

Spring 2012 Month One Bulletin Announcements

Religious Liberty

WEEK ONE



Marriage Matters: Moral Laws Lead to Happiness

Who do we say that Jesus is? Hopefully our definition would include the word “God”! But who do we say that God is? Is He a remote lawgiver in the sky who gives us arbitrary rules that are impossible to follow? That is a common misconception, even among baptized Christians. What are God’s moral laws for, however? What is the Church’s teaching on morals for? Are these instruments of a jealous tyrant? Or do they put pleasure in the context of God’s wise, and loving design for reality, in which human dignity and happiness require that we embrace pleasure intelligently and according to the demands of true love? It is only in terms of God’s plan for sexuality that human beings can treat each other with respect rather than selfishly. When wrenched out of the context of the one-flesh union of husband and wife open to life, sexual pleasure does not serve our good. Peter today shows that he trusts in Jesus as his Lord; can we trust that what God wants for our lives is meant to make us happy?

Bulletin: “In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization.”

Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, §33

For more information, visit: mncc.org/issues/marriage and Facebook.



Marriage Matters: True Freedom is the freedom to do the good

“Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect?”

As Paul says in the letter to the Romans, we must allow God’s wise and loving Will to transform our thinking, so that we do not think the like the dominant culture but like God. We live in a culture of death, in which God’s truth about sexuality, marriage, and life is obscured by self-interest and the selfish pursuit of pleasure. This is why the Church’s teaching on morals is so countercultural. But God’s Will for us is a law of life, which frees us to be truly happy. Freedom is not the ability to do whatever we please, acting out of emotion rather than out of intelligence; that is actually slavery to our desires. Freedom is being free enough to give ourselves away, even when it is hard. As Jesus tells us, pursuing God’s Will involves carrying our cross and dying to our selfish desires, in order to arise with Him to new life forever. It is only by Christ’s self-sacrificial love, poured out for us in the Eucharist that will soon be made present on this altar, that we are able to love perfectly. It transforms us completely, so that we are able to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice for true love.

Bulletin: “The human being is made for love and cannot live without love. When it is manifested as the total gift of two persons in their complementarities, love cannot be reduced to emotions or feelings, much less to mere sexual expression... the truth of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of unity and fidelity...”

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §223

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Marriage Matters: True freedom is love that is guided by truth

All you need is love, St. Paul tells us in the letter to the Romans. But he also makes clear that love entails following God's commandments. They are not a bunch of "thou shalt nots" or random rules from God. Rather, they are the laws that lead to happiness. Moral laws are as necessary to our human flourishing as the natural "laws" (such as gravity) that God has put in place in our world. Freedom is not the ability to do whatever we please, acting out of emotion rather than out of intelligence, that is actually slavery to our desires. Freedom is being free enough to give ourselves away, even when it is hard.

This is why God urges us in the book of Ezekiel to dissuade those who are following a path of unhappiness by not following God's law. Jesus reinforces this lesson. God loves each person into existence. The Father has created us for no other reason than to share His happiness with us. The natural moral law is the path to this happiness of eternal love. This is why the Church never ceases to proclaim even unpopular truths, such as the truth of human sexuality being reserved for marriage. Married love is designed to be lifelong and life-giving, and only in this way can sexual love be real love. Let us recommit ourselves to evangelizing our culture on these important truths!

Bulletin: "Christian faith and ethics are not meant to stifle love, but to make it healthier, stronger and more truly free."

Pope Benedict XVI, Fifth World Meeting of Families, Valencia, Spain 7/8/2006

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Marriage Matters: We are made for self-gift

Today's feast focuses our attention on the great means of our salvation, the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross shows the ultimate basis for the truth that the Second Vatican Council emphasized: "[M]an... cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." God is love, and He gives of himself completely, all the way to death on a cross. And He continues to give of himself in the Eucharist, which makes the sacrifice of the Cross present to us here and now. We are made in His image. We can only fulfill ourselves in imitating Jesus' self-giving. Remember what Pope John Paul II used to say: "Be not afraid!" Be not afraid to give of yourself completely in love! For most of us, this is done in the vocation of marriage. For some of us, we give ourselves in the generous acceptance of the priesthood or religious life. In whatever path, we are given the great gift of being made free enough to give ourselves to God and to others. Let us recommit ourselves today to following our crucified Lord, in order to find ourselves in his Resurrection, in which the enemies of love—sin and death—are finally overcome.

Bulletin: "Just as the Incarnation of the Son of God reveals its true meaning in the Cross, so genuine human love is self-giving and cannot exist if it seeks to detach itself from the Cross."

Pope Benedict XVI, 6/6/2005

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