

First Reading: Genesis 2:18-24
Response: *"My the Lord bless us all the days of our life"* (Ps. 127:5)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 127
Second Reading: Hebrews 2:9-11
Gospel: Mark 10:2-16.

The Risen Lord's presence is not simply physical, not seen with eyes of flesh, but mystical, a loving experience through the eyes of faith. It is a spiritual awareness of the nearness of the Lord and to one another, like the marriage bond that binds us together, so is Christ married to his Church.

*"More than just our stories, more than what we do.
 When we get together there's more to me and you.
 More than just some people, more than things we see,
 More than we can say in words is there between you and me.*

*Jesus you are with us in your new and risen life.
 When we meet you share with us—the things we see in signs.
 As once God brought the people to a new and promised land,
 You're leading us, you're changing us. You make of us a people
 and a sign of God's love for all the world."* (Fr. Peter O'Reilly)

This hymn is attributed to *Fr Peter O'Reilly*, but no further information about him is available.

Marriage captures the image of union and intimacy. Genesis describes it as to *"become one body"* (Gen.2:24). It is not to be understood as just a physical union but a total giving of each other, in mind heart and soul. Genesis calls it 'knowing', **יָדָע** (*yoda'*), when united in such a way.

Such a relationship is expressed in the first human words spoken in the Bible: *"This is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh"* (Gen.2:23). It emphasizes a relationship of equals, of one and same nature and same dignity. They are a partnership in God's order of creation.

God's grace and blessings is expressed as a happy marriage, with *"wife like a fruitful vine"* (Ps. 127:3) and *"children around your table"* (Ps. 127:3). This ideal picture of a family of God is prophetic of Christ and his Church in the Eucharist with his faithful children.

Such splendid grace is not meant to be ephemeral but everlasting. *"May the Lord bless us all the days of our life"* (Ps. 127:5).

Letter to Hebrews focuses on the role of Christ who brings himself to the level of the ones he loves. He was *"made lower than the angels"* (Heb.2:9) and now *"crowned with glory and splendour."*

The holy one unites himself with his sinful beloved to make them holy, and his equal, so that *"the one who sanctifies and the ones sanctified are of the same stock"* (Heb.2:11) and share the same destiny. Such is the depth and meaning of love and marriage between Christ and Church.

The biggest tragedy to family life is divorce, break-down of human relationships, no longer seen in its original context as part of God's loving covenantal plan but rather dealt with as a legal matter. *"Moses allowed us to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce"* (Mk. 10:4).

Jesus places the Mosaic concession of divorce in its context. It is not meant to be a legal escape route but actually a sin against the injured party of a marriage. In fact, the one *"who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery"* (Mk. 10:11).

And Jesus ends the day with the blessing of children, the fruit of love and marriage. *"Let the little children come unto me"* (Mk. 10:14).

Read and reflect upon what Jesus says in the *Gospel* about marriage (*Mk. 10:2-16*).

Remember the marriage vows of a wedding and the closing words of “***I will love you and honour you all the days of my life***”? (*Rite of Marriage*)

Sacrament of Matrimony consists of a marriage covenant by which a man and a woman bond with each other ‘in a communion of life and love’ (*Teaching of **Catechism of Catholic Church** #1660*).

Make your house to be a Christian home where adults and children can love and live their faith.

***“More than water washing, more than bread and wine,
More than just a promise to be faithful for all time,
More than just anointing, more than hands laid on;
In each and every sacrament there’s more,
More that’s going on.***

***Jesus you are with us in your new and risen life.
When we meet you share with us—the things we see in signs.
As once God brought the people to a new and promised land,
You’re leading us, you’re changing us. You make of us a people
and a sign of God’s love for all the world.”***

FOR THE CHILDREN

Read the Gospel for the day and share with children what is marriage and what does Jesus say.

Ask the children if they have ever been to a wedding and discuss what happens there.

Explain what marriage means, especially words like: covenant, fidelity, sacrament and love.

How can you help to make your home a happy family?

FOR TEENAGERS (*Shared Christian Praxis*)

Name the present Action: ***What does love, binding together and marriage mean to you?***

Your Story and Vision: Share your experiences and aspirations of love and unity.

Church’s Story and Vision: *Give the Church’s teaching on marriage and the role of children.*

Yours and Church’s Vision: ***Can you love and serve others in Christ? Can you unite and bind with them in the building of the Kingdom?***

RCIA

Three basic points of marriage: 1) Leave mother and father; 2) Bond with wife (mutual love); 3) Two become one flesh (full union physically and spiritually).

