

My dear brothers and sisters, the theme for 27th Sunday is **what God has joined together, no human being must separate** Mark.10:9. The Pharisees questioned Jesus about the Law of divorce. Jesus Christ, the Messiah and the Son of God, has perfect understanding of the Law. According to Jesus, Moses had permitted divorce because of the hardness of heart of the ancient people. Today, we live at a time when divorce is common and acceptable in most countries and cultures. The Book of Genesis tells us of an ideal situation at the time of creation, when God created man and woman. It speaks first of all to the relationship between man and woman and about their original unity. The creation account is also speaking to us about a spiritual ideal: that those united in marriage are really one (Gen.2:24)—and it is this ideal that the Gospel picks up.

Today, the Pharisees question Jesus about the lawfulness of divorce. Under specific conditions, divorce was an accepted practice among the Jewish people during the time of Jesus. It was regulated by the Law of Moses, as found in Deuteronomy 24:1-5. This law only permits that a husband may divorce his wife if he finds her to be indecent. This is the justification that the Pharisees reference when Jesus inquires about the commandment of Moses. In reply, Jesus quotes from the Book of Genesis and counters that God's original intention was that men and women would become one flesh in marriage (Gen.2:24). Jesus describes the teaching of Moses as a concession made to God's original intention because of human stubbornness.

We may know many good and holy people in our community or in our parish who are suffering in their marriage with separation, divorce, and probably annulment. What is an annulment? In the teaching of our Catholic Church, an annulment declares that a marriage never really took place. In private, Jesus' disciples questioned him further about this teaching on divorce. It is to his disciples that Jesus lays out the implications of his teaching by explaining that remarriage after divorce is adultery (Mk.10:11-12). Jesus' teaching was more restrictive than the teaching of the Pharisees, which permitted remarriage. Jesus further distinguished his teaching from the cultural norms of his time by applying his words equally to men and women. Jewish culture permitted only that a husband may divorce his wife. Wives were not permitted to divorce their husband for any reason, including adultery.

Some Christian men think that they can use adultery to divorce their wives. They normally quote Matthew 19:9, as a ground for divorce, but they had it wrong because the Greek word *porneia* is not the proper name for adultery rather it means an unlawful marriage or an illicit marriage... The proper name for adultery *moicheia*. To base on sin as grounds for divorce is not Christian, because the couple have promised themselves to love each other for better and for worse... the purpose of marriage is for the good of the couple. God intended for women and men to be joined together in marriage. Among the purposes of marriage is the raising of children. By welcoming children and fostering their relationship with God, parents and families bear witness to the Kingdom of God.

Finally, dear friends, the matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership for life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offsprings; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament (Can.1055). Although marriage is the oldest institution in the world, the problems of marriage is as old as Adam. If your marriage is going on well, keep it up! But if your marriage is struggling, don't give up. Always focus on what unites you than what divides you. Let us pray in this Mass that all married couples may have the grace to live together in love and in unity all the days of their lives. Amen!