

HOMILY SUNDAY 27 B (Homily 03)

“Invest in Relationships ”

Gen 2:7-8, 18-24; Psalm 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16)

Wesley Jamieson, owner of Tri City Surveys, had to travel to northern Saskatchewan as part of his work. He would stay at the rectory in Beauval and visit the pastor who was a former classmate and friend of his. Every night, he would phone his wife just to connect and talk about their day. The pastor commented once that this practice must get expensive. To this comment Wesley replied simply, “It’s not an expense; it’s an investment.”

Today’s readings invite us to invest in relationships in our lives, and to hold up marriage as the ideal.

The first reading from Genesis reminds us that the first man was incomplete on his own, even with all the rest of creation given to him. God then created woman out of man, and now the first man could be happy and complete, in his relationship with his wife. They were given the divine commission to become one flesh, which is the true goal of all marriages, and indeed of all human relationships, to image and illustrate the oneness of God.

Jesus in the Gospel puts forward, when confronted by the Jewish leaders, the ideal of marriage. He acknowledges that this ideal is a difficult one to achieve, for which reason Moses allowed divorce. However, in the reign of God that Jesus came to establish, this ideal is to be the goal. Marriage is to unite one man and one woman, and this is to be a life time commitment, which alone reflects God’s committed love for us.

Living this ideal involves becoming one, unity, intimacy. Two key ingredients for a marriage to thrive are trust and acceptance or forgiveness. The famous passage of St. Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ends with the assertion that love is always ready to trust and to accept whatever may come. At the end of today’s Gospel passage, Jesus goes on to state that the transparency and innocence of a child should be part and parcel of every marriage relationship, indeed every relationship that we have.

In the second reading, we can infer that achieving this oneness and unity will involve some sacrifice and hardship; it will not happen on its own. Christ was made perfect through his suffering. Can we not expect that we, whether in marital

relationships or plain friendships, in our turn be made perfect in suffering and sacrifice? After all, the one who sanctifies, and those who are sanctified, are all from one source.

John, married for twenty years, shared with his pastor that he had lost all feelings of love for his wife, who admittedly had gained weight since their marriage. He was tempted to develop relationships with other more attractive women. The pastor heard him out, and then encouraged him to share this with his wife. John was shocked, and said he could not do that as his wife would be certainly hurt. The pastor pointed out that marriage was a call to oneness and unity. He had not been unfaithful, and he was still in every other respect still married to her. Now the pastor was just asking him to trust his wife, to be humble, and to share his feelings with her, as they were just emotions that come and go. The love would be in his trust for her. He did so, and she came crying to the pastor, claiming that her husband did not love her anymore. The pastor pointed out that he had trusted her, had told her the truth about himself, and had not been unfaithful to her although tempted. He had shared his feelings with her, feelings that could change overnight. She was able to understand what the pastor was saying, was able to forgive her husband his shortcomings, and carry on with the relationship. They remained faithful to each other until the day he died, and grew in love for each other each year, expressed especially by their commitment to their relationship.

The Marriage Encounter movement offers an invaluable tool for keeping marriages vibrant and alive – a tool called daily dialogue. Spouses are invited to take 10 minutes to write down their thoughts and feelings about themselves and their relationship. They then take 10 minutes to share that with each other. This twenty minute daily commitment to their relationship is almost guaranteed to enhance any marriage relationship, and help it to achieve that unity and oneness that is called for in the reading from Genesis, and in Jesus' teaching about no marriage.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is a participation in the suffering and death that Jesus underwent out his love and commitment to all of humanity. It also is a promise of the eternal life he alone can offer us.

May our celebration today empower us to see the sacrifice and commitment called for in marriage, and indeed in any relationship, as an investment in our relationships, and a building up of the reign of God here on earth.