

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTONARY #140

READING I Genesis 2:18-24

A reading from the Book of Genesis

The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a suitable partner for him."

So the LORD God formed out of the ground

various wild animals and various birds of the air,

and he brought them to the man to see what he would

call them;

whatever the man called each of them would be its name.

The man gave names to all the cattle,

all the birds of the air, and all wild animals;

but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man,

and while he was asleep,

he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib

that he had taken from the man.

When he brought her to the man, the man said:

"This one, at last, is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called 'woman,'

for out of 'her man' this one has been taken."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother

and clings to his wife,

and the two of them become one flesh.

Genesis = JEN-uh-sihns

Try to maintain the poetic nature of the text. Using volume and tone, distinguish between the narrator of the story and God's dialogue.

Naming was very important to the ancients. It established relationship and authority. Consider the importance of this in light of our faith and current concerns for ecological issues.

Adam had no knowledge of what God had in store for him.

Bring joy to the text. God's perfect design is brought to fruition and should be celebrated.

With figurative language, Genesis conveys the potential closeness that God fashions into the bond between men and women. By forming one from the other, God establishes an exchange between them. The man, drawn to the woman as the

most fitting of all animate partners, will forgo familiar bonds with parents, home, and kin, to enter a new relationship with a new horizon. Intense attraction matches the close fittingness. Adam's enthralled exclamation, "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," expresses the primordial sentiment that motivates partnership bonds between men and women. By fashioning bonds of partnership between men and women into creation (marriage) with which he promises to perpetuate the species. With exquisite

READING I

To aim humanity toward the good, the Lord makes us for partnership. In the first instance, all of creation provides us with a host of ani-

mate companions; however, that partnership is largely one-sided. God does the molding, humanity the naming. A more fitting partnership is possible.

READING II

As the lectionary switches from a semi-continuous reading of the letter of James to that of

narrative artistry, Genesis signals the depth and meaning of human partnership, the intensity of interpersonal attraction, and the goal toward which God has ordered these: humanity's ultimate good. Accordingly, the account of humanity's creation in Genesis is a fundamental touchstone for reflecting on the theological nature, meaning, purpose, and goal of humanity and one of its most fundamental institutions—marriage.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6 (5)

R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

Blessed are you who fear the LORD,
Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

For meditation and context:

The author's Christology here focuses on Jesus' humanity, how he became fully human and suffered for the sake of our salvation.

Lower your voice for the parenthetical.

Neither should we be ashamed to proclaim this. Read with firm intention.

READING II Hebrews 2:9-11

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he,

for whom and through whom all things exist,

in bringing many children to glory,

should make the leader to their salvation perfect

through suffering.

He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated

all have one origin.

Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers."

GOSPEL Mark 10:2-16

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

[The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked,

"Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?"

They were testing him.

He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" »

Jesus is being tested. What tone do you think he uses in his reply? Apply that to your proclamation.

Hebrews this week, our attention is directed to familial bonds once again. Instead of attending to marriage, Hebrews focuses on the bonds between parents and children and the bonds among siblings. These familial bonds comprise the nature of the relationship that God establishes with and among the faithful in Christ. Hebrews highlights that Christ's suffering paves the way for believers to enter into the divine family. Through Jesus' self-offering, through his willingness to be "made lower than the angels," and to "taste death for everyone," God brings many children

means to life, and through it we become siblings of the Son of God. So it is with great joy that we hear the conclusion of the reading from Hebrews today, which reminds us that, in his passion and death, Jesus is pleased to have obtained familial status for us with God and unabashedly call us his siblings.

GOSPEL

Jesus' teaching on marriage and family was and remains one of his most demanding lessons. Pharisees, in today's Gospel, test him on the topic of marriage and divorce. Jesus

They replied,
 "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce
 and dismiss her,"

But Jesus told them,

"Because of the hardness of your hearts

he wrote you this commandment.

But 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.

Therefore what God has joined together,

no human being must separate."

In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this.

He said to them,

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another

commits adultery against her,

and if she divorces her husband and marries another,

she commits adultery."]

And people were bringing children to him that he might

touch them,

but the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this he 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.

Amen, I say to you,

whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child

will not enter it."

Then he embraced them and blessed them,

placing his hands on them.

[Shorter: Mark 10:2–12 (see brackets)]

Pause slightly before beginning the new section. Time has passed.

Pause slightly for another new section.

"Rebuke" and "indignant" are strong words. Give them the power they represent.

"Amen" shows the earnestness of Jesus' dialogue.

Use a tender, slow tone. Let the assembly savor the image of Jesus picking up their children or grandchildren, embracing them, and blessing them.

counters with a question, establishing himself as the superior teacher. At the same time, he points them to the tradition of Moses, which challenges the Pharisees to read Scripture well. To know Mosaic teaching on marriage and divorce would require them to know both the mandates of Torah and the meaning of its stories. The Pharisees know only the mandates. Moses, they say, permitted a bill of divorce. Jesus acknowledges this fact (see Deuteronomy 24:1–4). But this, he explains, was a compromise. Moses was pitying hardened hearts. Divorce, Jesus goes on, is

no one may separate.

After his exchange with Pharisees, Jesus' disciples revisit this teaching, indi-

catting its demanding nature even for Jesus' earliest followers. Jesus responds to them by expanding his position into a mandate that Moses may have given had he not faced the hardness of human hearts: to marry someone who is divorced is adulterous. As Mark's account continues, furtherveys the full meaning and depth of the bond of marriage: the two become one flesh, so that they are no longer two but one. Thus, what God joins in marital union, these the Lord embraces. Since marriages beget children, marriage itself becomes a font for the expansion of God's kingdom. Accordingly, it merits demanding instruction. E.W.