
National NFP Week 2015 DAILY READINGS

Monday July 20, 2015

Exodus. 14: 5-18; Matthew 12: 38-42

Throughout salvation history, individuals have questioned God's wisdom. In the Book of Exodus, the Hebrew people complained to Moses about God's plan to save them. In the Gospel, people wanted clear proof of a "sign" from Jesus. Today, there is a tendency to question so much of Church teaching, especially on reverencing God's vision of human sexuality. Related to this, many ridicule the Church's teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood. People do not understand that the conjugal embrace is designed to be both unitive and procreative and that contraception and sterilization harm God's plan. They have forgotten that marriage, sexual relations, and procreation are interwoven by God Himself. God is the architect of marriage. In this context, the methods of Natural Family Planning are supported by the Church because they respect God's design for married love.

Petition: Let us pray for all couples who need support to accept God's design for responsible parenting in their marriage.

Tuesday July 21, 2015

Exodus 14: 21-15:1; Matthew 12:46-50

In our readings today, we have the powerful symbol of the outstretched hand. In the Book of Exodus, Moses stretched out his hand to save the Hebrew people from the chariots and charioteers of the pharaoh. They worshipped the God who saved them, because they had witnessed God's power over pharaoh. Jesus, when asked the question about who were members of his family, extended his hand to identify those who do the will of his heavenly Father. We renew our commitment of baptism to follow the Lord every time we pray the Our Father. We pray for the strength to be faithful.

During this week devoted to education about Natural Family Planning, let us open our minds and hearts to the Church's teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood. If you have not read the papal letter *Humanae vitae* (Of Human Life) by Blessed Pope Paul VI which beautifully articulates these teachings, visit the Vatican's website to download it. Or go to the U.S. bishops' NFP page on their website at www.usccb.org.

Petition: Let us remember all married couples who are struggling, perhaps considering divorce. May they rediscover their love for each and trust in the hand of God to continually bless their covenant of life and love.

Wednesday July 22, 2015

Exodus 16: 1-5, 9-15; Matthew 13: 1-9

Today, once again we hear how the frustrated, tired and hungry Hebrews lost their faith in God. They were fed up. They were fed up with Moses and with God. Life was tough in the desert. It was so bad that they preferred slavery in Egypt. Miraculously, God supplies food in the middle of the desert. In the gospel, Jesus uses the parable of the sower to provide an example of various degrees of openness to receiving and doing God's will. To follow Jesus takes courage and trust. It requires an open and humble heart to be faithful in the midst of life's struggles. For instance the practice of Natural Family Planning by married couples, takes personal discipline, trust, and real faith to live out this part of the vocation of spousal love. There are many times when the love of celebration is reflected in the love of restraint. Daily faithfulness to God, regardless if a person is single, marriage, or celibate, requires sacrificial love.

Petition: Today, let us remember all of those couples who are unable to have children. May the Lord inspire them to share their love with those who need their love.

Thursday July 22, 2015

Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b; Matthew 13: 10-17

Imagine if you were one of the Hebrews in the desert and had the experience that was just read. It must have stunned all. God was made visible to them in sights and sounds. Scripture scholars call this experience, a *theophany* or a wondrous manifestation of God. In Jesus, the power of God is hidden. Jesus' call to discipleship is an invitation based on love, not fear and trembling. One of the reasons Jesus spoke in parables was to encourage people to be moved by the truth of what he said, not by his power as the Son of God. So much of what we believe as Christians requires a docility of mind and heart that is contrary to the values and ways of this world. This is especially true regarding Church teaching on human sexuality and Natural Family Planning. Yet, this is what spouses are asked to do, to be open to a mystery and a truth that lies below the surface waiting to be discovered.

Petition: Lord God, there are so many ways that we are blind to your presence in our lives. We pray for couples that they may discover the hidden treasure buried in your divine plan for married love. Help more couples discover the beautiful of Natural Family Planning as a wonderful gift that they offer to each other and to you.

Friday July 24, 2015

Exodus 20: 1-17; Matthew 14: 18-23

The phrase, *I am the Lord your God*, was the singular thread that bound the Hebrew people together as a nation. The Ten Commandments was the binding legal structure to form them as a society. In the Old Testament, we see how the betrayal of God's commandments eventually led to the destruction of Israel. The Gospel again describes the blessings to those who are open to doing God's will. Such lives will produce an abundant harvest. Maintaining a mindset to be open to God's will is challenging but it will give us the deepest joy!

Petition: The Ten Commandments are only the foundation of living a life of holiness and goodness. May spouses reflect goodness in all of their actions, to form the lives of their children in virtue. Help them to be faithful to each other and to you.

Saturday July 25, 2015

I Corinthians 4: 7-15; Matthew 20-28

The essence of being a follower of Christ is to admit that we are empty vessels. When we are filled with the Spirit of Christ however, we are able to endure all of the demands of discipleship with a strength that we know comes from the power of God working within us. When we realize that we can do very little on our own, we find ourselves empowered by God. Pride then slips away. We recognize that we are merely servants, our true identity. This was apostolic vocation that St. Andrew learned by following Jesus. Likewise, when we push our prejudices aside to find God's truth, we can lead a deeper life of discipleship.

As we come to the end of National NFP Awareness Week, I would like to challenge you all to take the time to do some reading about the Church's teaching on human sexuality, marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood and the methods of Natural Family Planning. Please visit the U.S. bishops' NFP page on their website at www.usccb.org. There you will find all pertinent Church teaching as well as basic information about the methods of NFP.

Petition: Lord may our hearts be humble. Help us to be servants to each other, especially to those in need. Bless all married couples called to support each other as spouses and in their willingness to bring new life into the world as parents in the service of life.