

Proper 22

(Sunday between 2 and 8 October inclusive)

Ordinary Time, week 27

Principal Service readings

Genesis 2.18-24	God makes man and woman as companions
Psalm 8	The power and majesty of God
Hebrews 1.1-4; 2.5-12	The greatness of God's incarnate Son; redemption brought by Christ, not angels
Mark 10.2-16	Question about divorce; Jesus and the children

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The question about divorce

²Some Pharisees came, and to test Jesus they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' ³He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' ⁴They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' ⁵But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female. ⁷For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' ¹⁰Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹²and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

Jesus and the children

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children

come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Mark 10.2-16 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

For Mark's first readers, especially Jewish ones, it was important that what Jesus taught was consonant with the Torah delivered through Moses.

Do the Pharisees want to hear what Jesus says, or merely to draw him into an argument?

Jesus doesn't say that Moses was wrong, but that divorce was a concession to human weakness (v.5), cf Deuteronomy 24.1.

Think of some arguments in favour of divorce, and then some against it. Can you think of any ways that might help people to avoid resorting to divorce?

Why does Jesus suggest that adults should receive 'the kingdom of God' like a little child (v.15)?

Quotations

1

A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers.

Robert Quillen 1887–1948

2

Whenever Christ was confronted by people in sexual disarray he took good care to safeguard sexuality by reminding them that they had to avoid sin; that is to say to use their sexuality in a fully human way.

Jack Dominican b.1929

3

A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person.

Mignon McLaughlin 1913–83

4

The goal in marriage is not to think alike, but to think together.

Robert C. Dodds 1919–89

5

My divorce came to me as a complete surprise. That's what happens when you haven't been home in eighteen years.

Lee Trevino b.1939

6

However often marriage is dissolved, it remains indissoluble. Real divorce, the divorce of the heart and nerve and fiber, does not exist, since there is no divorce from memory.

Virgilia Peterson 1904–66

7

There's nothing sadder in this world than to awake Christmas morning and not be a child.

Erma Bombeck 1927–96

8

All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.

Pablo Picasso 1881–1973

Related topics

For further study:

Theology of Marriage; Christian and Jewish Perspectives on Marriage, Divorce and Annulments; Human Dignity; Children

Closing Prayer

God of community,
in your threefold wisdom you have ordained
that it is not good for us to be alone.
Restore to the children of Adam and Eve
the holiness and harmony
with which you endowed the beginning of creation,
that those united in marriage
may remain faithful to each other,
and that every bond of friendship and affection
may be blessed, confirmed and perfected
through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

Collect for Proper 22, Year B²

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

² *Celebrating the Christian Year : Prayers and Resources for Sundays, Holy Days and Festivals : Years*