IMPORTANT WORD: ***Become one, προσκολληθησεται*** (*proskollethesetai*), דבק (*davaq*), ***una caro***. When man and woman are married, Jesus says, the two become one. The word used in original Greek New Testament is *proskollethesetai*, passive of *proskollao*, meaning ‘join together, cement together.’ The Hebrew translation of it is the same, *davaq*, meaning ‘cleave together, weld fast.’ Such words are used to describe love and marriage, the full union of husband and wife, aptly expressed in the Gospel as becoming one, *una caro* (one flesh). Jesus emphasizes the sense of permanence, sticking together in a lasting relationship. So one sees why divorce is diametrically opposed to marriage, tearing apart, ripping what is joined, separating what has been+ divinely sealed together.

LIVING OUR FAITH TODAY AS A FAMILY

The Catechetical Festival theme in Durban is 'Consecrated to God through FAMILY-Church and Catechesis.' The Pope is taking us back to *Catechesis* that is not simply *doctrinaire*, teaching people to know the right definitions of faith (like a *Gnostic*), but experiential (Catholic), an encounter with Risen Lord. In apostolic times, *Catechesis* followed upon the *Kerygma*, i.e. to first have an experience of the 'Risen Lord' and then be taught (*Catechesis*) all about who he is and what he has done, and the Kingdom of God. Instead, we have been giving catechesis first, telling you about Jesus without ever meeting him. The *Kerygmatic*, like the charismatic, asks: "Have you seen the Lord?" and then wants to talk about it (*catechesis*). He wants you to have an experience of Jesus, to meet the Risen Lord." It involves an experience of love, welcome, joy, sharing, caring; and daring the trust between you and him, even if you are not sure of yourself and might betray him, he accepts you unconditionally. This experience is in the whole Tradition of the Church which will be described later. It is *Kerygmatic*, meaning that in it you will encounter the Risen Lord. It is the basis of evang-elization, bringing Christ to the world. The *Kerygma*, meaning the apostolic proclamation, shows that Christ is not just history but the present moment. Jesus is alive and we can experience him. You can have a personal encounter him in a unique way individually, like St. Paul on the road to Damascus, and a fortiori, in the *koinonia* (community of the faithful), the Church, specifically seen in the structures of the PARISH. The PARISH portrays the full Tradition of the Church, giving all that Christ gave to his apostles.

What does *Tradition* mean here? It comes from the Latin '*tradere*', to hand down, to transmit. It is the heritage of the Church, wider than Scripture for it embraces Scripture and all that Christ gave to Church, in fact it identifies with the Church. My thesis is, all that Jesus received from his Father, he gave to his apostles, based on *John 15:15, 17:7-8, 18*, and by implication, *John 15:9, 20: 21*, and they passed it on to the faithful. Jesus did not come 2,000 years ago, just to be with a particular people, at a particular time in a particular place. He wants to encounter everybody, every-where, all the time. The Jewish word for 'tradition,' '*halakah*,' captures this, meaning to walk with the Lord, now as of old, living the Covenant. The Covenant (of *Sinaï*) is not just a historical event but a present reality. More so is the incarnate Word of God in every moment of humanity. In a sense is more alive now as the Risen Lord, than when he was simply born a man 2,000 years ago. The post-resurrection stories of the Gospel show the mystery of his Presence (*Shekinah*) every-where. The living Tradition of the Church is witnessed in the PARISH through Scripture, Liturgy, Doctrine and Witness, known as the pillars of our faith. *Catechesis* is based on these four pillars of faith.

It is in the *FAMILY* which is in the PARISH, where the faith is learnt and enhanced through *catechetics*. Technically speaking, the teaching the faith is '*catechesis*,' the teacher is '*catechist*,' the one being instructed is a '*catechumen*,' the book used is a '*catechism*' and the art of teaching is '*catechetics*.' We are looking at the way of teaching the faith in the parish, *catechetics*. There are many different ways, such as 'apostolic'; Church fathers' from which derives the RCIA, a pre-Baptismal *catechesis*; then post-baptismal catechesis; and 'dogmatic' way, teaching definitions through question/answer catechisms, and many others to the latest, such as the 'lectionary-based catechesis.'

