recognize the beauty of married life. By so doing, we encourage couples that stable and lasting marriage is possible. Marriage and family, as important as they are in human history and existence, must not be trivialized as some people do.

The Gospel concludes with the following, "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." Some countries and some governments do not allow religion to be taught in government owned schools, thereby undermining the importance of faith and religion in the children's development. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of parents to teach their children the importance of spiritual life. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it."

Another problem affecting our family system is that some people do not believe that marriage is a covenant. They see marriage as a contract that can be terminated with time. Also, some people are not committed to the responsibility of bringing up children. They 'make babies' and walk away thereafter. Further, some parents have no religious affiliation, and have nothing to teach their children concerning faith and religion.

We pray for a better understanding that marriage is a sacred institution and a covenant. We pray for fidelity, love and respect that enable lasting marriage among couples. We pray that parents will embrace the task of training their children in the way of God. Finally, we pray that our children may discern properly in their decision concerning married life.

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