

PREACHING FOR THE FAMILY
National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week
July 25-31, 2010

Rev. John Gordon, STL, Archdiocese of Newark

HOMILY NOTES

Sunday 25 July 2010

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C
(Anniversary of the papal encyclical, *Humanae vitae*)

Gen 18:20-32 Abraham barter with God for the lives of the innocent of Sodom and Gomorrah. God allows this – for He trusts Abraham as Abraham trusts Him. As Abraham eventually sets it as ten, a quorum needed for Jewish prayer, we see God’s care for life. As we know, even though there were not even ten, God protected the innocent.

We are invited not to fear the plan of the Lord – as awesome/awful as it may seem. His plan is perfect, and He protects those who trust Him.

Ps 138 Lord, on the day I called for help, You answered me.

A psalm of thanksgiving, for the psalmist has learned to trust in the Lord. All we have to do is call upon Him. As we are aware of our need, we realize all the more that He will provide.

Col 2:12-14 We are raised with Christ through faith in the power of God. Even when dead, He has not forgotten us, but has forgiven all our trespasses.

Even when we feel we have messed everything up, when we feel our sin is so vast, perhaps especially in the area of openness to life and trusting in God’s plan for our marriage, the Lord comes as salvation. We are never so far removed that His power, His life, is not stronger. Let us not be afraid to let go of our old way of life, and trust Him to care for us and our needs.

Lk 11:1-13 Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, giving us the ‘Lord’s prayer’. He continues to teach about perseverance in prayer. He reminds us that our prayer is always heard and answered. Even more, He gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

It is impossible to trust without prayer. Prayer is that privileged place of openness and trust that allows true conversion to take root and grow. We can be confident that when we pray, especially as He has taught, that we are not talking to ourselves, but that He hears and answers. Indeed, He is waiting for us to open ourselves to Him in prayer, that He may give us the greatest good, His Holy Spirit. This is the perfect love that takes away all fear.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. Perhaps one of the most significant decisions a person makes is about marriage. Will I marry? Whom should I marry? Where will we live? How will raise our children? How many children will I have? All of these have far reaching consequences. Very often, we seek advice about these, and other, important issues. Of course, the best advice we can seek is from the Lord. Indeed, the Scriptures make clear that God has a plan for our lives and that He is eager to communicate that plan to us.

This week is NFP Awareness week. The theme is “Trust – God has a plan for your marriage.” NFP is about trusting the Lord in the most basic and intimate aspect of married life; intimacy and life. This would be a good time to learn more about NFP and to trust in the Lord God; He has a perfect plan for your marriage, your life.

All of us can respond to this invitation. We can all grow in trusting God. Let us pray for one another that we all may be more open to life; His Life in us, and all that love offers us.

Monday 26 July 2010

Ss. Joachim & Anne, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Jer 13:1-11 Jeremiah's loincloth is rotted, good for nothing. So will the Lord allow the pride of Judah to rot, the great pride of Jerusalem. The wicked shall be like the loincloth. For the Lord had brought Israel as close to him as a loincloth clings to a man. They were to be His people, His beauty, but they did not listen.

All this week we read from the prophet Jeremiah. He speaks to a people that are destined for deportation, because they would not trust the Lord, but wanted to be like the other nations around them.

The Lord desires to be that close, that intimate, with us. How He longs for us to trust Him, even with the most intimate aspects of our lives.

Deut 32:18a *You have forgotten God who gave you birth.*

There are penalties, consequences, for rejecting God.

Mt 13:31-35 Kingdom of heaven like mustard seed; though very small becomes largest of plants. Birds of the sky dwell in its branches. Kingdom of heaven like yeast mixed with flour until the whole batch leavened. Jesus fulfills the prophet who proclaims 'I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what is hidden from foundation of world.'

The smallest of decisions, of actions, can have huge consequences. To be open to life, to trust the Lord with your future, will yield eternal reward.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. If we can only see NFP and trust as a huge step, it will be very difficult to begin. The longest journey begins with but a simple step.

Let us not be afraid to trust Him who has entrusted Himself to us.

Tuesday 27 July 2010

Jer 14:17-22 Jeremiah laments over the destruction wrought upon Jerusalem. He asks if God has cast Judah off completely. He admits our wickedness, that we have sinned against the Lord. There is no one to turn to except Him.

The realization of our situation makes us realize that we deserve it, and also that the Lord wants to rescue us from it. We do not have to stay in the [self] destructive place; He is eager to reach out with the grace that will help us to turn and trust.

Ps 79 *For the glory of Your Name, O Lord, deliver us.*

As we cry out to the Lord for His help, we are able to praise Him for we know He hears and answers our prayer.

Mt 16:36-43 Jesus is asked to explain the parables of the weeds in the field. He makes it an allegory; the sower of good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the Kingdom, the weeds are the children of the Evil One, the enemy who sows them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, the harvesters are angels. At the end, there is reward and punishment for all, depending on the seed that is harvested.

