

Jesus' View of Marriage Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time/B October 7, 2018
Gn 2:18-24; Heb 2:9-11; **Mk 10:2-16** (Marriage can become a sacramental gift of God, not only to the spouses themselves, but to the whole of our society.)

Today's gospel takes it right into **the controversial subject of marriage**, and it was controversial two thousand years ago; it remains controversial today. Now Jewish rabbis disputed, what were the proper grounds for divorce? Some said it had to be something very, very serious. Others said it can be anything, trivial. So this was the dispute that was going on at the time of Jesus. What he did is completely avoid the whole thing, and he did that by **reverting back to what he calls "God's original intention in creating human beings male and female."** He says that God created us male and female **so that we might create a living union that endures.** This is not a legal concept. This is something much deeper than law.

But from the very beginning in the Church, **people questioned what this really means and how it can be applied.** For example people would say, well, is this true for every marriage? Does God put together everyone who is married in their own mind or in the law of the land? **These are very deep questions as well, and they can't be answered easily.** In time the Church came to regard **Christian marriage as something totally unique and different from every other kind**, but that doesn't help us to actually perceive, what is Christian marriage?

Marriage is a complex phenomenon. **It is personal, spiritual, social, and it is a legal event** as well, and it can unite individuals, families, fortunes, and in some cases even nations. But at times the tail wags the dog; secondary issues become primary issues.

Jesus was talking about a lifelong union of body and soul between a man and woman. But many aspects of marriage are actually from that viewpoint superfluous or even foreign to what he is talking about. For example, if someone marries for money, are they doing what Jesus is talking about? No. Is it legal? Yes. **So we have to distinguish in our minds between what**

Jesus is talking about and what people call marriage. Another issue is, what is the role of law? Again we can't answer that now, but it's a question to keep in mind.

The essence of marriage in the gospel and in our Church tradition is this union of two souls that enhances a couple's capacity to receive and bestow love, and therefore it belongs to the sacramental life of the Church, because all the sacraments enhance our capacity to receive and bestow love, beginning with Baptism.

Now Jesus' teachings cannot be applied to unbelievers or people who believe something else different from what he taught, nor can they be applied to people who are not spiritually attuned. **This is a spiritual message. It has to be taken in, in a spiritual sense.** But in the history of our world there have been **many natural family systems** and they have all served a very important purpose. We are not to despise them or negate them or act as if they are completely unimportant. **They are also important, but they are not what he is talking about.**

Jesus' desire was to deepen people's awareness of how close God is and how God is an intimate partner in all our relationships, but most especially the relationship between husband and wife. If married people consciously put God at the center of their relationship, their marriage will become a source of holiness for themselves, for their children, and for the world at large. We are called to serve God's mission to save the world and every sacrament contributes to it. In this way, marriage can become a sacramental gift of God, not only to the spouses themselves, but to the whole of our society.