

Father O'Connor's Homily for 3 October 2021
Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time-B
Respect Life Sunday
Weekend Two: Homily before Lay Witness Talk

Genesis 2: 18-24
Hebrews 2: 9-11
Mark 10: 2-16

Monday, October 4th, is the feast day of one of everybody's favorite saints, Francis of Assisi.

Saint Francis loved life and he revered all of God's creation. He would walk barefoot on the spring soil lest he crush the new life of nature. Francis would genuflect before an expectant mother, acknowledging the precious life that she was carrying in the tabernacle of her womb. And Francis had a special love for animals.

Saint Francis' love for animals reminds me of today's First Reading, from the very first book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis. There is Adam, the first man. God says, **"It is not good for the man to be alone."** So God creates the animals and Adam gives each one of them a name.

But God knows that none of the animals, as nice as they were, could be a suitable partner for Adam. So God, the Author of Life, puts Adam to sleep, takes out one of his ribs, and creates the first woman, Eve. And God presents them to each other in marriage.

Notice that from the very beginning – in the first book of the Bible, Genesis chapter 2 – marriage between a man and a woman was God's idea and is God's gift to the human race.

In today's Gospel, Jesus quotes from this same passage from Genesis: **"God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"** [Mark 10: 6-8 and Genesis 2: 24].

Jesus raises God's original gift of marriage to be a sacrament. That is how sacred the calling of marriage is. A couple united in faithful love, and in cooperation with God, the Author of Life, may even find their love becoming flesh, incarnate, in the conception of their child.

At the end of today's Gospel, Jesus embraces the children and blesses them, saying: **“Let the children come to Me. Do not prevent them. For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these”** [Mark 10: 14].

These readings from the Bible are perfect for this first Sunday of October, known as **Respect Life Sunday**.

We must never tire of proclaiming the Church's ageless and unchanging belief that every human life is sacred and has value from the moment it begins at conception until the moment of natural death, and all the time in between.

Stewardship is the way that we use and reverence the lives that God has given us.

As a steward of God's bountiful blessings, I acknowledge that all that I have is a gift from God: my very life itself and my next breath, my time, my talents and my treasure. God wants me to receive these gifts from Him gratefully, to develop them with an increase and, with gratitude, to share a portion of them generously with others, so that each person gives as they have been blessed and each person receives as they need.

“Stewardship as a way of life” is all about becoming even better disciples of Jesus: being ready to say “yes” to His call to follow Him and to fully live the Christian life every day.

I hope that you received your stewardship packet in the mail this week. It contains: (1) a letter from me; (2) an explanation of our annual stewardship renewal in Saint Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parishes; (3) a “Ministry Catalog” which describes each of the current ministries in our parishes as well as a contact person; most ministries are available for members of both of our parishes to participate in; (4) and a “2021 Commitment Card” specially marked for each parish that enables each household to check off ministry involvements that you would like to renew for another year or that you would like to join for one year. [Like Julia Greeley, “What do you have to offer Jesus in your little red wagon this year?”]

If your stewardship packet did not arrive, please let us know in the parish office because we want every household to have one. There are also some available at the doorways of the church.

Next weekend, 9-10 October, is our annual Stewardship Commitment Sunday. You are asked to bring your completed cards to Mass with your one-year commitments of your time, talent and treasure. And we will place them in the collection baskets along with our regular Sunday offerings.

We have a lot to pray about and to do in our world today. And we ask the prayers of Immaculate Mary, the patroness of our United States, and of our favorite, Saint Francis of Assisi, in our efforts to promote reverence and respect for every human life. And that we grow as disciples of Jesus, by being grateful and generous stewards of His bountiful blessings.

This weekend we have a couple that you know at both Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes, who will offer their personal testimony at the Masses about how “the stewardship way of life” is enhancing their own lives. They are Nick Toney and Olivia Sliman who, since their marriage on 10 July 2021, are now known as Mr. Nick and Mrs. Olivia Toney. Please welcome them to the pulpit.