

PREACHING FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week

July 24-30, 2011

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HOMILY NOTES

Sunday 24 July 2011 "God's Love, Our Love, Our Family"

Reading 1:

[1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12](#)

Ask something of me and I will give it to you.

Psalm:

[119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#)

Lord, I love your commands.

Reading 2:

[Rom 8:28-30](#)

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

Gospel:

[Mt 13:44-52 or 13:44-46](#)

The Kingdom of God is like...a treasure buried in a field, a pearl of great price, a net thrown into the sea which collects fish of every kind.

Homily Helper Talking Points

- If the readings this week teach us anything, it is about PRIORITIES. If our priorities are in the proper order, then our life will be in the proper order. In today's society, especially for those who are in marriage or discerning a vocation to married life, it is especially important to get our priorities straight.
- For National NFP Awareness Week, the bishops of the United States invite us to reflect on the theme, "God's Love, Our Love, Our Family."
- It makes sense if you think about it. God's love must always come first. This is first priority. This is the treasure in the field or the pearl of great price. This is priority number one. All other decisions and relationships in life will find their source and their fulfillment in our relationship with God. It's God's love that makes us lovable, and allows us to love others as God would love them.
- In the married vocation, it is the very love of God which brings two people together to become the living expression of God's love alive in the world. Married love finds its

origin in and flows out of God's love. When the rest of us see how the married couple loves one another without reservation and without condition, then we get just a glimpse of what it means for God to love us. This is one way in which the Sacrament of Marriage truly is the sacrament of God's love alive and expressed in the midst of everyday life. For the married couple, "God's Love" finds its expression in "Our Love."

- And then what a marvelous thing! Through the most intimate expression of love between a husband and wife, new life becomes possible. God is love and love by its very nature is creative. The Sacrament of Marriage, as an expression of God's Love, shares in that creative dynamic and is truly "pro-creative." "Our Love" becomes "Our Family."
- There is an element of trust, born of love, which makes this all possible. We have to be able to trust that God, who loves us, wants what's best for us, even if we don't know exactly what that is at the outset. So we must be open to the possibilities that God will open up for us, especially the possibility of love, life and family. St. Paul is correct. If our priorities are in the right order, then all things do indeed work out. This does not mean that we are Pollyannaish about things. After prayerful discernment, some couples may decide that it is more prudent to plan their families more judiciously. Here, Natural Family Planning provides a practical moral option. But the bottom line is that we need to trust God and to cooperate with God by working with the way in which God made us. To act *with* the body and mind God gave us, not against them.
- Natural Family Planning is not rocket science. It's about having our priorities straight and being practical in their application to everyday life. "God's Love, Our Love, Our Family" is more than just a catchy slogan. It's a roadmap for the Sacrament of Marriage and simple way of remembering how to keep our priorities in the proper order.

Monday, July 25, 2011, Feast of St. James the Apostle

Reading 1:

2 Cor 4:7-15

Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.

Responsorial Psalm:

[126:1bc-2ab, 2cd-3, 4-5, 6](#)

Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.

Gospel:

[Mt 20:20-28](#)

The mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something.

Homily Helper Talking Points

- There is a cardinal rule in the wilderness that you never get between a mother bear and her cubs. This is because the maternal instinct is one of the most powerful in nature. In this light the request of the mother of James and John makes sense. She is just looking out for her boys.
- Like everyone following Jesus, and indeed all the people Israel at that time, the mother of James and John was expecting the coming Messiah to be a priest-king in the line of David. He would throw out the Romans and reestablish the Kingdom of Israel as a political and religious entity. She, like all of the disciples at that time, misunderstands what Jesus means by the “Kingdom of God.” Jesus is simply being honest when he tells her that she does not know what she is asking. She is setting her sights too low. The Kingdom of God is a much richer reality than anything she can imagine at that time.
- “God's Love, Our Love, Our Family” - Sometimes married couples do the same thing regarding their marriage. They set their sights to low. In the Sacrament of Marriage, God's Love calls a husband and wife to a higher, more sacred calling than that of a secular, civil marriage. When we cooperate with God's love by living out that calling in fidelity to God and each other, “Our Love” takes on and expresses a deeper meaning than anything this world can offer. When we trust the God who calls us to holiness through married life, when we cooperate with the way in which God has designed us as human beings, then the fruits of the that love give life not only to our children, but becomes a life-giving relationship to all those we encounter every day.

