

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Aug 16th 2013

The reading and the gospel for today are about commitments. The former is about God's commitment to the Israelites from the time of Abraham's father, Terah, to the time of Joshua. Despite their many transgressions, God saved them from innumerable armies and rulers who were determined to conquer and enslave the Jewish people. They were God's chosen people and His commitment and mercy endures forever.

The gospel reading from Matthew is the story of the Pharisees' attempt to trap Jesus by asking if a man can divorce his wife. Jesus defends the commitment of marriage as originally intended and explains that divorce was allowed in the time of Moses only because of the "hardness of the hearts" of the Jewish people at the time. Jesus is very straightforward in his expectation that marriage is a permanent commitment.

Being assigned to write the reflection for this day was quite a coincidence for me. As I write this, it has been just a week since one of our daughters entered into the commitment of marriage. As all weddings are, it was truly a beautiful event and the bride and groom radiated joy and happiness. They expressed their solemn commitment before family and friends with her father, who is a deacon, having the singular privilege of escorting her down the aisle and then officiating at their commitment to each other. Most importantly, they made their commitment to each other before God with more than good intentions but a solemn promise to each other. Though they were not thinking at the time of the inevitable struggles they will face; they have entered into their commitment fully aware that there will be small day-to-day hurdles and the larger trials for which they will need strength and determination as well as trust in God to be their constant companion.

As God told the Israelites, "...it was not your sword or your bow. I gave you a land that you had not tilled and cities that you had not built, to dwell in; you have eaten of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant." For any of us who have been married for a long time, it is totally evident that we have not accomplished that long-term commitment on our own. At times, it is only with awareness of and reliance on God's presence to provide what we do not deserve that we are able to meet the commitment to each other.

1 John 4:12 If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is brought to perfection in us.

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