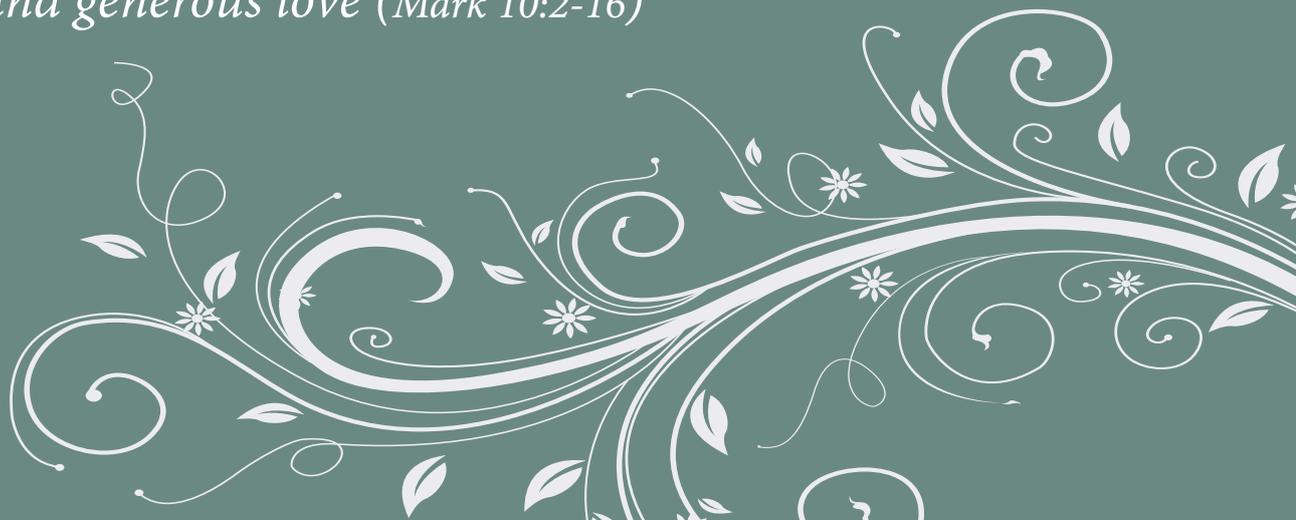




CELEBRATING AT HOME

27TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Gracious and generous love (Mark 10:2-16)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

We are the body of Christ.

**We are gathered with the whole Church,
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

Lord Jesus,
you lead us to salvation.

Lord Jesus,
you are the love of God present among us.

Lord Jesus,
your love binds us to one another.

Scripture Reading (*Mark 10:2-16*)

Some Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, 'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?' They were testing him. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 'Moses allowed us', they said, 'to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.' Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave his father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.'

Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'

People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not

welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will not enter it.' Then he put his arms around them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

Reflection - *Gracious and generous love*

No doubt, many will find this Sunday's Gospel difficult reading.

One of the great themes of Mark's Gospel is that, in Jesus, all things are being restored to God's original purpose. That gives us a bit of context for the words of Jesus.

Among Jewish scholars and rabbis of Jesus' time there was often fierce debate about the grounds for divorce permitted by Jewish Law (Deuteronomy 24:1). As the Gospel recalls, a man could draw up a 'writ of dismissal', give it to his wife and they would be considered divorced. At least one line of thought allowed the husband to do this for almost any reason whatever. In a way, the writ was meant as a kind of protection for the woman lest she be accused of infidelity.

When the Pharisees approach Jesus, they already seem to be aware of his teaching about divorce and may be trying to trap him into saying something against Moses and the Law. Something they could use against him.

Jesus, however, talks not about the Law, but about God's original intention for marriage using quotes from the Book of Genesis.

The words of Jesus make clear that marriage is part of God's design for human beings. The rich imagery of the husband being so drawn to his wife that he leaves home and family and the two become 'one body' implies great love, warmth, intimacy and companionship. When God draws human beings together like this, man must not divide them. Later, the disciples question Jesus about his teaching. It is important to understand that Jesus' reply is about a situation in which one party in the marriage divorces the other *in order to marry someone else*. It is not talking about a person fleeing an abusive relationship or one which has failed for some other reason. So, it

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is important not to take these words of Jesus and use them as a judgement on those who have divorced, or who have remarried some time later.

It is also worth remembering that the Church itself has a process to assist people whose marriages fail, often enabling them to marry again.

The reply that Jesus gives recognises husband and wife as equal partners in marriage. No longer, according to Jesus, is it permissible for a husband to divorce his wife 'because he finds something displeasing about her' (Deut 24:1) and neither can the wife.

Jesus does the same thing in the following story about the little children. When people (probably their mothers) bring the little children to Jesus for a blessing, the disciples, acting as minders, shoo them away. Once again, the disciples have got things wrong, and Jesus rebukes them. They seem to have forgotten already Jesus' teaching in last week's Gospel about welcoming the little child.

Jesus astounds the disciples by insisting that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who welcome it like little children, who open-heartedly embrace the Kingdom as sheer gift from a gracious God. The Kingdom cannot be earned, or bought, or bargained for. It is ours for the taking. All we need is the conversion of heart to believe in a God who is so good and so gracious as to give us the Kingdom freely and without measure.

In both parts of the Gospel today, Jesus teaches that married women and children are not to be treated as possessions or objects, but with dignity and respect. As well as recalling God's initial intention for marriage, Jesus also recalls God's initial intention about the treatment of other people including those thought to be of lesser or no account.

The disciples need to learn that only those who receive the kingdom of God with the openness and receptivity of a child will be able to enter into the mystery of God's gracious and generous love.

Prayers of Intercession

As you constantly call us to embrace your vision,
may we live together in faith and communion.

Bless all single people.
Surround them with good friends.

Bless all married couples.
Strengthen their love and dreams

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus,
we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

May our lives reveal your presence,
and our love transform the world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

Bless us, O Lord,
and bless all whom we meet this week.
Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.



The Carmelites
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