

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday per Annum - B  
Genesis 2:18-24;  
Hebrews 2:9-11;  
Mark 10:2-16  
Little Flower - 10/4/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's reading from Genesis challenges us to reflect on God's vision for us as human beings. The reading suggests four profound truths about us as human persons created by God.

God said, "*It is not good for the man to be alone.*" In other words, God created us social or relational. God created us to be in relationship with others, to live in community with others. Scripture scholars tell us that the story of the creation of woman from the rib of man was a primitive attempt to explain sexual attraction. In other words, God created us sexual. Sex and sexuality, then, are gifts from God.

The beautiful conclusion to the story gives us the meaning of marriage: "*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh.*" In other words, if God created us social and sexual, God created marriage. In marriage, an *I* and a *you* become a *we* without losing their individual identities.

The final truth is that God intended men and women to be radically equal. "Bone of my bone" suggests that men and women share the same strengths; "flesh of my flesh" suggests that they share the same weaknesses. If men and women shared the same strengths and weaknesses in the beginning, God intended men and women to be radically equal.

Although this was God's original vision and plan for us as human beings, original sin intervened. Consequently, in today's Gospel, Jesus is asked about divorce. Jesus' response offers a new insight into marriage: "*Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.*" By these words, Jesus affirms that God is the binding or bonding force in every marriage.

Two weeks ago, Pope Francis came to the United States to participate in the World Meeting of Families. All of us are aware of how fragile marriages and families are in our society. Likewise, all of us are aware that there are many threats to marriage within our society. However, some would argue that no-fault divorce has done more to undermine marriage than any of the other threats. Pope Benedict himself acknowledged that we can no longer presume that couples intend to enter a lifelong marriage when they marry. In fact, one can argue that one of the reasons so many couples choose not to marry is because they are afraid, afraid that their marriages will end in divorce.

In the second part of today's Gospel, the disciples tried to prevent parents from bringing their children to Jesus. The Gospel tells us that Jesus became indignant and said to them, "*Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*" With these words, Jesus is proclaiming the value and importance of children within the family and the community.

My brothers and sisters, today is also Respect Life Sunday. Today's first reading proclaims that God is the creator and, therefore, the giver of all life. In his homilies and talks in the United States, Pope Francis at one time or another addressed all the respect life issues. His talks were reminiscent of Cardinal Bernardin's "seamless garment of life." Each person has a unique part to play in God's plan of salvation. Therefore, we are called to respect all human life from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death. Among the various respect life issues, abortion merits special attention because children in the womb are the most vulnerable and most innocent of all human beings. If we do not respect and protect the most vulnerable and most innocent human lives, we will never create a culture in which any life is respected. If we doubt this, we need only look around us.