

Trinity 20

(There are three choices of propers for each office this week) A Homily is provided for Morning Prayer A, and another for Evening Prayer A. Others are to be written. In 2011 use the readings for Third Sunday before Advent with today's collect.

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Mal 2:14-17

Second Lesson: Matt 19:3-9a, 13-15

Homily

Please note that this message may hit some parishioners very strongly. This is indeed where these lessons point us, and these passages can't be preached without going into these issues.

Check with your priest to make sure that he thinks the timing appropriate. If not, select one of the other sets of lessons.

“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

Two thousand years have gone by.

But have you ever heard a more up-to-date question?

Divorce certainly has always been with us,

but some of us

remember a time when it was uncommon, a time when only something drastic could cause it.

It used to be that we were surprised,

and maybe a little shocked,

to hear that someone we knew had been divorced.

But now?

Hasn't it become usual to be surprised

when we encounter a couple that has been married for a good long time?

We hear reports from teachers

whose classes include no children of intact families.

The Pharisees had a good question,

one that Christians need to deal with today.

In their day, it was a major problem.

In Roman and Greek society divorce was easy and extremely common.

Hebrew society was divided on the issue.

Among the Pharisees themselves there were two schools of thought.

There was a very strict party that strongly disapproved of divorce and restricted it to extreme cases.

but there was also

a so-called 'compassionate' party, that, like modern Western cultures,

didn't want to 'bind' people
to marriages they didn't want.

This group of Pharisees had probably
just been arguing over this passage
for the Book of Deuteronomy:

*'When a man hath taken a wife, and married her,
and it come to pass
that she find no favour in his eyes,
because he hath found some uncleanness in her:
then let him write her a bill of divorcement,
and give it in her hand,
and send her out of his house.
And when she is departed out of his house,
she may go and be another man's wife.
(Deut 24:1-2)*

Their question would have been as to
what kind of 'uncleanness' justifies divorce.
Could it be granted for any and all reasons?
Jesus began with a quotation from Genesis.
"When they married, God made them one flesh,"
he pointed out, and went on,
"If God joined them, can man put them apart?"

Moses, He said,
had given very limited permission,

and had restricted it by requiring a legal document,
but he had only done so,
"because of the hardness of your hearts ,"
and that did not make it right.
On His own authority,
as the true Author of the Book,
he made a pronouncement that Christians must heed:

*"And I say unto you,
Whosoever shall put away his wife,
except it be for fornication,
and shall marry another, committeth adultery: "*

In doing so, He was speaking in full concord
with the Prophet Malachi,
who said in today's reading:

*"... the LORD hath been witness
between thee and the wife of thy youth,
against whom thou hast dealt treacherously:
yet is she thy companion,
and the wife of thy covenant.
And did not he make one? ...
Therefore take heed to your spirit,
and let none deal treacherously
against the wife of his youth.
For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith
that he hateth putting away: "*

Now these are hard words.

Lawmakers in our society have valued choice and individual freedom above the sacred bonds of matrimony, and divorce laws have been made easier and easier, until the standard now is a 'no-fault' divorce. Such a thing is perhaps acceptable by men's laws, but it is against the law of God. The vow taken is, "...till death do us part," not "Until we don't want to do this anymore." Sometimes it isn't easy to go on, but our Christian faith affirms that God is able to supply the strength we need.

Please remember, that this message is being delivered by a layman to lay people. There is no attempt to answer every question or to solve every problem. We need to approach the Scriptures honestly, to seek God's guidance to apply them to our own circumstances, and then to bring our questions and our concerns to our priest and our bishop, to those godly men in whose care God has placed us. And we need to follow God, whether we like His direction or not.

Let us pray.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Trinity 20

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Ecclesiastes 9:4-10

Second Lesson: Eph 6:1-9

Homily to be written

Trinity 20

Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Exod 32:1-6, 15-20, 30-34

Second Lesson: 1 Cor 10:14-22

Homily to be written

Trinity 20

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Jer 31:31-37

Second Lesson: John 13:31-35

Homily

Everything was ready.
 Three years of public ministry
 were coming to an end.
 The Twelve were chosen and gathered together.
 They were seated at Table for the Seder meal,
 the feast of the celebration of redemption.
 Jesus had fed them with what he declared to be
 His own Body and His own Blood,
 He had humbly bowed before them,
 washing each one's feet like a servant,
 even the feet of the one about to betray Him,
 and He had sent Judas forth
 to do his horrible, yet necessary deed.
 Everything was ready, and He said,

*"Now is the Son of man glorified,
 and God is glorified in him. "*

HUH?

There didn't seem to be any glory in view.
 The disciples did not know
 what was about to happen.
 Even though they'd been told many times,
 they didn't know,
 but He did.
 He was about to be betrayed,
 and to be put to death in the most painful,
 and most shameful,
 way that it could be done.

*"You'll seek me," He said,
 "but where I'm going, you can't come,"*
 not just yet they couldn't,
 though all but one of them
 would be killed for their faith,
 and all of them would join Him
 at the Father's throne,
 It was not yet time.
 He would go and they would remain.

And His glory was being revealed,
 and yet not in a way that men sought.
 They would see the evidence of His glory,
 and they would cringe and nearly despair.
 For it was to be as St. Paul said:

"In the cross of Christ I glory"

What greater glory than the manifestation
of an infinite love in suffering
on behalf of those who don't deserve it?

Look at the cross and know the glory of God,
the sin-conquering total embracing
of a rebellious, yet much desired creation.

*"So God loved the world
that he gave his only-begotten Son ... "*

Now hear the parting command He gave his men:

"A new commandment I give unto you,
That ye love one another;
as I have loved you,"

That's not pointing at a smiling Jesus,
saying, "Come unto me"
(though He certainly is that).

No, it's pointing mere hours ahead of the speaking,
to a Cross, to suffering, to love that costs.
How should we love each other?
How should we love
the most unpleasant people in our lives?
How should we love our enemies?

Look at the Cross!
Look at the Cross!
Look at the Cross!

Anything less than that
is failure to observe His own commandment.

This is the New Covenant
of which Jeremiah wrote.
This is the Law written on our hearts.
It is on this that we shall be judged.
It is the ignoring of this that we must repent,
that He will forgive if we seek forgiveness,
but that He will forgive in the same way
that He forgave the woman to whom He said,
"Go, and sin no more".

Is our love, then, as great as His?
Of course not!
Is the human spirit capable of attaining that?
Not in this fallen world.
Is it required of us anyway?
It's His solemn commandment.

"There is no health in us" we have prayed,
God grant us healing.

Let us pray.

Loving Father,
we bow before the Cross of thine only Son.
We bow in deepest awe and deepest thanksgiving
before the glory of His love revealed thereupon.
Forgive us our lack of love toward others,
and pour upon us thy Holy Spirit,
that we may show forth
that infinite glory toward them,
as it hath been manifest toward us.
Through the same,
our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Trinity 20

Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Jer 2:1-9, 13

Second Lesson: Matt 22:1-14

Homily to be written

Trinity 20

Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 2 Kings 2:1-15

Second Lesson: Acts 24:10-27

Homily to be written