



Preaching Resource: World Marriage Sunday 2020  
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
February 9, 2020

Below are a few suggested themes, reflective questions, and resources for preaching on World Marriage Sunday 2020. For more instruction or inspiration, visit [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org) or [marriageuniqueforareason.org](http://marriageuniqueforareason.org).

**First Reading:** Isaiah 58: 7-10

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 112: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

**Gospel:** Matthew 5: 13-16

❖ **The Word of God**

The readings and Gospel for this Sunday all speak in various ways of the light that the Lord brings into our lives, particularly the light of Christ crucified, and the mission to proclaim this light and to actually become *the light of the world, the salt of the earth*. These readings are particularly providential on this Sunday, which is being celebrated as World Marriage Day during this National Marriage Week (Feb. 7-14).

- The word of God leads us to the heart of what it means to be the Church, and therefore also to the heart of what it means to be a Christian family: For the Church and our families to be light, we must be centered on Christ and imitate Him, going out to the peripheries to bring the Gospel.
- Based on the theme chosen for this year (Stories from the Domestic Church) the homily for this Sunday might emphasize the family as the domestic church. A question could be posed near the beginning of the homily: Where might the word of God be leading us when it comes to our family life?

❖ **Connecting to Marriage and Family**

- *Marriage and family concerns everyone:* Each of us comes from a family. Each of us is a son or a daughter. In God's plan every child is meant to be the fruit of his or her mother's and father's love for each other in the sacred bond of marriage. This is why conversations about marriage and the family in the public square concern all of us, and this is why the Church's teaching on marriage and family is important for all of us.
- *Acknowledging the experience and pain of broken marriages and families:* Sadly, many of us have experienced or know family or friends who have experienced the pain of a broken marriage



# FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

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and family. Each experience is unique, and the Lord's mercy is great. Even for those of us who find our family situation difficult – and that probably includes all of us at one time or another! – we each have a role to play in God's vision of the family. Ultimately, all of us are part of the perfect family – God's family – as beloved sons and daughters of God the Father.

- *“Domestic Church”*: Very early in the life of the Church, the Christian family, founded upon the covenant of marriage between husband and wife, together with any children they were blessed with, became understood as the *domestic church*. This understanding has profound implications.
- *Considering particular aspects of the family as the domestic church*: What does it mean to call the family the domestic church? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of the family as the place where one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life. (CCC, nos. 1656-57). A particular aspect(s) of the domestic church might be highlighted. Concrete stories or examples could assist as well. Here, let's take three of the points mentioned in the Catechism as it relates to the family: love, forgiveness, and prayer:
  - *Family as school of love*: First, family life is where we are meant to learn to love. The family has its foundation in the promise of lifelong, faithful, and fruitful love between husband and wife. In good times and in bad, in sickness and health, married love gives an exceptional witness to the fact that love has a language, and that language is the gift of self. Spouses live and learn this daily and hand it on to their children. The home is the school of love, where we learn to counter selfishness with self-giving, and rejection with acceptance. No marriage and family are perfect. The key is in constantly striving to love, taking the risk to love, every single day. Such love always bears fruit, even if we don't immediately see its results.
  - *Family as school of forgiveness*: Second, the family, as the domestic church, is called to be a school of forgiveness. Every day, we are reminded that we are far from perfect. We are all sinners in need of mercy, forgiveness, and healing. Imagine how different our society would be if every home were truly a school of forgiveness! But this is the great task of the family, which begins with the husband and wife, father and mother. Spouses who regularly forgive each other, and seek to love each other more fully, hand on a precious gift to their children and to those around them. True forgiveness does not overlook the evil committed - it accounts for it but then introduces something new: mercy, healing, and a renewed beginning.
  - *Family as school of prayer*: And now for the third point, on prayer: to love and to forgive in the way that Christ calls us requires the Lord's grace. We cannot be salt of the earth and

# FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

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February 9, 2020

the light of the world without God. Only by prayer - itself a grace - do we keep the Lord at the center and recognize our need for Him. We've likely heard the line from Fr. Patrick Peyton: The family that prays together stays together. This isn't a formula for a life of ease. Difficulties will still come. It is rather a promise of hope. For every difficulty we face, we do so in the light of the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. A family that prays together makes room for God and for His grace and mercy. As a domestic church, the family is called to be a school of prayer, keeping the Lord at the center of the home, so that His light will shine brightly throughout the home, into the neighborhood, the community, and the world.

### ❖ Concluding Points

- On this World Marriage Day, we thank our heavenly Father for the gift and blessing of marriage and the family. As we strive to live our particular vocations and respond to the Lord's grace in our lives, let's also consider how we might dedicate renewed prayer and attention to marriage and the family. As a start, here are possible areas we might consider:
  - First, we begin with prayer: Let's remember to pray with and for marriages and families throughout our nation.
  - Second, let us reclaim Sunday as the Day of the Lord and a day of the family. We are already doing it now by participating in the celebration of Mass. But is there something more the Lord is inviting us to when we go back home? Praying together, or spending some time together in leisure, or having dinner together as a family...
  - And third, let us consider how our homes, families and parish are places of hospitality and welcome. How might the Lord be calling us to become more generous? Maybe we will find renewed ways to shine the light of Christ to others. This could include reaching out to those who are lonely, or sick, or are suffering because they don't have family members to care for them.
- Lastly, let us stay close to those who are hurting from difficulties in their families and let them know they are loved. This is where families can reach out with love to others in need. Ultimately, the Church is the "family of God" and all are welcomed with joy by God the Father. All of us are beloved sons and daughters of God. As domestic churches, Christian families witness to the promise of Christ through his Church that no one is ever alone.

*May the Lord be glorified in all our words and deeds, and may our families shine with the light of Christ for all to see.*

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## ❖ Selected Resources

- Pope John Paul II: Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, November 22, 1981.
- Pope Francis: *Catechesis on the Family*, January 7, 2015 – November 18, 2015.
- Pope Francis: Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, March 19, 2016.
- USCCB, Pastoral Letter *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 2009.
- USCCB, *For Your Marriage* website: [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org).
- USCCB, *Por Tu Matrimonio* website: [portumatrimonio.org](http://portumatrimonio.org).
- USCCB, *Marriage Unique for A Reason* website: [marriageuniqueforareason.org](http://marriageuniqueforareason.org).
- On marriages in crisis: *For Your Marriage* [list of ministries](#) that help married couples in difficulty or crisis.
- On healthy sexuality within marriage: Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, 1968.
- On divorce: USCCB, *Divorce and the Church's Healing Ministry*, 2010.
- On lust and pornography – USCCB: *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*, 2015 and *Clean Heart* [series of pamphlets](#), 2016.