Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

October 2, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“The two of them become one flesh” (Genesis 2: 24).

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gn 2:18-24; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16

The context of Jesus’s defense of marriage is the Pharisee’s defense of a husband’s right to dismiss his wife. We should not be surprised that Jesus defends the ideal of indissolubility found in Genesis over a provision Moses allowed only because of the hardness of men’s hearts. Jesus goes back to creation to show that man and woman together reveal the image and likeness of God. True union makes them one flesh, a single being. Their mutual love is a symbol of the Covenant between God and Israel. Fidelity between husband and wife affirms God’s fidelity.

Jesus’ insistence that what God joins humans should not separate and that those who divorce and remarry commit adultery must have shocked the disciples, and they seek further explanation. Church teaching has evolved to acknowledge that the ideal marriage Jesus defends is not always evident in many unions, contracted without full knowledge, freedom and capacity. Annulment for lack of these criteria and separation because of abandonment, abuse and for the welfare of children are common canonical and pastoral approaches to addressing broken marriages.

Pope Francis has urged pastors to accompany and support rather than judge and exclude divorced and remarried couples with both the ideal and the reality in mind. Should people suffering estrangement because of failed marriages also suffer estrangement from their faith communities and families? Discernment says that God has not joined together every attempt at marriage and that mercy is never withdrawn from people for failure.

Today’s Gospel ties Jesus’ affirmation of marriage to his concern for children. He rebukes his disciples for preventing the children from coming to him, calling them models for those seeking to enter the Kingdom of God. Without their innocence and simplicity, adults will not enter, and Jesus welcomes children by embracing and touching them. We measure the tragic loss of this simple affection because of the clergy sex abuse crisis. It must have been refreshing for Jesus himself to be surrounded by children after facing the cold hostility and hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

Advertisement