

LOVE, NATURALLY!

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
Cooperating with God's plan for married love

National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week
July 21-27, 2019

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WEEKDAY HOMILY NOTES

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

July 22, 2019 - Feast of Mary Magdalene

The readings today focus on the tender encounter of love. [Option 1: SS 3:1-4b] The Song of Songs celebrates the thralls of love between the bride and her bridegroom, how she seeks after, and to her delight, finds the one whom her “heart loves.” [Option 2: 2 COR 5:14-17] St. Paul says it is “The love of Christ” that “impels us”, i.e., carries us forward in life. Honest, open, and generous love which embraces life is the foundation of human flourishing.

In the Gospel [Jn. 20:1-2, 11-18], Mary Magdalene is the first to encounter the risen Lord and to be his herald to the other disciples. Luke tells us Jesus cast seven demons out of her. Why seven? In the Bible the number seven seems to indicate completion, fullness, and rest. Perhaps this indicates Mary was a totally broken woman, haunted by her past – until she encountered Jesus, in whom she finds unmatched love and tenderness, and in whom she finds rest for her weary soul.

In Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, we become more aware of the source of tender love that unites two persons, husband and wife, in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony which in turn bears the fruitfulness of life.

July 23, 2019

The first reading [Ex 14:21—15:1] is a rehearsal of the dramatic events that took place in the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Pharaoh's forces are defeated when God intervenes for his people and turns the tide against their tormentors. In the Gospel [Mt 12:46-50] Jesus expands the definition of his family to include “whoever does the will of my heavenly Father.” Because of their unique history and heritage, and the events that shaped their consciousness, Israel restricted the boundaries of their identity to only those who were descendants of their ancestors or had subscribed to their law and traditions. This is understandable due to their experience of harassment, slavery and persecution. Jesus is himself a Jew, born to a Jewish mother and descended from an illustrious Jewish family line. Yet, notwithstanding his solid Jewish identity, Jesus opens membership in his most immediate family to all those who will do God's will.

In Natural Family Planning Awareness week, we become aware of how we might expand the definition of our own loving families by doing God's will and being open to life.

July 24, 2019

In the first reading [Ex 16:1-5, 9-15] we see how God provides for his people in spite of their grumbling and lack of trust in him. The Psalm [Ps 78:18-28] celebrates this abundant provision, singing “he commanded the skies above and the doors of heaven he opened; He rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread” and “rained meat upon them like dust, and, like the sand of the sea, winged fowl.” God answered their anxiety and protests with a generous abundance of food, assuring them of his provision even in difficult circumstances. In the Gospel [Mt 13:1-9] Jesus teaches that the seed of God’s Word, when received by open hearts and souls, produces an abundance of spiritual fruits in the lives of those who receive it joyfully.

In Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, we focus on how God provides for families even in difficult circumstances. In *Humane vitae*, Pope St. Paul VI wrote, “The transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator. It has always been a source of great joy to them, even though it sometimes entails many difficulties and hardships.” Recognizing the realistic challenges families face, the Church teaches a way to responsibly determine family size while trusting God to provide for its needs.

July 25, 2019 - Feast of Saint James, Apostle

The first reading [2 Cor. 4:7-15] reflects on the difficult straits that often face the Lord’s followers. Christians live in a fallen and broken world. Living faithfully can be a serious challenge when we find ourselves afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, even struck down as we seek to follow the Lord and obey his word. In spite of these difficulties, Paul remains stalwart, trusting that “the life of Jesus” will be shown to us and through us. The Psalm [Ps 126:1bc-6] celebrates the transformative power of God to change weeping into rejoicing. In the Gospel [Mt 20:20-28] Jesus shows the brothers and their mother that true greatness is demonstrated by sincere service to one another. In Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, we understand that married couples often face difficult straits in their relationships with each other, in providing for their children, and in raising their family in a fallen, broken world. Remaining faithful to God, respecting the nature of woman and man, and living out the vocation of married life, couples find that despite their difficulties, “the life of Jesus may be manifested in them.”

July 26, 2019 - Memorial of Saints Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Our Memorial today celebrates the vocation to marital life and the joy of marital love in a truly unique way. By recalling the lives of Saints Joachim and Anne, father and mother of the Virgin Mary, our Blessed Mother, the Church points up the joys and the sorrows, the highs and the lows, the rewards and the sacrifices of married family life. The first reading [Ex 20:1-17] is the recitation of the Ten Commandments. Among the commandments, the fourth stands out today, “Honor your father and your mother.” In scripture parenthood is held in the highest esteem. In *Humane vitae*, St. Paul VI wrote “husband and wife, through [the] mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.” The Gospel [Mt 13:18-23] shows us the word of God’s kingdom, when it is openly received, “bears fruit and yields” manifold. The fruitfulness of marital love is the gift of children.

In Natural Family Planning Week, we learn that married life and love is especially ordered to cooperating with God in bringing new life into the world by celebrating Holy Matrimony, being faithful to God and to each other, and being open to “the generation and rearing of new lives.”

July 27, 2019 Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

In the first reading [Ex 24:3-8] we see Moses descending from Mount Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments. In the twelve pillars, standing for the tribes, we have the display of the enduring value of family life. The tribes were made up of persons, each created in God’s image and likeness, the fruit of the married love of their parents and ancestors. The bonds of love between family members are the foundations of human civilization. In the Gospel [Mt 13:24-30] we learn that the well-planted wheat field can have weeds sown in it. Faithful families face challenges when weeds of distrust, jealousy, and selfishness are sown into them. The Catechism [#2207] states “The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life ... family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.”

In Natural Family Planning Awareness Week we discover that the bonds of marital love and of family life are the enduring sources and the firm foundation of socialization and civilization.

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