Catechesis in the parish needs an *aggiornamento*, a radical update, going back to its roots. The PARISH, before giving instructions about Christ, should first enable others to have an experience and encounter the Lord, a 'Nathaniel experience' of when the apostle Philip said: "**Come and see**" (*Jn. 1:46*). "*Nemo dat quod non habet*," i.e. you cannot give what you haven't got. The catechist must himself, first experienced the Lord, like *Philip*, who said to Nathaniel that "**we have seen..Jesus of Nazareth**" (*Jn. 1:45*), "*bringing a friend into an intimate friendship*"¹ with Christ. So the catechist in the parish has to be both a disciple and an apostle. What is a disciple? A disciple is one who learns by following the master, sits at his feet and listens to him. He lives and walks and talks with him. Be-lieving and trusting in him, he becomes like him, an echo of the Word. This in fact is the definition of '*catechesis*' from '*kata-echo*': '*kata*' meaning here 'thoroughly', and '*echo*', 'to resound', echo Christ. Interestingly, there was another Greek word used for teaching the faith, *viz. didaskein*, however, *cat-echesis* was more specific with regards to living the faith. The Christian faith was not a talking faith but a doing faith, specifically orthodox (right belief) and emphatically orthopraxis (right commitment) even being a '*martyr*' (Greek for witness) and ready to die for Christ like he died for us.

¹ HINDU MYTHS. *Source Book translated from Sanskrit. Translation W. O'Flaherty.* Penguin Classics. 1984.

VIGNETTES OF MY LIFE

Allan is criticized for his memoirs ringing with a racial tone. They are written to embrace his best and worst experiences. They can be melancholic and they can have a sense of humour. While trying to be positive, he has to acknowledge what is wrong, especially in the Church to whom he has committed himself, and can also be as shocked as is his own immediate family, and the families he serves. The clergy must hear the people, not only *docens* (teach) but *discens* (*discern* and *learn*), with the people, like Pope Francis working with the Holy Spirit.

Now while *Newlands East* was being formed on one side of *Kwa Mashu*, a new Indian township was developing on the other. It was called *Phoenix*, after the place where *Mahatma Ghandi* lived, just outside of Durban. *Phoenix* was for the overflow of the Indian population of Durban. The Catholics there, were cared for by Br. *Stephen Muethen OMI* and Sr. *Benita Hummels OP*. Later, *Fr. Langlois*, no longer Vicar-General, was installed as the first parish priest, and began building a church there. He and *Br. Stephen* lived with Allan at *Newlands East*, forming an Oblate community. Those were happy times together, with *Charlie Langlois* very thorough and methodic, and *Stephen*, also diligent and with a great sense of humor. They invented nicknames for each other, like *Larnie*, *Tube-Lightie* and *Pugwallah*. These names were loosely applied, depending on the changing status of the other. Allan recalls one day, going to the dentist and almost losing his sole (of shoe) on the way. The dentist seeing Allan's fallen sole, would not charge him, advising him to repair it. Allan was the *Pugwallah*, until *Stephen* wanted to borrow Allan's sole because he go to the dentist.

In 1980, cedara student, *Richard Menatsi*, came to *Newlands* for pastoral experience. He remembers being with Allan when *Bechet* High-school students did a protest march down *Barnes Road*. Allan recognized some of the brave young girls from *Bechet*, like *Barbara Moollan*, *Jackie Delport* and *Leslie James*. Armed police arrived to cut off the march. Lots of parents also came to protect their children. Allan, from early days, not easily intimidated and stood his ground. He and *Richard* were standing between the police and the people. He took out his rosary and people joined in. The police looked foolish, facing people in prayer, and peacefully departed and so did the people.

Then came *Good Friday* morning when Allan heard that *Pentecostals* were inviting Catholics to their service and were falsely telling them that their priest sanctioned it. Being angry, he rushed to his car. He saw people at a bus-stop who told him that a bus was taking Catholics to the service. He raced to the bus and with his car, forced it to a halt. He informed the passengers they had been deceived and helped them to get off. Those getting off told him about others hiding under the seats. Allan went back on and called upon them as well. They came out, stating that some were already there. Allan raced on to the gathering and gate-crashed the service, grabbing the preacher's microphone, declaring that Catholics were being misled by the *Pentecostals'* lies and the devil is the father of lies. The *Pentecostals* shouted back that the priest is the devil. This upset the Catholics who turned upon them for insulting their priest. It developed into a brawl. It was chaos on *Good Friday* morning. *Good Friday* afternoon, ministers of other Churches wondered why their churches were empty. The Catholic Church was packed to capacity with crowds standing outside. People of *Newlands* saw what happened in the morning and now came to see what's next. Allan says, this, not with pride, knowing he is called "to live humbly, among the humble, in a humble place."¹ He knows from his youth, *YCW (Young Christian Workers)* and army days, he can overreact. *Richard* now a priest and secretary of Bishops' conferences, reminds Allan of these times. And many old parishioners recall the stormy days of their young and daring priest at *Newlands East*.

