

27TH SUNDAY, ORD. (B) THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is one of the seven sacraments and it is as old as the beginning of creation. Today we are called to reflect on marriage according to God's plan. Why did God make us male and female? What was His purpose?

After creating man, God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." We heard that God created animals and birds and brought them to the man to name them, but none was a suitable partner for him. This indicates that we cannot substitute human beings with animals. They cannot be suitable partners in the eyes of God. "God created man in the image of Himself, in the image of God He created Him, male and female He created them," (Gen.1:27).

God then created a human being from the man, who the man named woman. The interesting thing God made was that even though the woman was from the man, they have some different features or body parts peculiar to each one of them. The man and woman have different biological parts. God did that for a purpose, and it was for procreation. So marriage is for procreation and companionship. "God bless them saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it,'" (Gen.128).

The readings of today are to remind us of the indissolubility of marriage, monogamy, and chastity. This means that God's plan for marriage is between a man and a woman, and it becomes a sacred bond that no one should separate. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and the two of them become one flesh". Thus, there is nothing like marriage of convenience. This also means that the man and the woman are equal, and they complement each other.

We may have different ideas about marriage, but the answer Jesus gave to the Pharisees should make us reflect deeply on what God planned marriage to be. When they told Jesus that Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her, He told them that it was because of the hardness of their hearts that is why he wrote them that commandment. It can also be due to the hardness of our hearts that we are treating marriage the way we like in our world today, as we are even redefining marriage.

Marriage is holy and a mystery. Its holiness originated from God, and the mystery is about how man and woman were created, and what comes out of marriage - the continuation of bringing human beings into the world. Again the love that exists between husband and wife is like the love between Christ and the Church. From the side of Adam was the woman born. In the same way, from the side of Jesus, the new Adam, was the Church born through the water and blood that flowed from His side when pierced with a lance.

The love between husband and wife results in the creation of children, the best gift of God. So we heard Jesus asking His disciples to allow the children to come to Him, “for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these”. Children are blessings God bestows on couples who walk in His ways, as the Psalm we sang today indicates. “Blessed are you who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways! Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home, your children like olive plants around your table”.

We are reminded to keep marriage sacred and not to destroy it. The foundation of marriage is love and without love it cannot stand the test of time. One may ask why the Church allows annulment. It is because the marriage was faulty before the man and the woman exchanged their vows. In this case before one marries he or she has to consider the purpose for which God instituted marriage. One has to pray over it and know the one he or she is going to stay with for life. God’s plan is that marriage should be a permanent union between a man and a woman.

What are the causes of divorce in marriage? In our modern world, people enter into marriage with all kinds of reasons - just for fun, or for pleasure, or for personal satisfaction, or just to get someone to keep him or her in company. Some enter marriage not because of love, but because of physical beauty, riches or wealth, intelligence, and sometimes, because of fame and social standing of the partner. All these reasons and many others will make the marriage invalid even though they may lawfully exchange vows before a priest. These factors may not last and when it happens that way, the marriage will definitely collapse.

How can marriage be maintained and sustained? God must be consulted day and night. There is the need for constant communication between husband and wife. When there is a problem, none of the partners should try to claim to be innocent, but there should be a compromise and an amicable resolution. Husband and wife should always remember that the salvation, or otherwise, of each of them depends in a way upon the other; (1Pet.3:7).