

## 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, today's scriptures speak of unity and indissolubility, love and procreation as well as the challenges to the nature and characteristics of marriage life. Having looked at it from multiple perspectives and knowing that today in the world, we are more preoccupied with annulments than pre-nuptial preparations for married life. Marriages are expected to break. Long relationships, married love tend to be lesser than separations and divorces. More preparations are made for the expectation of divorce than to help a functional marriage.

Indeed, the sabotage against the institution of marriage did not start with this generation. While on the way from Egypt to the promised land, in about 1250 BC, Moses noticed wickedness and inhuman acts in marriage especially against women. He therefore gave what he at that time considered as a "protective act", namely; "If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house". Deut. 24:1. Now there are many social, legal, civil, religious and gender problems with this divorce bill. The main issue is that this divorce bill is borne out of human wickedness and their hardness of heart Mark 10:5. From the beginning of creation (Gen. 2:21-25), the Creator made them male and female - one rib and one flesh. This is why a man leaves his father and mother, and clings to his wife, and the two becomes one flesh Mark 10:8. Just to escape from exegetical criticisms. Matthew 5:32 quoted Jesus giving a condition for divorce namely "illicit marriage" and some texts translate "adultery". "But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife (or husband), except for the case of an "illicit marriage" (or adultery), makes her (him) an adulteress (adulterer) Matt. 5:48.

The truth is that the institution of marriage has been both admired and stifled over time. This Church, therefore, has gotten a divinely assigned task to help dysfunctional marriages and families to survive the ordeal of postmodernism. The first task is to encourage on the nature and properties of marriage. Marriage should be based on love, but, also with some rationality which balances such love. Much more time should be assigned to prenuptial preparation, especially in the area of knowledge and awareness. Another fruit of this is that many people actually know why they should not enter into a particular relationship, they never the less commit themselves to it believing that they will change it, or the situation will simply change because of their commitment. Statistics reveal that bad habits, though, do not always tend to escalate after marriage! It is better to avoid bad relationships than breaking them afterwards.

The beauty of marriage and family life is my main concern. Let us together with Tertullian (160-225 AD). Reflect on the joy of kingship visible in marriage:

Where are we to find language adequately to express the happiness of marriage which the church cements, the oblation confirms, the benediction signs and seals, the angels

celebrate, and the Father holds as approved? For all around the earth young do not rightly and lawfully wed without their parents' consent.

What kind of yoke is that of two believers who share one hope, one desire, one discipline, one service? They enjoy kinship in spirit and in flesh. They are mutual servants with no discrepancy of interests. Truly they are "two in one flesh". Where the flesh is one, the spirit is one as well.

Tertullian, *Letter to His Wife*