

## Weekend Readings & Reflections

### October 2-3, 2021 – Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Reflection:** In today's Gospel, the Pharisees try to trap Jesus with a trick question. The "lawfulness" of divorce in Israel was never an issue. Moses had long ago allowed it (see [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)). But Jesus points His enemies back before Moses, to "the beginning," interpreting the text we hear in today's First Reading. Divorce violates the order of creation, He says. Moses permitted it only as a concession to the people's "hardness of heart"—their inability to live by God's covenant Law. But Jesus comes to fulfill the Law, to reveal its true meaning and purpose, and to give people the grace to keep God's commands. Marriage, He reveals, is a sacrament, a divine, life-giving sign. Through the union of husband and wife, God intended to bestow His blessings on the human family—making it fruitful, multiplying it until it filled the earth (see [Genesis 1:28](#)). That's why today's Gospel moves so easily from a debate about marriage to Jesus' blessing of children. Children are blessings the Father bestows on couples who walk in His ways, as we sing in today's Psalm. Marriage also is a sign of God's new covenant. As today's Epistle hints, Jesus is the new Adam—made a little lower than the angels, born of a human family (see [Romans 5:14](#); [Psalm 8:5-7](#)). The Church is the new Eve, the "woman" born of Christ's pierced side as He hung in the sleep of death on the Cross (see [John 19:34](#); [Revelation 12:1-17](#)). Through the union of Christ and the Church as "one flesh," God's plan for the world is fulfilled (see [Ephesians 5:21-32](#)). Eve was "mother of all the living" (see [Genesis 3:20](#)). And in Baptism, we are made sons and daughters of the Church, children of the Father, heirs of the eternal glory He intended for the human family in the beginning. The challenge for us is to live as children of the kingdom, growing up ever more faithful in our love and devotion to the ways of Christ and the teachings of His Church.

### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome to our study for the Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time. Let us begin in prayer:

**All:** O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all my relatives and friends, and in particular for the good intentions that align with Your Holy Will of the Holy Father. Amen.

**Leader:** *God's vision for marriage should actually be refreshing and reassuring for those who have grown up in this hypersexualized culture. The world proclaims to have all the answers about happiness and the meaning of life, but eventually, we realize that it is actually only filled with loneliness and misery. Today's hookup culture, focused on sex, pornography, and instant gratification, does not bring true and lasting happiness, nor does it help prepare us for living the sacrament of marriage. God offers us the path that will bring us fulfillment: marriage between one man and one woman, which is indissoluble, faithful, and fruitful. This path will bring us closer to God, which is why it can help us to be fulfilled as human beings. As you watch this short video, try to remember God's love for you and that his plan for you is a good one – in fact, it's more beautiful than we can imagine! Try to keep your heart open to what he has to say about marriage.*

#### Marriage and Family Resources

Marriage is an expansive topic, and especially pertinent in our times, which is very confused about the traditional understanding of marriage and family. It's important to spend time learning Church teaching so that we can defend it against the voices of the world and avoid falling into falsities. Encourage your participants to do some personal study of the topic, or maybe even further study together. Here are a few resources to get you started:

CCC 369-373, 1601-1666, 2201-2213, 2331-2336, 2357-2379

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*

Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 47-52

Pope John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio*, *Letter to Families, Theology of the Body, Love & Responsibility*.

## FIRST READING ~ Genesis 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.

*Genesis describes a truth, about our human condition. man and woman are different from the rest of creation. God's invitation and partnership with creation invites man to 'name' the animals and exercise authority over them. It seems God's most beautiful act of creation is woman. In Genesis we learn, 'male and female he created them... in God's image and likeness he created them.'*

- *Have you considered the intimacy of man and woman becoming 'one flesh' together points to the image and reality of what God is like?*

*One Flesh is the Old Testament and Jewish phrase describing the deep and total union of mind, body, emotion, and spirit that is lived in the marriage covenant. The sacrament of marriage is therefore pointing toward and making God's love present for the other.*

