

HOMILY SUNDAY 27 B

“God’s Wildest Dream”

Gen 2:7-8, 18-24; Psalm 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16)

A little boy opened the big family Bible and leafed through the pages. When he saw an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages, he called out to his mother, “Mom, look what I found.” When she asked what, he replied with astonishment in his voice, “I think it's Adam's underwear!”

Do you have a dream – a vision?

God has a dream – to begin the Kingdom of God here on earth.

God sent Jesus to begin realizing that dream among us; to begin realizing the Reign of God right here, right now. Jesus would do this by loving us; forgiving us and breaking the power of sin. His favourite activity was to teach us about the kingdom. He taught us to pray that God’s kingdom would come. My Episcopal motto comes from this reality – “The Kingdom of God is among us.”

The readings today speak of three essential elements of that kingdom: commitment, communication and childlikeness.

The first essential ingredient of the Kingdom of God is commitment. Both the reading from Genesis and the gospel put forward life time commitment in marriage as part of this new reality, this kingdom Jesus was initiating. The reading from Hebrews adds the ingredient of Jesus’ commitment that allowed him to suffer for us, to be made perfect through redemptive suffering.

Any life time commitment, such as final vows for religious life, holy orders or marriage, speaks to our deepest selves and reflects God’s commitment to us. Where the Old Testament tempered that commitment by allowing divorce, Jesus presents a new dispensation – where there is genuine, mature faith commitment, there is no divorce. Marriage is now a sacrament that reveals God’s nuptial relationship of love to us, and as such, cannot be broken, so there is no divorce for the Church.

When the harsh realities of life, however, present us with a broken relationship that ends in a civil divorce, the Church in her compassion provides a process of investigation to see if the bond was perhaps never valid in the first place for a reason that only God could know at that time, such as fear, force, lack of truth or maturity. In those cases, a declaration of nullity can be granted because there never was a marriage from the beginning, despite a wedding and all appearances to the contrary. This is a teaching that is hard for some to understand and accept, and calls for compassion on the part of all.

The second essential ingredient in the reign of God is childlikeness. This is so essential that Jesus can say that unless we change and become like a little child, we cannot enter into the Kingdom. What is this childlikeness about?

Before they are wounded by life’s hurts, children have an innate trust in adults. I am always amazed

at the trust that children show when tossed into the air and caught by their father or another trusted person, with not a fear in the world that they would ever be dropped. To be childlike is to have that kind of trust in God, and for that to happen means a transformation on our part, a change, a metanoia, a letting go of the Old Testament hardness of heart that Jesus speaks about in the gospel. We need to pray for the childlikeness that is a key to the Kingdom.

A final ingredient of the Kingdom of God is communication. Both the reading from Genesis and the gospel present marriage as two people becoming “one flesh.” That is a profound, spiritual reality that happens through communicating with love. It is the achieving of union, oneness, communion through complete trust and acceptance. This centres on the life-giving nature of achieving intimacy in one’s relationship. This intimacy is a sign of who God is: life-giving community and intimate relationship.

Those who achieve intimacy in their marriage or friendship relationship will experience God, because God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are a family, a relationship, and Jesus states in the gospel of John that they will reveal themselves to those who keep his commandment to love each other. This is heady stuff, this intimacy through communication that takes us right into the heart of the Kingdom of God.

Max and his late wife Velma Iron of Canoe Lake are an example of a married couple who in their relationship and lives exemplified these three essential ingredients of the Kingdom of God. Certainly they were faithful to their marriage commitment, a commitment that was challenged daily by the suffering of Velma’s illness. To the day she died, Max cared for her selflessly. And both shared their faith commitment through their ministry in the Church, leading worship or teaching sacramental preparation.

They had about them a childlikeness that was endearing, in their hospitality, their generosity and their simple way of life. And they communicated well – they were of one mind and one heart, and helped other couples preparing for marriage to do likewise. Would that more couples would follow their example.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the Kingdom of God. We who partake of it are empowered to participate in Jesus’ mission of initiating that kingdom here among us, through our own faith commitments, our childlikeness, and the unity that we achieve through communicating with love.

So: strive to make real the Kingdom of God among us, through the commitment, communication and childlike trust in our own lives.