

Homily of Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

Genesis 2:18-24; Psalm 128:1-6; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16

Today's readings address marriage and family, which are two very important areas of our human existence. Marriage and family issues concern every one of us since all human beings come into existence through the union of man and woman; and each person belongs 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" (Genesis 2:24). In the gospel, Jesus repeats this line and added, "Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Mark 10:9). 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 in the same way.

After creating the union of 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 wife as God made it to be in the beginning. The New Testament epistles do not suggest any alternative. It means that the absence of alternatives to the union of man and woman is not an omission. God made it so. Human biology, physiology, and the reproductive system are naturally designed to enhance the union of man and woman.

However, 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. For the sake of civility and decency, I will not go into discussing the alternatives, which are, as we know, recognized by some religious bodies and governments of some countries. The recognitions do not change the Catholic teaching on marriage, which is based on the Scripture, morality, and human nature. It is important that we know what the Scripture says and what the Church teaches. Then, we are responsible for the choices we make, and we are accountable to God.

Another problem affecting the family institution is that some people do not believe that marriage is a covenant. They see marriage as a contract that can be terminated with time or when there are defaults. Jesus says in today's gospel, "So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Mark 10:8-9). For this reason, the Catholic Church does not encourage or facilitate divorce. Rather, after all necessary inquiries, the Church can annul and void a marriage as if the marriage never existed. This is different from divorce, which means that the marriage existed but ended. It is pathetic how celebrities and some people toy with divorce and belittle family life, and their admirers and social media celebrate the news. This has a huge negative influence on young people.

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" (Mark 10:13-16). 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 children's development. By doing so, children are taken away from God. 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.”

Unfortunately, some parents are not committed to the responsibility of bringing their children to Jesus. When a parent’s priority for his/her child on a weekend is something else rather than worshipping God, the parent has taken his/her child away from Jesus. There are runaway parents who completely abandon their children. There are parents who have no religious affiliation and have nothing to teach their children concerning faith and religion; which is why we are beginning to have a God-less and faith-less generation.

The readings today call for the protection of the institution of marriage and family, and bringing our children close to God. We pray for a better understanding of the sacredness of marriage and family. We pray for fidelity, love, and respect that enable lasting marriages among couples. We pray that our sons and daughters discern prayerfully and properly before entering into marriage covenants. We pray that parents may embrace the task of training their children in the way of God.

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