Tuesday, July 26, 2011, Memorial of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Reading 1:

[Ex 33:7-11; 34:5b-9, 28](#)

Receive us as your own.

Responsorial Psalm:

[103:6-7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13](#)

The Lord is kind and merciful.

Gospel:

[Mt 13:36-43](#)

Whoever has ears ought to hear.

Homily Helper Talking Points

- It's nice to know that Jesus has a sense of humor. I'm told that the pun, “Whoever has ears ought to hear” works as well in Aramaic and Greek as it does in English regarding ears of grain and ears on the side of one's head. My mother always told me that God gave us two

ears and one mouth because we were supposed to listen twice as much as we speak. Good advice.

- With this in mind, Jesus' exhortation that we must listen first in order to understand is very well taken. We must listen as we study, worship and pray in order to come to insight as to what God has planned for us.
- This is especially important for married couples as they discern together how God is working in their lives for the building up of the Church and the world. It is important to make use of all the practical and spiritual resources the Church offers when making important decisions about children and family. The resources of available to regarding Marriage and NFP are readily available, especially on the USCCB website. It's a good place to get good information that makes sense in the real world we live in.
- The parents of Mary, Joachim and Anna, whose feast we celebrate today, certainly did so. It must have been quite a job being the parents of the future Mother of God. But God had a plan and Joachim and Anna seemed to understand that they were an essential part of that plan.
- As the saying goes, we may not know the master plan, but it is comforting to know that the Master has planned it, and we are included.

Wednesday, July 27, 2011, Wednesday of the Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Reading 1:

[Ex 34:29-35](#)

Later on, all the children of Israel came up to him, and he enjoined on them all that the LORD had told him on Mount Sinai.

Responsorial Psalm:

[99:5, 6, 7, 9](#)

Holy is the Lord our God.

Gospel:

[Mt 13:44-46](#)

The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field...or a pearl of great price.

Homily Helper Talking Points

(Note: If the preacher would like to concentrate on the gospel, please see the Talking Points for Sunday, July 24, 2011, above.)

- Moses would commune with God so intimately that afterwards his face would shine radiantly. This was a sign to the people that he had a very special relationship with God.

- Each of us, through our baptism, also has a very special relationship with God. When we live our baptismal calling in communion with Christ and His Church, we also become a sign and source of God's love in the world.
- For example, we all know at least one couple who are living the Sacrament of Marriage especially well. Such couples are incredibly “life giving.” The love they share in their relationship radiates out, if you will, in such a way that others cannot help but be drawn into it. There is always an invitation to family functions, always an extra place at the table, always the time for someone in need. Being invited into the circle of love of a sacramental marriage is an incredibly enlivening experience.
- We are all called to be “life giving,” but this call finds a unique and beautiful expression in the Sacrament of Marriage in all aspects. It reminds us that life is a precious gift that we should be open to receive in accord with God's plan. When we do so, we become “life giving” in every sense of the word.
- The Irish have a wonderful saying, “May the love of God warm your heart like a great fire, so that a friend may come and warm himself there.”

Thursday, July 28, 2011, Thursday of the Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

(NB: Anniversary of the encyclical, Humanae vitae)

Reading 1:

[Ex 40:16-21, 34-38](#)

The glory of the LORD filled the Dwelling.

Responsorial Psalm:

[84:3, 4, 5-6a and 8a, 11](#)

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord, mighty God!

Gospel:

[Mt 13:47-53](#)

The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind.

