

Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16

This week's Bullet will focus on the first reading from the Book of Genesis. It must be remembered that Genesis is a composite of the writings of several traditions (or the works of several different authors). The selection for this Sunday's reading is from the Yahwist tradition (also called the "J" source). It was written about the time of King Solomon or his heir to the throne, Rehoboam, in the southern kingdom of Judah. Some scholars believe that "J" was a woman, citing certain characteristics of style. Whatever the truth is, we find ourselves today facing the task of sorting through the writer's style, the history of the time, the purpose of the composition, and the various translations of the ancient Hebrew into our understood languages when the words of the original may not have a direct modern translation. In the midst of this task lies ***the truth of the Word of God.***

Let's look first at the translation of certain phrases into a more literal form:

suitable partner - one who corresponds in face-to-face likeness

rib - to be made from the bone of another is to be made of the essence of another

adam - not a man's name; comes from the word "adamah" which means earth. God made adam from adamah, earth, or humans were made from the earth. Adam is then neither male nor female, but rather human. Sexual differentiation does not appear until later in the work when the Hebrew, "is" and "issah" are used to identify genders.

Sr. Joan Mitchell CSJ, in writing for Sunday by Sunday, has rewritten the same selection from Genesis with substitutions of terms to provide a more literal translation from the original Hebrew. I offer Sister's version with all credit due to her scholarship:

The Creator God said; “It is not good for human to be alone. I will make a partner for human.” So the Creator God formed wild animals and birds of the air out of the earth, and brought them to human to see what human would call them; whatever human called each, would be its name. Human gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the human.

So the Creator God cast a deep sleep on human, and while human was asleep, took out a rib and closed up its place with flesh. The Creator God built up the rib taken from human into a woman. When the Creator God brought the woman, human said: “This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called female, for from the male this one has been taken.”

That is why husband leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.

Certainly this version does not emphasize the submission or secondary creation of one gender. Rather, all of humanity is taken and then differentiated by sex for the God given purpose of procreation.

Power...

Submission...

Primary...

Secondary...

Equality was God’s intent. Gender caste is an aberration of human creation. How many times have you heard this story used to prove the superiority of male over female? The literal translation helps us to see the true meaning of human being a helpmate to human as both act together as God’s helpmate in continuing creation.