Friday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 19:3-12): Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and tested him, saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?” He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, 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, man must not separate.”

They said to him, “Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss her?” He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.

His disciples said to him, “If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” He answered, “Not all can accept this word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.”

“What God has joined together, man must not separate.”

Fr. Roger J. LANDRY
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Today, Jesus responds to his contemporaries’ questions about the true meaning of marriage by underlining its indissolubility.

His answer, however, also provides the adequate foundation for Christians to respond to those whose stubborn hearts have made them seek to extend the definition of marriage to homosexual couples.

In taking marriage back to God's original plan, Jesus underlines four things relevant to why only one man and one woman can be joined in marriage:

1) “From the beginning the Creator made them male and female” (Mt 19:4). Jesus teaches that there is great meaning to our masculinity and femininity in God's plan. To ignore it is to ignore who we are.

2) “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife” (Mt 19:5). God's plan is not that a man leave his parents and cling to whomever he wishes, but to a wife.

3) “The two shall become one flesh” (Mt 19:5). This bodily union goes beyond the short-lived physical union that occurs in the act of making love. It points toward the lasting union that happens when man and woman, through making love, actually procreate a child who is the perduring marriage or union of their bodies. It is obvious that man and man, and woman and woman, cannot become one body in this way.

4) “What God has joined together, man must not separate” (Mt 19:6). God himself has joined man and woman in marriage and whenever we try to divide what he has joined, we do so on our own and at society's expense.

In his catechesis on Genesis, Saint John Paul II said: “In his answer to the Pharisees, Christ put forward to his interlocutors the Total vision of man, without which no adequate answer can be given to questions connected with marriage.” Each of us is called to be the “echo” of this Word of God in our own day.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "The stature and customs of man may change, but his nature remains identical and his person is the same" (Saint Vincent of Lérins)

- “In the biblical narrative, the idea that man is somehow incomplete is certainly present, driven by nature to seek in another the part that can make him whole, the idea that only in communion with the opposite sex can he become “complete”” (Benedict XVI)

- "Esteem of virginity for the sake of the kingdom and the Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable, and they reinforce each other" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1620)