

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR - B

In this week's gospel reading from Mark we have Jesus' teaching on the indissoluble bond of marriage saying divorce is not part of God's plan. Jesus continues saying that if we want to enter the Kingdom of God we must be like little children, utterly dependent on the will of God. The first reading from Genesis recalls the creation of man and woman and has the teaching quoted by Jesus in the gospel reading. The second reading is from the letter to the Hebrews with the wonderful teaching that Christ is the sanctifier and we, who are sanctified, are of the same stock.

The **First Reading** is from the book of Genesis the first book in the Bible and the first book of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Jewish Law. The book's origins are still uncertain, it speaks of mankind's beginnings and then the history of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob until the arrival in Egypt of Jacob and his twelve sons. Our reading comes from the story of the creation of man completed with the creation of woman. The story belongs to the Yahwistic source, one of three, it is thought, that go to make up the book of Genesis whose authorship, although attributed to Moses, is unknown. It was possibly put into writing during the reign of Solomon c.950 B.C. The Yahwist tradition has a lively and vivid style and although God is described in human terms the author has a deep sense of the divine.

The reading, 2.18-24, is part of two narratives of the creation of man as distinct from the creation of the world, which is completed with the creation of woman and the appearance of the first human couple, an account of the loss of paradise, the fall and consequent punishment. Our reading starts after man's creation and begins with the creation of his 'helper.' God fashions all the animals and man gives them each a name, but no helper can be found so God fashions woman out of man, showing their close relationship. The man recognizes the close relationship he has with the woman, and the reading ends with that unity which is the essence of married love.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 127, celebrates the domestic happiness granted by God to the upright and was sung, besides other occasions, as pilgrims made their way up to Jerusalem for a religious festival. The man who fears God and walks in his ways will be happy and prosperous he will have a loving caring wife and children round his table. These are the blessings for those who fear God who will keep him in his old age.

The **Second Reading** is from the letter to the Hebrews. This wonderful letter to the Jewish Christians was for a time attributed to Paul's pen but now this is considered not to be the case although he is considered to have had some indirect influence on the letter's contents. It would seem from internal evidence that the letter was written about 67AD. The letter is addressed to Jewish people who have a good knowledge of the covenant God made with their people, and who became Christians. They left Jerusalem and with an uncertain faith, they yearn for the splendour of the ceremonies carried out in the Temple. They are tempted to revert to Judaism, but the writer is intent on preventing this by helping them to see their new life in Christ. They are on a new exodus to the Promised Land (heaven), with Christ, not Moses, as their leader whose one sacrifice on the Cross replaces the many sacrifices of the old priesthood. The letter is a good teaching letter for us showing the harmony between the Old and New Testaments.

In today's reading, 2.9-11, the writer is intent on teaching that although the Son of God was lower than the angels while here on earth yet now through his glorious death and resurrection he is crowned with glory and his death will benefit all mankind. But this is a hard teaching for the despised and persecuted Christians of the first century who have to await the full and final triumph of Christ. And yet by dying and fulfilling the will of God Christ becomes the one perfect Saviour, responsible for the entry of human beings into the glory of God and they become part of the same stock as the one who sanctifies. This reading presents us with much to contemplate.