

HOMILY for 27th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year B

This Sunday's First Reading tells us how God formed Eve out of one of Adam's ribs; & it reminds me of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

One day in the Garden of Eden, God decided it wasn't good for Adam to be alone, so the Lord visited the man & said, "Adam, I have a plan to fulfill your every need. I'm going to make you happy with a companion who is beautiful & faithful, who will make you feel wonderful every day of your life."

Adam was amazed at the thought & said, "That sounds great, Lord!"

"I should warn you, though," God replied, "it won't come cheaply. This will cost you an arm & a leg."

"That much?" Adam responded. "What should I get for a rib?"

Anyway, this Sunday's First Reading & Gospel talk to us about relationship, particularly marriage relationship. In the First Reading, "The Lord God said: 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.' So, the Lord God formed out of the ground various animals & various birds of the air, & he brought them to the man to see what he would call them... The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, & all wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man... The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that He had taken from the man. When He brought her to the man, the man said: 'This one, at last, is bone of my bones & flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called 'woman.'" That is why a man shall leave his father & mother & clings to his wife, the two of them shall become one body." Apparently the Lord worried about our loneliness & decided to make a suitable partner for us human. Here is how the Lord starts that process.

First, the Lord created animals & birds of the air & brought them to us. But, none proved to be the suitable partner for us. If we have pets, we know that they're cute & adorable; but they are certainly not our suitable partners. For they do not share our dreams & hopes. They cannot have a heart-to-heart exchange between two human beings. That is why the Lord created a woman for the man & made them one for each other. Their companionship is special & second to none. If we have found the right friend/companion, that person would make us feel uplifted & totally fulfilled. We would not be alone & lost in this world. When we find that right friend/companion, we are ready to tackle any life challenge & go a distance on any life mission because we have someone who understands us & supports us. That is why family & friends are an important part of our lives & worth more than anything on earth. When we lose one of them, we feel like we are losing part of ourselves. That is why we must cherish our family-&-friend relationships & show our appreciation for that precious gift of God every possible chance.

Sadly, this Sunday's Gospel tells us what we usually do to one of those relationships. It says, "Some Pharisees came up & as a test began to ask Jesus whether it was permissible for a husband to divorce his wife. In reply, He said, 'What command did Moses give you?' They answered, 'Moses permitted divorce & the writing of a decree of divorce.' But, Jesus told them: 'He wrote that Commandment for you because of your stubbornness. At the beginning of Creation, God made them male & female; for this reason a man shall leave his father & mother & the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no human separate what God has joined.'" As you can see, the Pharisees acted like some human beings often do & tried to test Jesus about the way to destroy a relationship. Instead of asking Jesus on how to make a relationship last a long time, they inquired Him whether a husband could divorce his wife. They wanted to find out if Jesus would permit a family relationship to be divided & destroyed. They knew that God helped

create the first human relationship between Adam & Eve as being described in today's First Reading. Yet, they would like to test Jesus to see how he would feel about divorce. Of course, we know all about the pains & heavy costs of a divorce. Without a doubt, Jesus would not want to divide up or end a family relationship. He would want us to do everything possible to keep it going.

Unfortunately, we humans have put the wrong focus in our lives & constantly chased after worldly stuffs instead of family-& friend relationships. We often do not appreciate & work hard for those relationships until something happens to them, or they are gone from our lives for good. We then regret about losing those precious treasures & wonder what else we should have done to make good use of them. If one thing I would like the Church/religion to do more in this world, it would be to build up relationships & figure out ways to maintain them. When the Church/religion focuses more on relationship building, the human family would have less pain & loneliness. People also would spend less time hurting & fighting with one another & more time helping & taking care of one another. Those senseless acts of violence reported on the News would happen less around us as people always try their best to take good care of all the relationships in their lives.

However, relationship building demands lots of personal sacrifices & cooperation as we have to put aside our own self-interests & benefits for the sake of the whole. We all have seen how our families & friends have made sacrifices to foster a strong relationship with us & keep everyone in harmony with one another. In fact, I have recently listened to a heart-felt story of an immigrant mother who had to work hard for a low-paying job to support her family & sacrifice her life that way so that her children and grandchildren would have a better future in the USA. She died peacefully in the presence of her family as she completed her life mission. Jesus did the same for us as today's Second Reading explains it in this way: "He for a little while was made lower than the angels that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that He, for whom & through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering." So, Jesus came down from Heaven to suffer with us & die for us on the Cross to bring us salvation & promise of eternal life in Heaven. If He did not do that for the family of God, we would be condemned for our sins & end up in Hell eternally for sure. Therefore, one of the most important relationships that we need to build up is the one between us & God. Jesus wants us to have a strong relationship with God if we would like to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He talks about that relationship in today's Gospel as the following: "...Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." So, Jesus wants us to have a relationship with God like a child because of their simple faith & complete trust in God.

My dear brothers & sisters, family-&-friend relationships are usually complicated & difficult for us to deal with at times. But, they are an essential part of our lives. Without those relationships, we would be like a tree without any branches. Those relationships bring us companionship & help us prosper. When we go through tough times, they help lift us up & give us much needed support. However, one of those relationships that we need it not only this life but also the next is the one between us & God. If we keep that relationship strong, we'll always have peace & joy in our hearts here on earth & also in the Kingdom of God someday.