

ANYONE WHO DOES NOT WELCOME THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN LIKE A LITTLE CHILD WILL NEVER ENTER IT ...

27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 3 OCTOBER 2021



"Anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of heaven like a little child will never enter it...."

GOSPEL OF MARK | TWO SEPARATE THEMES

This Sunday's gospel from Mark contains separate themes; Jesus' words on marriage and divorce, and the kingdom of heaven being accessible only to those with childlike qualities. One way to proceed is to acknowledge the prophetic role of the Church in regard to marriage and its pastoral role in marriage.

THEME ONE

The prophetic role of the Church is to uphold the position that Jesus expounds in Mark's gospel. Marriage is for life, it reflects the vision that God had for people. The two sexes find fulfilment in their union of mind heart and soul and body. Another way to say it is that the most visible sign of God's love on earth is a couple in right relationship.

But we acknowledge that divorce is a reality of contemporary life just as it was in society in Jesus' day and in the early Church. Our society is very different from biblical days: we live longer, women are more independent now and society has a pervasive influence of individualism.

It is significant that the words 'husband' and 'wife' are disappearing from our language as we embrace the word 'partner' to cover many relationships including marriage and common law marriage.

The Church is on the back foot these days, it does not have the social force that it used to have. Archbishop Mark Coleridge pointed this out recently in the debate on allowing euthanasia in Queensland. However, the Church will always have a pastoral care for those who are divorced and need assistance. Also a need to support people in their marriage relationships. Not just those that have broken down or divorced but also the healthy.' Much more needs to be done in this area' as common wisdom proclaims but it is so true.

Mark is uncompromising in his gospel, he really tells us that we have to change our lives and our ways of thinking to those of Christ's; there is a real challenge not to conform to the world's standards but to those of Christ. We can only do it through the Holy Spirit of God.

THEME TWO

The second theme is not about Jesus blessing and hugging children but more about people being childlike in their trust of God. With these qualities they will be able to accept the gift of the kingdom because they are able to let go of their self-reliance and trust in God the way a child trusts a parent to look after them.

The disciples make the decision to shoo people bringing children to Jesus and encounter an annoyed Jesus who corrects them and demands that they bring the children to him. This is a sub theme which the gospels carry: the decision the disciples make which are 'worldly' for want of a better word. They are not yet imbued with the mind and heart of Jesus and do not see things as he does. The gospel reminds us of such perennial attitudes.

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Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/100321.cfm>