

From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

October 6, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We ought not to think of today's scriptures as a teaching on divorce, but rather as a teaching about the meaning of human relationships. Human beings are essentially incomplete without each other.

Over the past 50 years we have increasingly come to see our own self-making as the essential quality of human life. We seek control over every aspect of our lives. Over our body, our mind, our emotions, and even over the laws that regulate the transmission of life.

We live in a culture of "the self-made man." This was the claim of a recent article in America Magazine. My true self is the self that I –and only I have made. It is that self that lives a life worth living and possesses dignity. In the business world a self-made man is someone whose success is owed to nothing but his own determination and hard work. The story of the success of the self-made man often begins without a penny in his pocket and ends with the accumulation of great wealth.

Self-making is also the focus in the personal memoir form of literature. In many personal memoirs a life filled with travel, with daring experiments, with out of the ordinary adventures is considered the life to celebrate. Those of us who are less wealthy and who live more ordinary lives can only aspire to live vicariously through reading the memoirs great women and men.

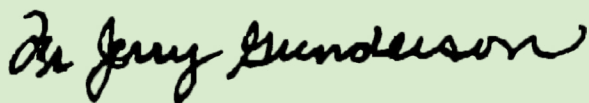
Whether it be in business or autobiography, the underlying claim is: Whatever I am that is worthwhile I have made. And the more fully I create myself from nothing, the more authentic and meaningful my life is.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Today's scriptures present a radically different view. We are not self-made. We are God made. We are not independent. We are created for solidarity.

After Jesus teaches about the significance of human union in the divine plan, well-meaning disciples try to separate Jesus from the children. This makes Jesus indignant. He insists that the Kingdom belongs to the children, and those who would belong to the Kingdom must be like children to enter it. Children more easily recognize their dependency and their interdependency.

As a community we must strive to foster interdependence, not self-making. We should support belonging that overcomes isolation.

If we do, then the political, racial and gender distinctions that are currently so strained will fade away and our separation from God will diminish, and the kingdom of God will be coming into our world.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson