

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Within your will, O Lord, all things are established,  
and there is none that can resist your will.  
For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth,  
and all that is held within the circle of heaven;  
you are the Lord of all.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
who in the abundance of your kindness  
surpass the merits and the desires of those  
who entreat you,  
pour out your mercy upon us  
to pardon what conscience dreads  
and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Genesis 2:18-24

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate." So from the soil the Lord God fashioned all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild beasts. But no helpmate suitable for man was found for him. So the Lord God made the man fall into a deep sleep. And while he slept, he took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. The Lord built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. The man exclaimed:

"This at last is bone from my bones,  
and flesh from my flesh!  
This is to be called woman  
for this was taken from man."

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 127

Response:

**May the Lord bless us  
all the days of our life.**

- O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways!  
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.  
You will be happy and prosper. (R.)
- Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in the heart of your house;  
your children like shoots of the olive, around your table. (R.)
- Indeed thus shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord.  
May the Lord bless you from Zion in a happy Jerusalem  
all the days of your life!  
May you see your children's children.  
On Israel, peace! (R.)

**SECOND READING**

Hebrews 2:9-11

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

We see in Jesus one who was for a short while made lower than the angels and is now crowned with glory and splendour because he submitted to death; by God's grace he had to experience death for all mankind.

As it was his purpose to bring a great many of his sons into glory, it was appropriate that God, for whom everything exists and through whom everything exists, should make perfect, through suffering, the leader who would take them to their salvation. For the one who sanctifies, and the ones who are sanctified, are of the same stock; that is why he openly calls them brothers.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Your word is truth, O Lord,  
consecrate us in the truth.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Mark 10:2-16

(For Shorter Form, read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

>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 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 never enter it." Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

>The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with

the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Accept, O Lord, we pray,  
the sacrifices instituted by your commands  
and, through the sacred mysteries,  
which we celebrate with dutiful service,  
graciously complete the sanctifying work  
by which you are pleased to redeem us.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Lord is good to those who hope in him,  
to the soul that seeks him.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant us, almighty God,  
that we may be refreshed and nourished  
by the Sacrament which we have received,  
so as to be transformed into what we  
consume.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**DIVORCE:  
YES OR NO?**  
(MARK 10:2-16)

The Gospel story presents us with several incidents in which Jesus is asked a question which will put him on the spot. Very often the issue concerns the observance of the Sabbath or a point about the interpretation of the Law.

In today's episode the subject is divorce. Mark sets the scene with some Pharisees asking Jesus whether divorce is permissible under the Law. However, it is clear that this is not a neutral question but one asked with hostile intent by characters who already know that the answer is yes. As with most aspects of Jewish life, there were different interpretations of the Law. Generally, Jesus would be on the more lenient side of these views, but in the case of divorce, he is more demanding even than those who would adopt a strict opinion on the matter. He forces his opponents to modify Moses' command in the event of the breakdown of marriage, to a concession given in view of people's "hardness of heart" in blinding themselves to God's original vision of unity and mutuality as set forth in Genesis.

The background to this controversy is that divorce was a common occurrence in the society and culture of Jesus' day. Under Roman law, a woman could divorce her husband, a detail which occurs in Jesus' explanation to his disciples. ■

**REFLECT**

**T**here are many aspects to this question of divorce and Jesus' attitude to it. One would be the nature of the male-dominated society of the day and the place of women within it. Marriages were arranged between the fathers of the couple and had the appearance more of a contract than anything else. Some of the grounds suggested for divorce were ridiculously flimsy.

The idea of marriage as a contract has given way in recent years to that of a covenant of life and love between the partners. The model for this is the relationship between Christ and the church, which in turn is based on the covenant between YHWH and Israel in the Hebrew scriptures. In this understanding, the covenant cannot be so much broken as betrayed. Hence the attitude of the church that it is possible, despite appearances to the contrary, that a marriage never really existed and so can be declared null.

However, we might keep in mind that when Jesus is actually faced with someone in an irregular marriage situation, he does not tell her off or enter into a discussion on the nature of marriage itself. As a result of the manner in which he treats the Samaritan woman, not only does she herself come to faith in him, but she then acts as an apostle to her townsfolk who similarly come to believe. The list of Jesus' ancestors, given to us by Matthew, mentions four women whose relationships with the fathers of their children is questionable in the extreme. So while Jesus presents us with the ideal, with which probably no one would disagree, the Bible also presents us with the picture of God working through situations which fall short of this vision. When it comes to pastoral practice, the best should not be the enemy of the good. ■

**SAY**

**With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.**

**DO**

Look at plants growing. Any relationship has to grow or it dies. The covenant reveals God's way of relating to human beings and is the model for the way Christians should understand marriage. Take some time to reflect on this.



**LEARN**

Divorce seems to have been taken for granted at the time of Jesus.

There was no one school of thought in interpreting the Law among the Pharisees (later the Rabbis).

The principal pair of teachers at the time of Jesus were Shammai, who represented the strict interpretation, and Hillel, who was of a more moderate opinion.

Jesus' teaching was closer to that of Hillel, except in the matter of divorce.