

27th Sunday, yr. B, Xavier Church, Gen. 2, 18-24; Ps. 128, 1-6; Heb. 2, 9-11; Mk. 10, 2-16. Ward Biemans SJ

Dear brothers and sisters, in the media, in schools and in politics there is a lot of discussion about gender. Now in itself, gender is a neutral word. It stands for the social, cultural significance of the biological differences between men and women. Unfortunately, nowadays the use of the word 'gender' quickly becomes an ideology, by which people want to deny the difference and the natural reciprocity of men and women. At school, for example, much emphasis is placed on sexuality and gender in all its particularities, sometimes losing sight of the natural connection between love and sexuality.

In the context of the discussion on gender, today's Bible readings have an enduring value. The first reading tells us the second creation story, which has a special, psychological dimension. It allows us to understand better the differences between men and women in the light of God's intention. We heard that first God creates the animals and gives them to a human being, to Adam, to see what he would call them. Animals certainly are a help to human beings, but they cannot solve his existential loneliness. As a celibate living person, one knows what loneliness could entail. Normally, a celibate also knows how to deal with loneliness. As a priest, I have learned and experienced that celibacy also gives fulfilment in self-giving, not to one person, but to all who call upon you in the Church community and beyond.

Let us now return to the second creation story: God lets Adam fall asleep and He creates Eve from one of his ribs. When Adam finds out, he is very happy. 'Finally bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh', he exclaims. Eve is for him 'a mutual help', someone of equal standing, with whom he can go through life. A companion in life.

It makes man complete, when he is united with other people in love. In today's Gospel, the legal aspects of marriage are considered. Jesus goes beyond the rule of divorce by pointing to the origin of creation. He reminds us that in the beginning, God created us as man and woman. Man and woman are both created in the image of God. In their mutual love and in giving themselves to the other, they make God's love and faithfulness visible for one another.

Nevertheless, it could happen, unfortunately, that human relationships break down or that people remain alone for a long time against their will. This could bring sadness or even despair. Yet this should not cloud our vision. We should not think that God does not see us in our own particular situation. God always remains faithful. When we think about the value of marriage in the light of the Gospel, we must not forget that Christian marriage is based on God's faithfulness to man.

God, in His Covenant with man, has shown that He is always faithful to man, and that He has thus set an example to man. As human beings, we can always start anew with God and with one another, again and again. This brings us to the origin of our existence. The author of the letter to the Hebrews points out that God is our origin, and He is also the end goal of everything. In our prayers, we may present everything to Him, including our vulnerability and our brokenness. Discrimination according to gender should not be allowed. In any case, we may trust in the Lord. He shows us the way through life. He gives us to each other. He is the love between people. He is God and calls us his brothers and sisters, because he shared in our brokenness. Because of that, we may share in his Easter, his resurrection and his Kingdom. Amen.