**Readings for October 6, 2024 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

With Childlike Simplicity

*Jesus again asks us to live our faith with childlike humility and simplicity. He also shows us the need to care for those who are vulnerable and in need, including women, who in his time could be devastated by divorce and civil policy.*

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**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, give us the grace to hear your Word more deeply so that we might run to you as children, filled with wonder and amazement at your love for us. Thank you for showing us the need for compassion and justice toward those who are vulnerable and in need. Amen.

Reading I [**Gn 2:18-24**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/2?18)

The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him."
So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air,
and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them;
whatever the man called each of them would be its name.
The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all wild animals;
but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep,
he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.
The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man.
When he brought her to the man, the man said:
    "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
    this one shall be called 'woman, ' for out of 'her man’ this one has been taken."
That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife,
and the two of them become one flesh.

**Responsorial Psalm** [**Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/128?1)

**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored.
**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants around your table.
**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:  may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!
**R. May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.**

**Reading II** [**Heb 2:9-11**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/hebrews/2?9)

Brothers and sisters: He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels, "
that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he,
for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory,
should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering.
He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them “brothers.”

Gospel [**Mk 10:2-16 or 10:2-12**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/10?2)

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked,
"Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him.
He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?"
They replied, "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce
and dismiss her." But Jesus told them,
"Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment.
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, no human being must separate."
In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this.
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." And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them,
but the disciples rebuked them.
When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me;
do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.
Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child
will not enter it."
Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

***Related scripture: Matthew 18: 2-5***

He called a child over, placed it in their midst and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.”

Related Reflections

It is important to ask why Jesus is making a big deal about divorce. Here the historical context is important. Note that Matthew only speaks of men divorcing women. In Matthew 19, he is responding to a question from the Pharisees, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?"

Where Jesus lived and taught, divorce was only available to men. [Mark, whose gospel was used in Rome, made the teaching of Jesus gender neutral because in Rome upper-class wives could divorce their husbands.]

I look upon Jesus' teaching on divorce as the first feminist legislation because a divorced woman was kicked out on the street with no assets or alimony. Her father would not take her back because she was a failure. No man would marry her. She had no education and few marketable skills. She would have to beg on the streets or prostitute herself.

It was not until the 19th Century that divorced women began to get some protection from the civil law. As a result, divorce was clearly a devastating injustice to women for most of human history. Jesus quite rightly condemned it since practically all divorces were done by powerful men to powerless women.

Today we live in a different world. How can we be so certain that Jesus would respond in the same way to divorce today? True, most divorces involve sin, moral failure and great pain. True, in most divorces women get the short end of the stick. Divorce is not something to be shrugged off, but once it has happened and a marriage is dead, can there be a possibility for healing and life in the future?

Pope Francis thinks so. So do I.

*Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a senior analyst at Religion News Service*

**Humble Yourself Like a Little Child**

If I've learned anything about Christianity, it's that God wants us to be humble.  He calls Himself humble ([Matthew 11:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matt%2011:29&version=NIV)), and calls us to be the same.  Paul teaches in his epistles we must be like Christ.  John the Apostle says we must walk as He walked.  Anyone who reads the Gospels can tell you Yeshua (Jesus) was a humble man.

He had no permanent home.  Likely, He only had one set of clothing.  He ate at the home of whomever invited Him over.  He didn't have two coins to rub together.  Rarely did He sleep on a bed.  And He said not a word to His accusers.

But He compares our humility to that of a child.  Children can make friends with anyone.  Spend five minutes with them and you're their best friend.  They might even declare how much they love you.  They don't care how loud they are, and they don't care who hears them.  They're not ashamed of who they are and they're not ashamed of who their father is.  They trust openly, and forgive easily.

They're in awe of the world around them.  Everything is new and fresh, and a dandelion is as amazing as a rose.  Their God is too awesome for words.  He can do anything.  The faith of a child is complete, praying to the Lord without a single thought their request won't come true.  Anything is possible.  The sky is the limit.

In short - they are not proud.  They are not jaded.  They are full of love, friendship, and wonder.  And they believe with all their heart God hears them.  That He is all-powerful.  And yet... they wouldn't hesitate to run and give Him a hug.

Jesus wants us to love like that.  He wants us to believe like that.  He wants us to have faith like that.  He wants us to be in awe like that.

He wants to chip away at our cynicism, break off our doubt, and crumble our disillusionment.  He wants us to love Him so much, that our love for Him tints our entire world through child-like glasses.  Every time we gaze at the night sky, every time we watch an eagle soar, every time we hold a rock, He wants us to be filled with wonder and excitement and absolute LOVE for Him.

When a child has stability and loving parents, their little world is perfect.  If they have a problem, they run to Mommy or Daddy.  If they have a boo-boo, it will be kissed, if they have a bad dream, they will be cuddled.  If they are scared of thunder, they'll run into their parents' arms.

God wants the same with us, HIS children.  He wants to provide for you, protect you, and love you.  And He wants you to have life more abundantly ([John 10:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%2010:10&version=ESV)).  I believe humbling ourselves like little children IS the abundant life.  When we look around and see God's fingerprint on everything, when we can trust Him so utterly that we cling to Him when the going gets tough, that we find joy in even the most mundane of places, that's when we live an abundant life through our love for God.

That's when we're His children.  That's when He's our *Abba*. ([Romans 8:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208:15&version=ESV))

(From Christian blogger Becka) - https://yahwehishisname.blogspot.com/2012/07/humble-yourself-like-little-child.html

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**The Great Sign**

“It is not good for the man to be alone,” God says in the reading from Genesis. Humans are social beings: God created us to live and work together, to share our lives, to care about and for each other. Shortly after this story in Genesis, Cain asks the rhetorical question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The rest of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures answer with a resounding: “YES!”

