

HOMILY SUNDAY 27 B (Homily 02)  
“The Foundation of Marriage and Family Life ”  
Gen 2:7-8, 18-24; Psalm 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16)

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What's it like to be your own boss? A businessman was asked. “I don't know,” he replied. “The police won't let me park in front of my office. Tax collectors tell me how to keep my books. My bank manager tells me how much of a bank balance I have to maintain. Freight agents tell me how my goods must be packed. Customers tell me how my goods must be made and what the price should be. The union tells me whom I can employ and how and when I can employ them. And now I just got married.”

Marriage today is struggling but still the foundation stone of our society.

The future well-being of society depends on strengthening family life. This is a constant message in many of Pope Benedict's recent speeches. On Dec. 1, in a speech to the newly arrived ambassador of St. Lucia to the Holy See, Benedict XVI stated that “the sacred institution of marriage is vital to the well-being of every nation.”

He warned that “any hope for renewal of society which does not adhere to God's plan for matrimony and the family is destined to founder, for it is there that the God-given dignity of every person is first realized and the self-esteem necessary for mature adult relationships is first experienced and nurtured.”

The first reading today speaks of the creation of Adam and all the animals and finally Eve out of Adam's rib. The other creation account in the bible is noteworthy. In it, when creating the animals, God said, “Let there be such and such an animal,” and that animal was created. The language changes, however, when God created the first man and woman. Suddenly, God said, “Let us make human beings *in our own image*.” This is a whole different reality than for the rest of creation.

There is a call here to a spousal relationship, to marriage, in which two become one, reflecting the very nature of God. Marriage reflects who God is, for God is relationship, marriage, eternal commitment, family.

The Gospel speaks strong words about the importance of marriage in God's plan

for us focused on the indissolubility of marriage that leads to family life. The words “two become one flesh” involve openness to new life, essentially becoming three in one.

Scripture over and over again affirms God’s love for humanity and Christ’s love for the Church, and that God himself is the author of the intimate partnership of the married state. The teachings of the Church, especially in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in the Canadian Bishops’ recent statement, *Liberating Potential*, and in JP II’s *Theology of the Body*, insist that the free, total, faithful and fruitful love of Christ who gives his life for his spouse, the Church and its members, is the love to which spouses are especially called. Each time they become one flesh, they are called to renew, through the language of their bodies, their marriage commitment to live a free, total, faithful and fruitful love, expressed in their lives.

Interestingly, the longer reading of the Gospel concludes with a comment on being childlike as the criteria for entering the kingdom of God. Could there be here a suggestion that greater docility to this hard teaching, the trusting attitude of a child, is an attribute that will help followers of Jesus experience kingdom peace and joy in their own lives?

The second reading seeks to motivate us to make whatever sacrifices are needed in our own lives to follow Jesus who died to save us and to sanctify us. He not only redeemed us by taking on our sin and sinfulness, but also took us home to be with the Father, making us his brothers and sisters, called to live a new life in Him.

Ron Rolheiser, noted Catholic author and theologian, shares an example of faithfulness in marriage. A business man, far away from home, felt attracted to a conference secretary. There was chemistry between them, and it was obvious that she also was attracted to him, staying behind at times just to chat with him. At the end of the day, they were alone, perhaps even intentionally. He felt excitement at what could develop, yet also fear and guilt, for he was happily married. She asked if he wanted to join her for supper. After a moment of hesitation, his faith kicked in and he made a decision – telling her that he would not as he was married and it would not be right for him to do that. In the end, he went home, eternally grateful that he had sacrificed passing pleasure, out of his commitment in faith to his marriage.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is in itself a nuptial meal, a wedding banquet, calling us to fidelity to our faith and to the fullness of life in the Kingdom.

Let us do all that we can, in any way that we can, to strengthen both marriage and family life in our communities and in our societies.