

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

It's time!

Say "Yes" to God's plan for married love!

National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week

July 23-29, 2017

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SUNDAY HOMILY NOTES

Note to homilists: The text that follows is to provide you with content as you consider how you would like to integrate Church teaching on marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood and the methods of Natural Family Planning into your homily. This text is not meant to be proclaimed in its entirety, although you may choose to adapt as much of it into your homily as you deem best.

SUNDAY, JULY 23, 2017

SIXTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Reading One: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

"There is no god besides you who have the care of all.... Your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all."

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

"You, O LORD, are good and forgiving... Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant."

Reading Two: Romans 8:26-27

"The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness... He intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will."

Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43

Three parables: the wheat and the tares; the mustard seed; the yeast.

Our lives are full of choices. Some choices are good and some problematic. Honest reflection reveals that some of our choices are grains of wheat and some are tares, or weed seeds. As the parable from the Gospel impresses upon us: early on, the two different plants look indistinguishable. Sometimes our choices too can seem neutral or inconsequential. Only later, with the benefit of hindsight and wisdom – when the field is mature – is it possible to see what was sown for good and what was sown for evil.

In 1968, when Pope Paul VI promulgated *Humanae vitae* (his encyclical on God's plan

for the transmission of human life), the modern world was under the impression that we would soon run out of the space and food to feed ourselves. Science suggested that humanity needed to curb its growth or face dire consequences. Pope Paul's message was different and he seemed out of step with the world, even with some advice he had received from inside the Church. Pope Paul warned that should humanity go down the path of accepting contraception, four dire consequences would result: 1) increased marital infidelity; 2) a general lowering of morality; 3) husbands objectifying their wives; and 4) governments enacting massive birth control programs on their people.

Now that 49 years have passed, as a society can we not see the wisdom of Pope Paul VI's predictions? Many rejections and even offenses to God's plan for married love are now epidemic: 1) After the birth control pill and no-fault divorce were introduced to American society, the divorce rate sky-rocketed, plateaued, then continued to remain high; 2) Cohabitation has emerged as an alternative to marriage with more and more men and woman rejecting marriage; 3) Sexually transmitted infections and diseases have risen to extremely high levels; 4) Pornography is a new plague especially affecting men, youth, and also a growing number of women; 5) Government leaders support forced contraception as has been seen in China's "one-child" policy; and, here in the USA, the recent HHS mandate forces religious organizations (e.g., the Little Sisters of the Poor) to pay for contraception for their employees.

It is time to reembrace our Christ-centered anthropological foundations. As a human community, it is time to honor the reality of how God made us, the blueprint of our humanity. We cannot pretend that our actions related to procreation do not have long-reaching consequences. Decisions to use contraception are not merely of a private matter to be decided between a husband and wife. That is the illusion of the evil one who sows weed seeds in the night. Rather, contraception has long-reaching implications for man and woman, the family, and for society as a whole. It is time to embrace God's plan for marriage by adopting the sound position of Natural Family Planning and rejecting contraception and sterilization.

When a family embraces the path that our good God has set for it, they are like the mustard seed and the yeast. Small almost hidden choices bear great fruit that leaven the whole loaf of the People of God, that lead to others taking rest in the shade of healthy branches.

If we have made mistaken or misinformed decisions in the past, the Lord is rich in mercy and kindness. As the Psalmist sings, "You, O LORD, are good and forgiving... Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant." It is never too late to embrace the path of goodness, truth and freedom. With the Author of Wisdom, we believe that God has the care of all in his capable hands! The Holy Trinity is in charge of all things. And this "mastery over all things," enables our God to be "lenient to all." Mastery and omnipotence allow for mercy and kindness.

If we do not understand the implications of our decisions, we can take the time to learn and appreciate more deeply the teachings of the Church on the human body and God's plan for marriage. In the meanwhile, we can trust that the Holy Spirit will intercede for us. If we have open hearts, if we desire to do God's will, St. Paul assures us that the Spirit will pray on our behalf with "inexpressible groanings." The Spirit will aid us in our weakness and "intercede for the holy ones according to God's will."

When presented with the option, it is more prudent and wise to trust the teachings of the

Church, built on the deep understanding of who we are created to be, rather than simply embrace the ever-changing winds of popular cultural notions. Modern science has a lot to offer and indeed, has given men and women the modern methods of Natural Family Planning. However, when certain applications of science and technology contradict God's design (especially with regard to the value of human life, the nature of human sexuality and marriage, etc.), we must be wise and reject what is false. We must embrace God's plan for married love!

So this week, I invite you to more deeply consider that it is time to say, "Yes!" to God's plan for marriage by taking a deep look at Church teaching on married love and responsible parenthood and the methods of Natural Family Planning.

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