

NFP WEEK—HOMILY NOTES

Pursue a lasting love

MARRIAGE

Create hope for the future!

Natural Family Planning ...

supporting God's gifts of love and life in marriage

Sunday, July 20, 2025

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year C)

Lectionary: 108

Reading 1: Genesis 18:1–10a

Responsorial Psalm: 15:2–3, 3–4, 5

Reading 2: Colossians 1:24–28

Gospel: Luke 10:38–42

This year's theme for National NFP Awareness Week is "Pursue a lasting love ... Marriage, create hope for the future!" The Church in the United States takes this time of the year to reflect on the nature of married love and the gift of life as designed by God and the ethical natural methods of family planning which support God's design for married love. Married love is captured beautifully in the phrase "divine hospitality" which our readings today reveal.

Why?

Because among the loving relationships that men and women can have, the unique nature of marriage mirrors God's love in that it creates the one-flesh union of husband and wife and can bring new life into the world. So, let's take a look at divine hospitality.

If understood correctly, divine hospitality permeates salvation history from the Book of Genesis through the Book of Revelation. It is woven into the very fabric of God's universal call to salvation.

We see how God's hospitality is repeatedly offered to individuals and communities, inviting them into a covenantal relationship filled with blessings and promises. Even the hunger and pursuit of a lasting love felt in our hearts is the invitation to dwell in communion with God forever, the promise of a hope-filled future.

In today's readings, first from the Book of Genesis and then in the Gospel, we are offered two examples of hospitality.

In our first example from the Book of Genesis, Abraham, while communing with God, notices three men who appear outside his tent. As a gesture of hospitality, Abraham welcomes them into his tent to escape the desert heat and humbly offers to wash their feet. Sarah quickly prepares a meal for them. In return for their hospitality, one of the travelers prophesied to Abraham and Sarah that their generous kindness would lead to the birth of a longed-for child within the year. In this biblical story, the sacred author makes a subtle connection between the hospitality of offering strangers food and drink and Abraham and Sarah's spousal openness to be blessed with a child. The story highlights how God's blessings flow through our acts of kindness and openness to the needs of those around us.

In our second example of hospitality from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus visited the home of His friends Lazarus, Martha, and Mary to rest, eat, and enjoy their friendship. One of the most frequent scenes in the Gospels is when people invite Jesus to come to their homes to enjoy their hospitality. Jesus loved these small, intimate gatherings, which were ideal for Him to teach about God the Father's love, the need for repentance, forgiveness, mercy, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. On this occasion, at the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus taught Martha that genuine hospitality was more than just serving food and drink to a guest. It can be something more, a gesture rich in spiritual sustenance.

Have you ever wondered what gave the array of outcasts and sinners, the despised, in the Gospels, the courage and confidence to approach Jesus? What was it about Jesus' demeanor that attracted all sorts of people to him? Perhaps, those hungry, desperate, and aching for a bit of tenderness could hear in the voice of Jesus and see in His eyes what is called "hospitality of soul"—how He made room by His compassion and tender care. Have you ever asked yourself this question? What is it about Jesus that attracts you to follow Him? It is a question worth pondering.

As the embodiment and perfect expression of God the Father's love, perhaps the magnetism of Jesus lay in how He radiated a heartfelt, merciful love, and vision of hope for the future. Maybe it was His words of reassurance that no repentant sinner would be turned away from God the Father's welcoming arms and all-embracing love.

The divine hospitality shown in Jesus, reminds us that God's love is not distant or detached, but personal, inviting, and life-giving. I am reminded of how this is enfolded in marriage. Reflecting on today's readings in the examples of Abraham and Sarah, and also Jesus with Martha and Mary, we see that divine hospitality is about much more than food and drink. Welcoming gestures of kindness can touch the soul. Rightly offered, hospitality is a form of charity in the service of others.¹ Yes, hospitality is a ministry of service that all of us can practice daily.

When we embody God's welcoming love and offer hospitality to others through a meal, a helping hand, or a heartfelt conversation, we mirror God's divine hospitality as His sons and daughters, true disciples of His son.

Like Jesus, we all need to strive to mirror His "hospitality of the soul," to make room for others through everyday acts of kindness and compassion, such as a simple "hello," a smile of recognition, a listening ear. Every gesture of welcoming another is an act of participation in God's eternal love, echoing the biblical call to love our neighbors as ourselves.²

When we try to practice the virtue of hospitality, we will begin to see the sacred and inherent dignity and worth of every person we encounter. Kindness replaces hatred, wounds are soothed, God's love flourishes, hope is nurtured, and joy is shared. As we practice divine hospitality, we create warm human spaces where people feel valued and loved, marriages are strengthened, and the Gospel is proclaimed.³

Christian couples have the unique vocation to practice hospitality, as the domestic church, where in their home spouses seek to live according to God's plan for love and life, thereby creating Christian homes and disposing themselves to be "cooperators in the love of God the creator."⁴ Their mutual love and hospitality create a "sanctuary of life."⁵

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2014): 102.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 103

⁴ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 28 quoting *Gaudium et spes*, no. 50.

⁵ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 92.

As we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, the pledge of Jesus continued love and foretaste of the heavenly banquet, it is an opportunity for us to rest and be fed by the table of God's word and to receive from the altar Christ's gift of himself, his very body and blood, the divine food and sustenance for our earthly pilgrimage of faith as Jesus' disciples.⁶

Today, people are hungry for real food for both body and soul. May we be a welcoming Church, truly Catholic in all ways, living as missionary disciples, who are willing to share the generous divine hospitality, saving life and love we have received, and thereby lead hungry hearts to pursuing lasting love and creating hope for the future in Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.⁷

Please add the intention below in the Sunday Prayers of the Faithful:

During this Natural Family Planning week, we pray that all married couples will cooperate with our God to create homes filled with the warmth of divine hospitality and open to the gift of children. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

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⁶ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 38

⁷ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 119-120.