They Are No Longer Two, But One Flesh.”

“Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses wrote this commandment for you. 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.” (Mark 10:5-8)

It says that there were two families living next door. One was very quiet and there was never any kind of quarrel or altercation. Both husband and wife loved each other and no one heard any noise from their home. However, the other family next door, always was in a quarrel and there was no peace. Whatever they did or decided to do, ended up in conflict and none of them had ever yielded to each other. One day, this couple realizes that there is no end to their conflicts and desires to find out how to gain peace. For this reason, the husband decides to go and see what is the key of that mutual and peaceful life that their neighbors possess. As he goes and begins looking into their neighbor’s home through the window, he sees a bucket on the floor filled with water. Later, he sees his neighbor, who all of a sudden, hits the bucket and spills the water all over the room. Afterwards, as the wife of his neighbor realizes that something happened at home, she hurries up towards his husband. As she sees that her husband spilled the water all over, she humbly says, “Sorry for this I was wrong, I should not have left the bucket in the middle of the room, forgive me.” Amazingly, her husband turns to his wife and says, “No. You are not wrong, I was wrong, I should have been watchful. Forgive me for spilling the water all over the room.”

This story and today’s Gospel reading is about marriage. Today’s Gospel says that some Pharisees wanted to test Christ and asked him questions about marriage and divorce. Jesus did not simply answer these Pharisees immediately out of his own authority. He sent them back to Moses. In other words, he upheld the authority of the Scriptures. He always referred to the Old Testament as a book that has the answers. By referring to the Old Testament Christ interprets the word of Moses for them, and reveals to us something that the Law itself does not tell us.

Our Lord goes behind the written statement of the Old Testament, and says, "Moses gave this because of the hardness of your heart." What does that mean? It is pointing out very clearly that a divorce could occur, in order to reveal in public what has been going on in private in that marriage: the hardness of heart. This is what the Law always does. The Law is given to reveal sin. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," (Romans 3:20). It is perfectly in line with his role as lawgiver that Moses, in giving the laws concerning marriage, should also give permission for divorce, in order to make visible what is going on in a family. What was going on in Israel was evidently hardness of heart. Hearts were being hardened, and that is why divorce came in. This is what the Old Testament is all about. It is given to unveil sin, yet the
New Testament is given to drive us to grace. Law can never heal the problem; it simply points it out but Christianity does heal our pain, puts remedy on our sins and gives solutions to our problems in the family.

But our Lord does not stop even there. He goes on to show us a far deeper and more important matter. Though he has put his finger on the reason why marriages fail, because of hardness of heart, he goes on now to show us how they can be cured, by revealing to us the purpose of marriage. Our Lord makes clear that this relationship is the highest relationship possible in life and it is about becoming one, as Jesus said. This is what marriages are for. Two people, who are distinct, and different individuals, with different personalities, different gifts, blending their lives together in such a way that through the process of the years they become one flesh, that is what marriage is. Now, it is not something that happens instantaneously when we get married. The wedding service does not make us one. It begins the process, but it does not finish it. It takes the whole marriage to accomplish this. Marriage is the process of two people becoming one.

This process is not about going separate ways, and merely sharing a house. Nor is this process splitting up over every problem or difficulty that arises between a couple; if at all possible, they are to work them out. They are to choose to be together, to spend the rest of their lives together, in order that they might merge their lives together. A successful marriage, therefore, is not one without problems; it is one where the problems are being worked out, where the husband and wife do not split but stick together, face up to their problems, discover the hardness of their hearts, and learn how God can soften it. In other words, it is a process, not a single production. It is a pilgrimage, not a six weeks' performance. In today’s story, we saw how two distinct families lived next door. As this man saw that both his neighbors are forgiving and tolerant towards each other, he went home and told his wife saying, “In our family we both are always true, we always try to find out who is right and who is wrong and that is why we both have hardness of heart. However, our neighbors do not have hardness of heart. Even if they have a problem they are always forgiving, lenient and gracious towards each other.”

Marriage then is God’s way of putting two lives together to produce a oneness that will be a testimony to the whole world of the grace and the power of God to change human lives. He can soften hearts, and remove hardness, and change people into what they ought to be, to whom is due glory and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages Amen.