



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 him 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 him 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.

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the master of the universe, and yet you wish to listen to me and guide me. You know all things past, present and future and yet you respect my freedom to choose you. Holy Trinity, you are completely happy and fulfilled on your own, and yet you have generously brought us into existence. You are our fulfillment. Thank you for the gift of yourself. I offer the littleness of myself in return, knowing you are pleased with what I have to give.

Lord Jesus, you are the master of the universe, and yet you wish to listen to me and guide me. You know all things past, present and future, and yet you respect my freedom to choose you. Holy Trinity, you are completely happy and fulfilled on you own, and yet you have generously brought us into existence. You are our fulfillment. Thank you for the gift of yourself. I offer the littleness of myself in return, knowing you are pleased with what I have to give.

Petition: Loving Father, help me to be open to your message today.

1. Man Puts God to the Test: In today's Gospel, the Pharisees put Christ to the test and call God's plan into question. How brutally proud we can sometimes become in our relationship with God! Who are we to test God? The Book of Job reminds us that when we test God, it is we who end up being sifted like wheat: "Who is this that obscures divine plans with words of ignorance? Gird up your loins now, like a man; I will question you, and you tell me the answers" (Job 38:1-2)! We can only answer wisely by repeating Job's response: "Behold, I am of little account; what can I answer you? I put my hand over my mouth. Though I have spoken once, I will not do so again; though twice, I will do so no more (Job 40: 4-5). Do I sometimes question God's providence by complaining, "Lord, why do you make me suffer?"

2. Asking Again for Good Measure: The disciples listened to Jesus' reply about marriage and wondered. They were far more open than the Pharisees to Our Lord's message, but this point is hard for the disciples to swallow as well. The second time around, Jesus reaffirms his same answer. Whoever divorces and remarries commits adultery. This passage reminds us that the Church bases her teachings on Christ's own teachings. The Church is the means by which his demanding message reaches us without being watered down. Do I know and value the teachings of the Church as the guardian of Christ's own words? Do I loyally defend her teachings? The disciples listened to Jesus' reply about marriage and wondered. They were far more open than the Pharisees to Our Lord's message, but this point is hard for the disciples to swallow as well. The second time around, Jesus reaffirms his same answer. Whoever divorces and remarries commits adultery. This passage reminds us that the Church bases her teachings on Christ's own teachings. The Church is the means by which his demanding message reaches us without being watered down. Do I know and value the teaching of the Church as the guardian of Christ's own words? Do I legally defend her teachings?