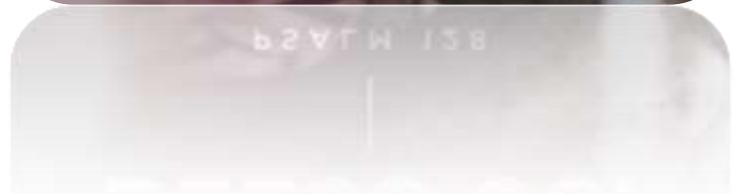
- *If you were to explain Christian marriage to someone what would you share?*

## SECOND READING ~ 2 Hebrews 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.'

*The Letter to the Hebrews seeks to show Jesus as the replacement of the Jewish temple priesthood and sacrifices. The temple in Jerusalem was like an earthly shadow of the reality of Heaven. God came down to earth in Jesus, and completed the task of salvation and continues to link Heaven and earth.*

- *Do you see the link between Heaven and earth in the Church, liturgy, priesthood, sacraments?*



**GOSPEL** ~ Mark 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.

- *What can we do this week to live the truth of the Gospel more fully?*

*Jesus is traveling toward Jerusalem and is questioned by Pharisees. Frequently they seek to trap him with difficult questions and arguments. This would embarrass him in front of the crowds and disciples. Jewish custom and practice had allowed a Husband to divorce his wife for anything objectionable. A Jewish woman was not allowed to divorce. Some agreed. Some disagreed. Rather than talk about legal arguments of divorce, Jesus chose to talk about what marriage is: two becoming one flesh and joined together by God. He states this injustice of easy divorce is not God's plan.*

- *Why do you think the scriptures continue to use the phrase 'two become one flesh'? What does this mean for you? What would you like to ask Jesus if you were involved in this conversation?*
  - *How are the Church's true teachings on marriage different from the world's views?*
  - *If we truly lived God's original plan for marriage, do you think true happiness would be possible?*
- Leaving "father and mother and be joined together" holds an incredible challenge. Family traditions, customs, expectations, money, support... misunderstanding, frustration, resentment can easily creep in. Forgiveness will be required. Cracks and fractures left unacknowledged or repaired can become un-repairable.*
- *How good are you at forgiving, talking, and sharing in a way that repairs hurt feelings and unmet needs? Have you shared your availability and willingness to help married couples in times of stress and need?*
  - *Consider whose marriage you were at most recently. Were you there for the celebration AND to show your support for their life-long journey? Have you shown support? How could you support those whose marriage dream has been broken?*

## MEDITATION

Jesus deals with the issue of divorce by taking his hearers back to the beginning of creation and to God's plan for the human race. In Genesis 2:23-24 we see God's intention and ideal that two people who marry should become so indissolubly one that they are one flesh. That ideal is found in the unbreakable union of Adam and Eve. They were created for each other and for no one else. They are the pattern and symbol for all who were to come. Jesus explains that Moses permitted divorce as a *concession* in view of a lost ideal.

Jesus sets the high ideal of the married state before those who are willing to accept his commands. Jesus, likewise sets the high ideal for those who freely renounce marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:11-12). Both marriage and celibacy are calls from God to live a consecrated life, that is to live as married couples or as singles who belong not to themselves but to God. Our lives are not our own, but they belong to God. He gives the grace and power to those who seek to follow his way of holiness in their state of life.

The parents who brought their children to Jesus wanted Jesus to lay his hands upon them. They knew of the healing power, both physical and spiritual, which came from Jesus' touch. Jesus, in turn, rebuked his disciples for hindering the children from coming. No doubt the disciples wanted to shield Jesus from the nuisance of noisy children. But Jesus delighted in the children and demonstrated that God's love has ample room for everyone.

No one is unimportant to God. He comes to each person individually that he might touch them with his healing love and power. May we never hinder our youth from coming to the Lord to receive his blessing and healing power. And as we grow with age, may we never lose that child-like simplicity and humility which draws us into Christ's loving presence.

- *Do you seek the Lord and his grace in your state of life?*
- *Do you seek to help others draw near to the Lord?*
- *Do you show kindness to the youth you encounter in your neighborhood, home, and church and do you pray for them that they may grow in the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus Christ?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing, let us pray ...

**ALL:** Lord Jesus Christ, your call to holiness extends to all in every state of life. Sanctify our lives - as married couples and as singles - that we may live as men and women who are consecrated to you. Make us leaven in a society that disdains life-long marriage fidelity, chastity, and living single for the Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

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[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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