NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Love, giving ourselves to others are what make us whole

Thomas Gumbleton | Oct. 11, 2012 The Peace Pulpit

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus uses the creation story as a way of emphasizing the importance of marriage and married life as being an extraordinary kind of life where two people can make themselves one and have such a deep relationship in unity and love that it can go on forever. As we listen to this story and as we refer to the event in the Book of Genesis, the story of all creation, I think it's important for us to realize that what Jesus is teaching us today is most of all important for those who want to live married life in the fullness of blessing that it can be.

It's also a very important lesson for all of us because it's about human relationships. It's very clear in the story of creation where God at first, as we heard, formed man out of the soil and then provided for that man everything that he needed for his physical life. Then God says, "It's not good for man to be alone, and so I will give a helper who will be like him." Then the story goes on to show how all of the creatures of the world come before Adam, the man, but none of them is a suitable partner.

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 2:18-24
Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mk 10:2-16

Full text of the readings

Then God, according to the story -- and it's not literally true, but it gives us a sense of what God is doing -- God takes a part of the man and forms the woman. He gives her to him, and the two become one. Adam is in ecstasy as he discovers this creature, this other person who is different from all the other animals, who is like him. He says, "Now this is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken from [1] man." That is why man and woman leave their father and mother and attach themselves to each other in marriage.

It's not just married people who need others. In fact, there's a beautiful passage in one of the Wisdom books, the Book of Sirach, that points out how important friendship is in our lives. In marriage, friendship can reach a fullness and ultimate goodness that it might not be able to achieve in other relationships. But nevertheless, this writer says, a faithful friend is a secure refuge. Whoever has found one has found a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond all price. We cannot buy friendship. It's beyond all price.

So hold your friend as priceless. A faithful friend is a lifesaving remedy, and those who love God will find one. It's friendship that is really what we're being taught about in that story from Genesis, friendship that can culminate for those who are called to it in the vocation of marriage, but all of us need friendships. It's not good for anyone to be alone. As we learned from this story of creation in Genesis, we're made in the image of God.

God is love, so we're made to love and to be loved. That's what friendship is about. That's what enables us to become full human persons, as we learn to love, to give ourselves to others and to be loved, to receive from others, we begin to grow more and more into the full human being that God calls us to be. It's not easy to form deep friendships. It's not easy to have a deep friendship even in married life. What we need very clearly is what Jesus symbolizes so beautifully at the end of the Gospel lesson today.

When Jesus takes a little child that the disciples have been rebuking and pushing away, he says, "No, the Reign of God is all about being like a child. No one will enter the Reign of God unless you are like a child." Now, he doesn't mean being childish or immature. We have to grow into maturity, fullness of life -- but one of the things

about a child is that a child cannot dominate. A child cannot try to lord it over another.

That's what Adam and Eve discover in that creation story, that they are made for one another. "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." Their relationship has to be equal and mutual. That's true of every friendship, every relationship. We cannot try to lord it over another. A child shows us very beautifully that in a relationship, there has to be mutuality. The child cannot dominate. The child has to interact on a more mutual basis.

So Jesus is saying in the Reign of God, when you find many friendships that will enrich your lives, it will be because you have learned how to be mutual and treat each other with respect, how to have an equality among all of us. That's what a child shows us; but then a child also shows us how a friendship needs to be nurtured. You have to love and nurture, and help the child to grow. The same thing is true of a friendship.

It has to be worked on. It isn't just true in marriage, but it is true in all of our friendships. We have to nurture them, be willing to make sacrifices at times so that they continue to grow. So this child that Jesus had in the midst of his disciples, the child that Jesus says, "Here is what you must be to enter into the Reign of God," the child is a symbol for us, of how true friendship is to be based on mutuality, equality and respect for one another.

It's true in marriage. It's true in every friendship and it is not good for us to be alone. We all need friends. We need relationships that nurture us and strengthen us. So as we listen to today's lessons, if we're married people, of course we want to try to deepen that relationship within marriage and make it all that it can be. If we're not, then we still need to learn how to be respectful of others, be mutual in our relationship with others, be generous and giving of ourselves to others. Then our friendships will grow.

Like the wise person who wrote those words so many thousands of years ago, we will find that within our own lives, we will have faithful friends who become a secure refuge. We will have found a treasure, a friendship that is beyond all price, and all of us will find that a faithful friend is a life-giving remedy. If we fear God, we love God and follow the way of Jesus, that faithful friend will be something that we will find, and our lives will be enriched. It's not good for us to be alone. We need these friends. Today's lesson teaches us how to grow in friendship. In that way, we become like a little child and enter into the Reign of God.

[Homily given at St. Hilary, Redford, Mich. The transcripts of Bishop Gumbleton's homilies are posted weekly to NCRonline.org. **Sign up here** [2] to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]

Source URL (retrieved on *02/09/2016 - 21:23*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/peace-pulpit/love-giving-ourselves-others-are-what-make-us-whole

Links:
[1] http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/100712.cfm
[2] http://ncronline.org/email-alert-signup