The great sign of the social nature of men and women is marriage, in which the “two of them become one body, the two shall become as one.” Another sign is the Eucharist, for as Paul says in the Communion Antiphon: “we, though many, are one body, for we all share in the one loaf and in the one cup.” Marriage and Eucharist are signs of sharing lives and living together.

The unity of humankind is shattered every day by the many scourges of injustice: racism, sexism, poverty, hunger, homelessness, war. We are constantly violating the fundamental principle: “let no man separate what God has joined.” God has joined us in a society of brothers and sisters because it is not good for us to be alone: let no one separate that society through collusion in injustice.

“Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other. From the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person, which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life. This social life is not something added on to man.

Hence, through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny.”

Vatican II, [Constitution on the Church in the Modern World](https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/pastoral-constitution-on-the-church-in-the-modern-world-1529) -- 1965:25

* Gerald Darring, published on - https://liturgy.slu.edu/27OrdB100321/reflections\_justice.html

**‘With wonder and awe’**

Have you noticed the tendency of listening to someone talk so that you can respond to them? We often do that. We do not, in reality, listen to them, but listen so that we can formulate a response. We sometimes interject, respond, speak. We are, subtly and unconsciously, the focal point in the conversation.

Active listening means paying attention to the conversation, the person, by not interrupting. It means taking the time to understand what the person is saying and not feeling we have to respond. It is other-centred.

Too often we let what we think we ‘know’ prevent us from seeing things as they really are. It seems as if Jesus knew this tendency all too well. He puts a child before his disciples and says that the kingdom of God belongs to children. Children have the remarkable ability to approach the world with wonder and awe. They can see everything for the first time, not prejudiced or partisan, but with attention and expectation. We are invited to cultivate a childlike mind by which we see everything for the first time. When we are childlike (not childish), we approach others and the world with wonder and expectation.

To be able to do this, we have to free ourselves from being trapped by experiences of the past. We have to try and arrive at every moment as if we had never been there before. When we cultivate living like this, we reserve judgment. We recognise that each moment is unique and rich with potential. Every encounter or experience becomes one of limitless possibility to learn something new.

Can you approach today, the experiences and encounters, with openness knowing something new is possible? Try listening to someone without thinking about how to respond, just let them speak.

 *Fr. Russell Pollitt, S.J (Jesuit Institute of South Africa)*

**From Pope Francis:**

To enter the Kingdom of Heaven we must make ourselves small like children…The child always asks a thousand questions because he wants to discover the world; and he wonders even at little things, because everything is new to him. To enter into the Kingdom of Heaven we must allow ourselves to be astonished. *(General Audience, Nov. 15, 2017)*

Discussion Questions

Talk about the first reading, and how it fits with the Gospel passage. How have we, as humans, altered God’s initial plan for his beloved creation, and for our ultimate unity and harmony with each other?

Do we sometimes make our faith more complicated than it needs to be? What is Jesus telling us about this? What other ways did he tell us, or show us, how to simply live our faith?

What do you think Jesus is saying about the dignity of women and other vulnerable people as he discusses the concept of divorce?

How does Fr. Pollitt’s suggestion (previous page) fit with what you might know about St. Ignatius, who reminded us to always “pay attention” to what God is doing in our lives? How can we do that better?

**Prayer:**

Lord God, Teach me to approach life’s experiences and encounters with a childlike wonder and expectation. Free me from anything that prevents me from living each moment as if it contains endless possibility. Amen *(from Fr. Pollitt)*

***Our Weekly Focus Thought (adapted from Pope Francis)***

“To enter into the Kingdom of Heaven we must allow ourselves to be astonished.”

*How was I astonished this week?*

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***Other thoughts for the coming week:***

When does it seem hard to recognize someone as a child of God-- as someone who is made in the image and likeness of God? When have I dismissed or diminished someone because of that person’s culture, race, or maybe their educational or economic status? I ask for the grace to be more loving – to better understand the life situations that someone else may be facing.

**ALSO:** In the gospel, people were bringing their children to Jesus **“that he might touch them.”** How can we place ourselves more fully before Jesus in order for him to touch us in the ways we need it most?

***Prayer to the God of Simplicity***

May the God of simplicity be with us, opening us to a clear vision of what is real and true,
Leading us deeply into the mystery of childhood.
And may our dealings with others be marked by honesty, which is simplicity.
May the blessing of simplicity be on us.

May the God of gentleness be with us,
caressing us with sunlight and rain and wind.
May God's tenderness shine through us
to warm all who are hurt and lonely.
May the blessing of gentleness be with us.

May the God of wonder be with us,
delighting us with sunrise and sunset, enchanting our
senses, filling our hearts, giving us wide-open eyes
that we may see the splendor in both the humble and majestic. May we open the eyes and hands and hearts of the blind and deaf and the insensitive.
May the blessing of wonder be with us.

May the God of compassion be with us,
holding us close when we are weary and hurt and alone.
And may we be the warm hands and eyes of compassion
for our sisters and brothers when they reach out to us.
May the blessing of compassion be on us.

May the God of joy be with us, thrilling us with God's nearness,
filling our hearts to fullness, and filling our throats with laughter and song.
May our joy bring life and joy to others.
May the blessing of joy be with us always.

May the God of love be with us.
May God's love in us light fires of faith and hope,
and may the fire grow and burn deeply and enflame the earth. Amen.

Adapted from

<https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/strength#A%20Blessing%20Prayer>