



# The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

28 September 2021



## TOGETHER FOR LIFE: 27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY B

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

When you and I were babies, we needed others to survive. When we grow old and weak, we will again need others to survive. But here's a secret! In between, we need others too.

God says to us in the poetic story we hear today in our First Reading about the relationship between man and woman: 'It is not good that the man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18). God means, surely, being permanently alone. While it's sometimes necessary and valuable to be alone and content with our own company, this can be for the time being only. We are social beings, and we need others to be fulfilled and complete. To feel this need is not a sign of sickness but health. Insanity, on the other hand, has been defined as a condition in which people can no longer connect with others.

The most dangerous lion is not the gregarious one or the one that roars the loudest, but the silent one who walks and stalks alone. Psychopaths and serial killers nearly always turn out to be lonely, angry individuals.

Isolation is a very painful condition. It causes people to turn in on themselves. Sometimes it leads to violence and addictions to alcohol, drugs, or sex. Then fear, shame, and guilt lead people to stay in their isolation. Persons who commit suicide are often people who have slipped into total isolation.

A survey was carried out among elderly people in America. When asked who was closest to them, two out of three said it was their pet dog or cat. How sad is that? In our poetic story today, God first gives animals and birds to the man. But Adam is unable to find among them a truly suitable companion.

Next, in this same symbolic story, God gives a woman to the man. As soon as Adam lays eyes on Eve he's gobsmacked at the sight. Instantly he recognizes her as his life partner - made of flesh and blood too, sharing the same human dignity, truly his companion and equal. (True communion and community happen only among equals, but never when one dominates the other).

In marriage, God has answered the human need for friendship, companionship, closeness, intimacy, and warmth – what humans pine for but don't always experience. To some extent, such needs may also be met by belonging to other types of community – to a community of religious women or men e.g. Those persons with a particularly close relationship with God report that they never feel totally isolated and alone.

All of us are more or less wounded by selfishness. When people get married, they bring to it not only their strengths but also their weaknesses. Getting married is entering a learning

situation, a school of love, but one where the partners can sometimes be slow learners. But when a couple lets God become a big part of their partnership, their bond can last a lifetime.

What are the things that weaken the marriage bond? Lack of respect, poor communication, selfishness, jealousy, anger, nastiness, insults, aggression, abuse, violence, bullying, and above all infidelity! On the other hand, respect, affection, openness, honesty, generosity, patience, kindness, empathy and fidelity, strengthen the marriage bond.

Just like a garden, relationships suffer from neglect. They have to be constantly worked at. If people are experiencing difficulties in their marriage, they should not be afraid to seek help. Relationships that have weathered some storms are sometimes the deepest and strongest. The quality of the relationship between the couple is so important that it must be put far ahead of a career, material gain, and financial success. This is illustrated by pictures in a newspaper paper now and then, of a couple with their arms around each other. Behind them, their house is burning down, but they are saying to each other such words as these: 'After all, we've still got each other, haven't we?'

'What God has united,' Jesus says, 'let no one separate' (Mk 10:9) This makes much sense both for the lifelong personal needs of the couple and for the lifelong needs of their children.

Together for life certainly remains the ideal both for Jesus and his followers. But our Church community has to face the fact that many marriages break down, and some of the victims of a broken marriage feel a deep longing for a new life partner and a brand-new start. (Some such hurt and wounded people may be sitting near us as we listen to Jesus today). But this raises an acute question for our Church community: Can there be only point-blank black and white refusals? Or does our sharing in the compassion, caring, and kindness of Jesus point to the possibility of reaching some truly creative pastoral solutions? But there are no easy answers to this dilemma. So, let's think, pray, and talk about it! A lot!

May the Passion of Jesus Christ and his everlasting love be always within our minds and hearts!

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