

## Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings:

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Hebrews 2:9-11

Mark 10:2-16

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

### The Word in Liturgy

Scholars have long noted that the Book of Genesis contains two separate accounts of creation (1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-3:24). Today's selection is taken from the older Yahwist account, whose focus is more on the human situation than is the case with the Priestly account, where God's actions are the central focus. We read today the author's portrayal of creation as God intended it to be; in subsequent verses he will describe human existence as we have come to know it under the reign of sin. A number of points in this narrative are important for an understanding of Catholic teaching on marriage. God makes the male and female creatures "partners" of each other: there is no divinely sanctioned subordination implied. In fact, the woman alone—nothing else in creation—is the "suitable" partner because she is of human flesh (this is the significance of the rib taken from the man, out of which she is formed). The attraction between the partners—human sexuality—is God-given and good, blessed by God and rooted in their common origin in "one flesh."

Our doctrinal focus today on marriage and divorce comes from the gospel teaching of Jesus when he was asked by the Pharisees about the traditional rabbinical interpretation of divorce as permitted by Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Instead of answering on their terms—that is, engaging in legalistic disputation regarding divorce—Jesus shifts the discussion to God's purpose in creation, the lasting union of husband and wife. Jesus portrays the Mosaic Law as a concession to human weakness (v. 5), but then quotes Genesis in support of his assertion that the divine will is for a lasting union between spouses. After this teaching to the crowds, Jesus speaks to his disciples "in the house" (a clue that Mark's text is now applying that teaching to its own situation). Mark's text has Jesus speak of the possibility of a woman divorcing her husband, an option not available within Judaism. This evidence that the



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Evangelist is writing to a Greco-Roman audience where such an option did exist gives us a glimpse into how the early Christian communities struggled to remain faithful to yet apply the teaching of Jesus to their own, somewhat different, situations.

### **Catholic Doctrine**

#### *Marriage, Divorce, and Annulment*

The first book of the Bible begins with the creation of man and woman, each meant for the good of the other (Genesis 1:26-27). The final book of the Bible concludes by presenting a soaring vision of the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). Scripture thus emphasizes how we are founded in this partnership and how our ultimate goal in Christ is imaged in it. Built into creation's fabric, "the intimate partnership of life and love which constitutes the married state" establishes not just a dynamic governing relations between husband and wife but engenders "its own proper laws...rooted in the...irrevocable personal consent" of the spouses (GS 48).

We believe that married couples share by their own fidelity and self-giving to each other in the very love of God. What seems virtually impossible, binding oneself to another for life, is available to us only through the grace of Christ. Thus, the Church prays: "Father, [we] see [our] high destiny in the love of husband and wife....The love of man and woman is made holy in the sacrament of marriage, and becomes the mirror of your everlasting love" (RM, Preface for Marriage III).

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