



27th Sunday Ord. Time, Yr B

Lectio Divina

Lectio: In this section¹ of Mark's Gospel, Mark has arranged teachings of Jesus that were being used in catechesis for new converts in the early Church. So there is a 'jumping' from one teaching to another. But all these teachings were to help new converts to understand and/or be introduced to basic teachings and understandings of the faith of the Church.

Jesus' teaching about the eternal death-bringing consequences of sin (last Sunday's text Mk 9: 38 – 43, 45, 47 – 48), led to a brief exhortation to "*Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.*" (Mk 9:50b) In other words: keep your enthusiasm for your faith and so reveal its primary gift of peace. If we do not have this enthusiasm and peace, why would new converts be convinced that our faith is what they too would want to share?

► In our text, Jesus is in the Jewish heartlands in Judea, south of the Dead Sea. While there is an impending conflict with the religious authorities, Jesus had time to teach the people in various and many situations. Jesus will take the road to Jerusalem (Mk 10:32) and to his Cross once these (catechetical) teachings of Jesus, that Mark has gathered together, are presented.

So in our text there are two teachings. The first (Mk 10:2-12) is Jesus' (the Christian) way of understanding the bond of marriage. New converts will have to live their lives by Jesus' understandings of marriage. The second teaching (Mk 10:13-16) is about learning from little children.² This would be a counter-cultural understanding. While children were valued, they were considered as 'empty vessels', just starting to learn the wisdom of the adult world. Yet children have a profound trust in their parents. We, and new converts, should learn from children to grow to a thorough-going trust in God, the Father of us all.

Read: Mark 10: 2 – 16 (Shorter form Mk 10:2-12)

Meditatio: Do I test Jesus or do I trust him? Do I live by the laws or live the ways of love? Do I only restrict my actions by what is allowed even when I could do much better? Have I seen the tragedies that divorce can bring to families? Am I resistant to learning new and better ways? Do I understand the complementarity of males and females as in their God-given makeup? Can I understand that marriage is a man and a woman united in love and God is love? Can I see that a married couple are one body in God, who is love? Do I trust that God loves me and he never takes back his love? Do I understand that there is nothing I can do to stop God loving me? For me, should God's faithfulness be reflected in the faithfulness of a married couple to each other – unfaithfulness, adultery, is absolutely counter to their marriage vows? For me, would divorce being allowed, mean that God can do the impossible and take back his love? Do I see in children lives filled with hope, they, like me are made in God's image? Do I think I have enough wisdom and self-sufficiency (as opposed to a child's wonder and simplicity) to make my own way into the kingdom? Could my wisdom and self-sufficiency block me entering the kingdom? Do I trust in God's gifts, freely given to me, as a child trusts in their parents' freely given gifts and love?

Oratio: Pray that our lives will not test the patience of God. Pray that we will take up the challenges to live the Command of love. Pray that men and women will enter into marriage committing themselves to mutual and faithful love. Pray for healing for families torn apart by divorce. Pray that married couples will rely on their bond of love to keep them together through the troubles of life. Pray that married couples will be witnesses to the power of love which unites and brings peace. Pray for faithfulness in marriage. Pray that every child will be respected and loved. Pray that the simplicity and wonder of children will inspire us to live simply.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Trust in God's faithful love.

✍ Fr Joe

Mark 10: 2 – 16 (Shorter form Mk 10:2-10)

(Shorter form in bold)

Some Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, ‘Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?’ They were testing him. He answered them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ ‘Moses allowed us’ they said ‘to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.’ Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, ‘The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.’

People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ Then he put his arms round the, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

Notes:

1 This catechetical section is Mk 9:28 -10:31.

2 The ‘little ones who have faith’ of last Sunday’s gospel were the new converts, but here ‘little children’ are children dependent on their parents. Mark connects these disparate teachings of Jesus through the same words or notions.