Homily Helper Talking Points

- After Moses built the meeting tent, it was filled with the presence of the Lord. But think about it a minute. What made the tent of Meeting so sacred? Was it the tent itself; or rather was it the One who dwelt there?
- So it is with every Catholic household. What makes any ordinary house into a Catholic, Christian home? It certainly is not the building itself, but rather the family that dwells there. The same thing applies to the Sacrament of Marriage. What makes the relationship sacred? Is it the couple themselves, or the presence of Christ dwelling in them as an integral part of their relationship?

- *God's Love, Our Love, Our Family*: Holy families are born of a holy marriage, and the love found in a holy marriage is a sacred calling begotten first by God's Love. When spouses invite Christ into every aspect of their marriage, then Christ can be present in every aspect of the life of the family. In this way, our God truly is Emmanuel, "God with us."

Friday, July 29, 2011, Feast of St. Martha

Reading 1:

[Lv 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34b-37](#)

"These are the festivals of the LORD which you shall celebrate at their proper time with a sacred assembly."

Responsorial Psalm:

[81:3-4, 5-6, 10-11ab](#)

Sing with joy to God our help.

Gospel:

[Jn 11:19-27](#)

I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.

Homily Helper Talking Points

- It's nice to know that Jesus had regular friends just like the rest of us. People who knew him before his public ministry and loved him for who he was. These were people with whom he could relax and not have to worry about being put on a pedestal. Today's feast celebrates St. Martha, one such friend of Jesus who embodies two essential Christian qualities: faith and hospitality. Each of these is spoken to in the options for the gospel reading today.
- Martha's faith is especially evident in the gospel passage where Jesus comes to visit her after the death of her brother Lazarus, also a good friend of Jesus.
- Relationships grow and deepen over time. Martha did not cease to become Jesus' friend just because she came to a fuller understanding of who he was. If anything, it deepened their relationship. Her new understanding and her profession of faith takes their relationship to a whole new level.
- It is the same in the life of faith, especially in the life of married couples and families. As couples continue to mature and grow and simply spend time in each other's presence, they discover more and more about their spouse and about themselves. If lived in the context of God's Love, this deeper self knowledge and knowledge of the other can lead not only to a deeper relationship with one's spouse, but also with God.

- Faith at its heart is a relationship. And relationships deepen and grow directly in proportion to the time and attention that we give to them. So it was for Martha and Jesus. So it is for us today.

Saturday, July 30, 2011, Saturday of the Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Reading 1:

[Lv 25:1, 8-17](#)

This fiftieth year you shall make sacred

Responsorial Psalm:

[67:2-3, 5, 7-8](#)

O God, let all the nations praise you!

Gospel:

[Mt 14:1-12](#)

The daughter of Herodias performed a dance before the guests and delighted Herod so much that he swore to give her whatever she might ask for.

Homily Helper Talking Points

- Why did Herodius hate John the Baptist so much? Simple. By pronouncing her relationship with Herod to be unlawful, he had undermined her credibility in the public eye. Of course, she could have taken his message to heart and changed her ways, but that would have meant giving up too much. As it was, she didn't like the message so she had the messenger put to death.
- It didn't work out in the long run, of course. Later on, her ambition caused the ruin of Herod when she asked the Emperor Caligula to crown her husband king. The request was refused and Herod was stripped of power. He and Herodius died in exile.
- It's a good lesson for all of us. God uses all kinds of means to speak to us, like he did with John the Baptist to Herod and Herodius. We can choose to listen or we can choose to go our own way. If we choose to heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit to repent, then it is always life-giving. If we choose to ignore the Spirit and follow our own ambitions, then, as Herodius found out, it always leads to our destruction.
- In his poem, "Little Miracles," Larry Beck said, "I believe in little miracles, that happen every day/not the cataclysmic kinds which cause the world to sway/but the simple, subtle messages the Good Lord sends our way."
- May we have the grace to listen to the little messages the Good Lord sends our way today, so that we may have life and have it abundantly.