

Homily for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Times

October 6-7, 2018

Readings: Genesis 2: 18-24; Hebrews 2: 9-11; Mark 10: 2-16

Preacher: Sr. Barbara Moore

Today we hear an ancient story about the creation of humankind. It follows the first creation story, the exquisite poem recalling the six days of creation and the day of rest. The ancient Scripture texts relate the beauty of the relationship between two persons and the creative energy that flows from that union.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus, in response to a question about divorce, makes a statement that we hear during every wedding. "What God has joined together; no human being must separate."

I was not called to marry and so I am careful about advice and judgments regarding this way of life. But over many years of ministry, I have witnessed times when human beings have caused separations between and among married people. I have also witnessed times when faith communities have been less than loving to men and women who found divorce the only way to choose life. Often when love and marriage draws differences of faith, race, gender and custom together, human beings and families have by their actions, and judgments, caused separation and division. I have also experienced the pain of spouses when fidelity to the other is broken.

When God in the creation story says that, "...the two of them became one flesh," there is a balance and equality in this phrase. "Two become one!" But often in different cultures and even our own, that equality between men and women can be absent.

But because of our current experiences and the recent call of Pope Francis to convene Bishops from all over the world to discuss sexual abuse of children and the numbers of children still separated from their immigrant parents, I am moved to focus my reflections this weekend on these realities. In my mind, they are linked to the closing verses in the Gospel from Mark.

The disciples rebuked parents who were bringing their children to Jesus for a touch and blessing. He responded with a rebuke of his own. "Let the children come to me...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." The kingdom belongs to the small dependent ones, the trusting ones, the playful ones, the vulnerable ones, the creative loving ones; the ones who most often lead with their hearts.

As we read about sexual and domestic child abuse by trusted clergy and adults, is it not ironic that the messiah came to us in the form of a weak dependent child? Is it not disturbing that a political system in order to make a point, uses vulnerable children as a tool to establish public policy? A policy that uses separation rather than union and family, to make a point?

The Psalmist this weekend refers to "...children (are) like olive plants around your table." But plants need tending and care if they are to blossom and thrive. Fear, separation, violence and anxiety stunt the emotional and physical growth of children.

Let us pray for Pope Francis as he addresses this dark chapter in the church's history. Let us pray for the children abused and separated from their parents. Let us do all we can through letters, prayers, action and words to correct any situation that places children in harm's way.

"The kingdom of God belongs to such as these."