

27th Sunday Ordinary Time Oct 4 2009 Year B

Gn 2:18-24; Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6; Hb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16

This Sunday's readings can be discussed under the rubric of the new creation inaugurated by Christ. The reading from the Letter to the Hebrews really should begin with verse 6, where Ps 8 begins to be quoted (and perhaps our psalm should have been this one!). Ps 8 can be interpreted as the song of the new creation inaugurated by the New Adam, the Son of "Man" (or, in Hebrew, "Adam," which equals humanity). The psalm says that all creation has been put under humanity's feet, and in fact it was, in creation, as described in Gn 2:19-20 in our first reading, when Adam named the animals and thus exercised dominion over them. But this original order willed by God was turned upside down by sin: it was the beasts who exercised dominion over mankind (the "beasts" can be considered the pagan empires, cruel dictators, the passions, etc.). This dominion was to be removed from the beasts by God in the final age: this is described in Dn 7 in the great vision of "one like a son of man" who is given this dominion, thus restoring the original order of things willed by God when he created. What the Letter to the Hebrews makes explicit is that Christ, the Son of man, obtained this reversal of the sinful condition by lowering himself, humbling himself in obedience to God and thus undoing Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden when they wanted to be like gods, Gn 3 (the "Fall;" cf. Phil 2:5-11). In the Gospel of Mark Jesus several times says that he, the Son of man, must suffer. We cooperate in this by following Jesus.

The gospel passage is the basis for the Church's belief that 'what God has united in marriage cannot be undone by a human decision,' i.e., divorce is prohibited. (The Church can declare that the conditions for such a valid marriage never existed, and declare the attempted marriage "null," or annul it.) This can best be understood in the context of Jesus' restoration of the human condition to what it was when God originally created it, i.e., before the Fall. In the in-between time, God established the Law of Moses as a temporary state before Christ's coming to renew all things; in accordance with this, due to "hardness of heart," Dt 24 allowed dismissal of a wife with the giving of a writ freeing her to remarry. Jesus in our gospel reading, and Paul, e.g. in Gal 3:15-29, agree that after Christ God's original intention when he made us in his image is to be fulfilled.