One day a lady came to Allan. She was disturbed because during the night she heard an owl on her roof and believing it meant a death in her young family. *Augusta* was her name and her husband's name was *Reg Napier*. They had two sons, one at primary school and a younger who stayed at home. Allan was surprised at *Augusta's* belief in Zulu tradition, she being one of the local community, treated her owl (*isikhova*) story as mere superstition and told her to forget about it. A few days later, after a thunder-storm, her elder son, on his way to school, took shortcut across a soaked field, not knowing that he was being followed by his little brother. His sibling fell into a flooded ditch and drowned. Allan did the funeral, and at the graveside, stood *Augusta*, looking at

Allan with a knowing look, as if to say, “If only you would have believed.” She was not bitter and knew something would happen because the owl had warned her.

¹ **BONAVENTURE.** *The Soul’s Journey into God. The Tree of Life. Life of St. Francis.* 1978. Paulist Press. p.237.

WHAT AM I THINKING?

I am thinking about the man who said “*Inkunzi eyodwa esibayini*” which means ‘there is only one bull in the kraal.’ He was emphasizing that he is the head of the family. The wife’s reply was that she is the neck which can turn the head in any direction she wants. Imagine if the man had to ‘*thembuza*’, an ancient Zulu custom of having more than one wife, like *Jacob Zuma*. It would mean more than one neck? No wonder a great Christian like *St. Thomas More* said, “every man with one wife apiece; and matrimony is there never broken but by death.”¹
I have also heard it said that the greatest gift a father can give his child is to love the mother.

¹ **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Utopia.* Wordsworth Classics of World Literature. Wordsworth Editions Ltd., Ware, UK. 1997. P.99.

Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in Latin in 1516. In Greek the name could mean *Eutopos*, good place, or *Outopos*, no place. His thoughts come through the *persona* of a traveler with a Hebrew and Greek name, *Raphael Hythlodæus*, speaker of nonsense. Is it meant to be just possibly a dream and not reality? In fact, he means to explain *Utopia* as well as he can for “a good tale evil told were better untold.”² He describes it as an island where everything is held in common and where the king “takes more care for the wealth and commodity of his country than for the enriching of himself;”³ and every family “fetcheth whatsoever hath need of and carried it away without money... seeing that there is an abundance of all things.”⁴ All men and women are educated alike and read good authors. High offices are “not to be obtained by inordinate suit, or by bribes and gifts.”⁵ Citizens live according to the principles of natural law and naturally everyone is a lawyer, there being just a few and practical laws. The people believe “that there is one chief and principal God”⁶ and so are seemingly open to Christianity. When a person dies, they “gladly talk of his merry death.”⁷ *Utopia* is an insight into political dreams of the renaissance, as compared to the European *mores* of the time, and is forerunner of utopian literary genre portraying ideal societies. It imbibes as well the mind of some of the earlier political philosophers such as *Plato*, *Aristotle* and *Cicero*. There is also in it a sense of biblical communalism as portrayed in the Acts of the apostles.

² **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Opus cit.* P.5.

⁴ **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Opus cit.* P.54.

⁶ **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Opus cit.* P.114

³ **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Opus cit.* P.50.

⁵ **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Opus cit.* P.74.

⁷ **MORE** Sir Thomas. *Opus cit.* P.118

Watchword: “*So then, what God has united, man must not divide*” (Mk. 10:9)

Hebrew: לֹכֵן אֶת אֲשֶׁר-חִבַּר אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִפְרִידוּ אָדָם
Laken eth asher-hibar Elohim lo yaphridenu adam.

Greek: Ο οὐν ὁ Θεὸς σὺνεζευξεν ἀνθρώπους μὴ χωρίζετω.
Ho oun ho Theos sunezeitseu anthropos me chorizeto.

Latin: **Quod ergo Deus coniunxit, homo non separet.**