As we realize that our little decisions in the past may not have borne good fruit, we can be frightened that there is only darkness and punishment awaiting us. The truth is, as we have heard so often this week, the Lord is eager to rescue and set us right. We have nothing to fear as we trust Him more and more. Indeed, we begin to realize that trusting in the Lord and His plan for our marriage is the only thing that makes sense.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. As we seek to entrust our lives to the Lord, we may realize that we have failed, especially in the area of life. We may have developed a contraceptive mentality and not been open to life.

Do not be afraid, the Lord's love is bigger than our sin.

Wednesday 28 July 2010

Jer 15:10, 16-21 Jeremiah laments his birth and his condition in life. He recognizes the captivating power of the Word of God. He realizes that he is to present this Word to the people of God. They will reject, but he is to be faithful. The Lord is with him.

When we decide to trust the Lord, we can feel like we are all alone. Perhaps our spouse is not so trusting, certainly others in our circle of family and friends are not as supportive. We might feel that we have made a mistake to trust the Lord. Be encouraged to press on, He is with us to raise us up. He has a plan for our marriage.

Ps 59 *God is my refuge on the day of distress.*

The Lord does rescue us. He is our strength. Praise Him.

Mt 13:44-46 Kingdom of heaven treasure in field, pearl of great price; it is worth everything.

We often have to dig deep to discover and keep the treasure that the Lord is offering to us. The cost is trust. Trust is more than an investment, it is our very lives placed into His hands. There is no wider way to spend oneself.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. Do I have what it takes to trust the Lord? Am I willing to believe that His perfect plan is good for the small, the medium, the large issues of my life?

NFP is an active way for me, for us, to grow in trust.

Thursday 29 July 2010

St. Martha

Jer 18:1-6 The Lord speaks to Jeremiah at the house of the potter. As the potter reworks the clay, so is the house of Israel in the hands of the Lord.

As we are supple in the hands of the Lord, so He is able to rework our hearts so that we can trust Him more and more.

Ps 146 *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob.*

Put not your trust in princes; trust in the Lord alone. He has the perfect plan for your life.

[the Gospel is proper for today's memorial. One of two options]

Jn 11:19-27 Jesus teaches Martha that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord, I have come to believe.

The conversion to trust often needs a revelation from the Lord. As He reveals Himself to us, even in our darkest grief, we are invited to trust His perfect plan. He is Life.

Or

Lk 10:38-42 Martha and Mary with Jesus. Martha is anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken away from her.

Even as we struggle with making the right decision to trust the Lord, we may find ourselves somewhat overwhelmed with other concerns that would rob us of this trust. As we choose the better part, it will be safe and secure for us.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. See how St. Martha grows – from anxiousness to belief. May we grow in the same way.

Let us not forget to encourage those couples that are faithfully utilizing NFP. May we support them in their love.

Friday 30 July 2010

Jer 26:1-9 Jeremiah, under obedience to the Lord, stands in the court of the house of the Lord and says: Thus says the Lord: if you disobey Me, I will treat this house like Shiloh. The priests, prophets, and people heard Jeremiah and cried out “You must be put to death!”

Even some of the people we might respect in terms of their religious piety and devotion, might not support us as we trust the Lord more and more. They may tell us that we have to rely on ourselves, that we have to have other plans besides what the Lord might provide. They may cause us to fear that the Lord will not be able to deliver all that He has promised. Let us pray that we may trust Him and His plan for our lives, fully.

Ps 69 Lord, in Your great love, answer me.

Although my enemies are many, my zeal is for the Lord. We are confident that He hears and answers our prayer.

Mt 13:54-58 Jesus returns to His native place and teaches in their synagogue. They feel that they know Him and so they take offense at Him. Jesus responds, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place.” He did not work many mighty deeds there due to their lack of faith.

As we honor the Lord, we grow in our trust of Him. May we cultivate the gift of faith, that His mighty deeds be done in our lives. May His plan for us be realized.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. Where do I seek support to grow in trust of God? I must seek it from those who are also seeking to grow in such trust. Pray that we can support one another in love and life.

Saturday 31 July 2010

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Jer 26:11-16,24 As Jeremiah is threatened with death by the religious leaders he responds: “It was the Lord who sent me to prophesy against this house and city. Now, therefore, reform your ways; listen to the voice of the Lord, so that He will repent of the evil with which He threatens you.” The princes and the people respond to the religious leaders that this man does not deserve death, for it is in the Name of the Lord that he speaks to us.

We may be surprised who walks with us on our journey of trust. There are many walking who want to hear and follow the Lord. And we are strong, they are encouraged, and we grow stronger.

Ps 69 Lord, in Your great love, answer me.

A prayer that the Lord would rescue us. As He does, we respond with praise and gratitude.

Mt 14:1-12 The beheading of John the Baptist. Note the criticism of Herod given by John, the oath of Herod, the dance of Herodias' daughter.

Even though following the Lord fully may require ultimate sacrifice; His plan for our lives extends beyond this life into eternity. Nobody remembers the name of the girl, and Herod and his wife are remembered with contempt. John the Baptist is a saint.

Trust – God has a plan for your marriage. NFP can be a saint maker! As I entrust this basic and intimate aspect of our life, our marriage, we may need heroic sanctity. The Holy Spirit will provide, in abundance, all we need to do is

Trust – God has a perfect plan for your marriage!

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