

## 2017 NATIONAL WEEK FOR LIFE AND THE FAMILY

Sunday, May 14 (Mother's Day) or Sunday, May 21

### HOMILY NOTES / SUGGESTIONS

**[It is intended that one or more of the following insights might be incorporated into the scriptural reflection for the given Sunday]**

- ✓ Love grows by giving it away: Jesus, Divine Love in the Flesh, is God's gift to the world; we are all called to imitate the example of Christ's self-giving love; we succeed only by accepting His gift in our own hearts and souls; Mary is the exemplar par excellence of openness to the gift of Divine love; by imitating her openness, we are enabled to accept the gift and are, in this way, empowered to confront the difficulties and challenges of family life. We can be merciful only if mercy has been received; we can give the gift of love only if we have first received the gift. (In Christ and only in Christ, we are, in fact, called to be "God's gifts to the world".)
- ✓ It is God's will that the family be the "locus" in which we first experience unconditional love --the selfless love of mother and father-- the kind of love which inspires us to act selflessly toward others, thus allowing love to grow by giving it away.
- ✓ In large measure, contemporary society has forgotten what real love means. In his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis offers us a piercingly insightful reflection of St. Paul's Hymn to Love in First Corinthians (see Chapter 4, paragraphs 89-119). This is the kind of love which Christ bestows and to which we are called.
- ✓ The Hebrew words for womb and mercy share a common root; mercy is thus the source of new life, life is nourished by mercy; life flourishes in the presence of mercy; mothers -- those called to nurture life in their wombs-- are nearly always the first and most important examples of mercy in action.
- ✓ The Blessed Virgin conceives in her womb the eternal son of the Father and is immediately inspired to go to the aid of her cousin Elizabeth. The 14th Century German mystic Meister Eckhart said "What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to His Son if I also do not give birth to him in my time and culture. This then, is the fullness of time. When the Son of God is begotten in us." To make room for Jesus in one's heart means being prepared to be given away as a gift of love to those around us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Respect and love for human life at every stage of development, from conception to natural death, is learned through example, example fueled by the activity of the Holy Spirit; those who feel loved, even when in great pain, seldom seek death through

euthanasia or assisted suicide.

- ✓ As long as we live we can receive and give love . . . God *is* Love; love given away in Christ! In Christ we become the “gifts” that we are meant to become, we are empowered to give ourselves away.
- ✓ Those who have not received unconditional love are seldom if ever able to extend unconditional love to another, or even to recognize the “lovability” of those the world sometimes considers unlovable; love grows by giving it away.
- ✓ Jesus gives Himself away in order to fuel the love which we are then called to give away. He is the source of infinite love which He offers as mercy to all who approach Him; the Incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ are, fundamentally, gifts of mercy as is the sending of the Holy Spirit;
- ✓ The Church, given to humanity as gift and channel of merciful love, is the last *and only possible* bastion against the culture of death. Only the Church can uphold God’s vision of the human person and through the channels of grace which flow from her embower the faithful to live lives consistent with human dignity. This is possible only because the Holy Spirit abides with the Church as gift –
- ✓ It is only by giving one’s self away as a gift that we discover ourselves; the Holy Spirit grants understanding, enabling us to recognize the truth regarding our call and empowering us to fulfill our call as individuals and as families in the midst of a world and a culture seduced by lies about the human person.
- ✓ We create homes and families which model selfless love only by depending on the grace of the Sacraments, the perpetuation of God’s gift of divine love.