



DARE TO DREAM

Autumn Series

Week Beginning October 3rd

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Before you begin read this reflection by Pope Francis on marriage and family life

'Today I would like to focus our attention on another reality: how to take care of those who, after an irreversible failure of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union.

The Church is fully aware that such a situation is contrary to the Christian Sacrament. However, her gaze as a teacher always draws from a mother's heart; a heart which, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, always seeks the good and the salvation of the people. This is why she feels obliged, "for the sake of truth", to "exercise careful discernment of situations". This is how St John Paul II expressed it in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (n. 84), giving as an example the difference between one subjected to separation compared to one who has caused it. This discernment has to be made.

If we then also look at these new bonds through the eyes of the young sons and daughters — and the little ones watch — through the eyes of the children, we are aware of a greater urgency to foster a true welcome for these families in our communities. For this reason, it is important that the style of the community, its language, its attitudes, always be attentive to people, starting with the little ones. They are the ones who suffer the most in these situations. After all, how can we encourage these parents to do everything possible to raise their children in the Christian life, to give them an example of committed and exercised faith, if we keep them at arm's length from the life of the community, as if they are excommunicated? We must act in a way so as not to add even more to the burdens which the children in these situations already feel they have to bear! Unfortunately, the number of these children and youth is really large. It is important for them to feel the Church as loving mother to all, always ready to listen and to meet.

Video - Watch and listen to Fr. Stephen Corrigan

Prayerfully read this passage from the Gospel of Mark 10:2-16

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

- Take some time to ponder on the words you have just read.
- Notice if there is anything, a word or phrase that stands out for you.
- Read the passage again and then reflect upon all or some of these questions: if you are doing this as a family or a group, make sure everyone is given the opportunity to speak.

Personal Reflections

- How does our Gospel reading this week make you feel?
- We hear that it is important for us not to be alone. How important is community and companionship in your life of faith?
- What emotions and feelings does Jesus taking the children into his arms evoke in you?

Now thinking about your parish and local community

- How does your parish support married couples?
- How does your parish treat people who are struggling with their marriage or who have gone through a divorce?
- Jesus tells the disciples, 'Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.' What aspects of childhood do you think Jesus is referring to, that adults are meant to emulate?

Action

We are being asked by Pope Francis to dream dreams, to create a church that is outward looking and mission orientated. We are reminded of this by Fr. Stephen in his reflection that we have listened to. This week simply take time to consider the vocation

of marriage with all its joys and struggles. If we are to be a church that truly evangelises, others will see this in the way we support our married couples in the good times and the bad. As a parish you might like to reflect on *Amoris Laetitia* written following the Synod on families, or read again and discuss the reflection on marriage and family life by Pope Francis.

Finish with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the grace to respond.

