

Homily for Friday of Week 19 in Ordinary Time

(Jos 24:1-13; Mt 19:3-12) Israel was not like other nations. To prove this point, Joshua recounted in today's first reading some choice favors that God had shown her. First, He singled out her patriarch, Abraham. The Lord in turn made him into a numerous people after Jacob went down to Egypt. When Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites, God sent Moses, who smote Egypt with wondrous plagues. The Lord preferred Israel over Egypt at the Red Sea. He fed Israel with manna for 40 years in the desert; He fought Israel's battles in the Promised Land. God gave Israel land that she had not tilled and cities that she had not built. There were many nations on earth, yet with Israel alone had God entered into a covenant. He became her God and she became His people. True, every nation on earth belonged to God, but they had all proved unfaithful. One by one, they had turned to the worship of idols. Therefore, God had presumably written them off with a bill of divorce. Or so it must have seemed until Jesus appeared.

The Eternal Word respected the sharp distinction found in the Old Testament between Israel and other nations. He did this beyond anyone's wildest dreams. At His incarnation, God didn't become a Roman, Greek or an Egyptian. He became a Jew. That is to say, He became a son of Abraham. At the same time, however, God also became a son of Adam, thereby confirming the primordial covenant He had made in Eden with all mankind. The Messianic title, Son of David, belongs by right to our Lord, yet His favorite title was Son of Man. Why? – Because Son of Man is equivalent to Son of Adam, since Adam means man in Hebrew. The King of the Jews had come to end the great divorce between God and the tribes of Adam. The primordial covenant forged in Eden between God and mankind was catholic or universal because Adam was the universal patriarch of every nation. Christ had come to restore it. His New Testament would also be Catholic. The Lord had not written the Nations a bill of divorce after all! God had remained faithful to His faithless spouse. Daughter Eden had turned into an enemy yet the Lord loved her still. We in turn must show the same indissoluble love for one another that God has shown for us. We too must love our enemies! We too must remain faithful to an unfaithful spouse!

Jesus' Gospel made no distinction between Jew and Gentile. For the scribes and Pharisees, this fact alone was shocking. It amounted to the ultimate heresy: the repudiation of Israel's privileged status. But Jesus wasn't asking Daughter Zion to take off her wedding ring. He was inviting Daughter Eden to put hers back on. Either way, hadn't Israel's privileged status come to an end? – Not in the least! In the new world order – better known as the New Testament – she supplies the Universal King who rules over the Nations: our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This fact in turn fulfills her ancient prophecies beyond all expectation. If the indissolubility of God's primordial covenant with all mankind was a shocker, so too was the indissolubility of the primordial covenant between husband and wife. Even our Lord's own apostles were dumbfounded in today's gospel when Christ forbade divorce. Our Lord was inviting married couples to live here on earth as if they still had one foot in Eden. When He followed up by recommending celibacy, our Lord was inviting some men to live here on earth as if they already had one foot in heaven. Celibacy for the Kingdom's sake is like walking on water. This trick involves a secret, and her name is Mother Mary. If anyone starts to sink, let him pray her Rosary slowly and devoutly for one hour each day! It's a small price to pay for the sublime thrill of treading underfoot the stormy waves of concupiscence and lust. So be it! Amen!