

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time – B

(Gen 2:18-24; Heb 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16)

Excerpts from *Pope Francis - 04 Oct 2015*

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Brothers and sisters, this Sunday's readings centre on three themes: *solitude, love between man and woman, and the family*. Adam, as we heard in the first reading, named all the other creatures as a sign of his dominion, his clear and undisputed power, over all of them. Nonetheless, he felt alone, because "*there was not found a helper as his partner*" (Gen 2:20). The drama is when loneliness becomes isolation, which is experienced by countless men and women in our own day.

I think of the elderly, abandoned even by their loved ones and children; widows and widowers; the many men and women left by their spouses; all those who feel alone, misunderstood and unheard. Migrants and refugees fleeing from war and persecution; and those many young people who are victims of the culture of consumerism, the culture of waste, the throwaway culture.

Today we experience the paradox of a globalized world filled with luxurious mansions and skyscrapers, but a lessening of the warmth of homes and families. Many sophisticated means of entertainment, but a deep and growing interior emptiness; many pleasures, but few loves; many liberties, but little freedom... The number of people who feel lonely and isolated keeps growing, as does the number of those who are caught up in selfishness, destructive violence and slavery to pleasure and money. Our experience today is, in some way, like that of Adam: so much power and at the same time so much loneliness, isolation. Love, which is lasting, faithful, stable and fruitful is increasingly looked down upon, viewed as a charming relic of the past.

In the first reading we also hear that God was pained by Adam's loneliness. He said: "*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner*" (Gen 2:18). These words show that nothing makes man's heart as happy as another heart like his own, a heart which loves him and takes away his sense of being alone. These words also show that God did not create us to live in sorrow or to be alone. It is for happiness, to share their journey with someone who complements them, to live the wondrous experience of love: to love and to be loved, and to see their love bear fruit in children (cf. *Ps 128*).

This is God's dream for his beloved creation: to see it fulfilled in the loving union between a man and a woman, rejoicing in their shared journey, fruitful in their mutual gift of self. It is the same plan that Jesus presents in today's Gospel: "*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*" (Mk 10:6-8).

To a question, Jesus responds in a straightforward and unexpected way— even if it seems to be a trap to make him unpopular with the crowd, which practiced divorce as an established fact. Jesus brings everything back to the beginning of creation, to teach us that God blesses human love, that it is he who joins the hearts of two people who love one another. The goal of conjugal life is not simply to live together for life, but to love one another for life! Jesus re-establishes the order that was present from the beginning.

“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mk 10:9). This is an exhortation to believers to overcome every a fear of accepting the true meaning of the couple and of human sexuality in God’s plan. For God, marriage is not some adolescent utopia, but a dream without which his creatures will be doomed to solitude! Indeed, being afraid to accept this plan paralyzes the human heart. Curiously, people today – who often ridicule this plan – continue to be attracted and are fascinated by every authentic love, by every steadfast love, by every fruitful love, by every faithful and enduring love. We see people chase after fleeting loves while dreaming of true love; they chase after pleasures of the flesh but desire total self-giving.

In this extremely difficult social and marital context, the Church is called to carry out her mission *in fidelity, truth and love. To carry out her mission in fidelity* to her Master, in defending faithful love and encouraging the many families, which live married life as an experience that reveals God’s love. In defending the sacredness of life, of every life; in defending the unity and faithfulness of the conjugal bond as a sign of God’s grace and of the human person’s ability to love seriously.

The Church is called to carry out her mission in truth, which is not changed by passing fads or popular opinions. *And the Church is called to carry out her mission in charity*, in her duty to seek out and care for hurting couples with the balm of hospitality and mercy; to be a “field hospital” with doors wide open to whoever knocks in search of help and support. Even more, to reach out to others with true love, to walk with our fellow men and women who suffer, to include them and guide them to the wellspring of salvation.

A Church teaching and defending fundamental values. A Church teaching authentic love, capable of taking loneliness and isolation away. The Church must search out these persons, welcome and accompany them, for a Church with closed doors betrays herself and her mission, and, instead of being a bridge, becomes a roadblock.

In this spirit we ask the Lord to accompany us and to guide his Church, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.