



PREACHING RESOURCES FOR WORLD MARRIAGE DAY 2021

The following is a compilation of preaching resources and homily notes from various sources for World Marriage Day, February 14, 2021, Cycle B

USCCB RESOURCES FOR PREACHING World Marriage Sunday Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 14, 2021

First Reading: Lev. 13:1-2, 44-46

Responsorial Psalm: Ps. 32:1-2, 5, 11

Second Reading: 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1

Alleluia: Lk. 7:16

Gospel: Mk. 1:40-45

Possible Themes, Reflective Questions, Resources, Quotes

- The wound of leprosy kept the leper isolated from society. Sometimes the wounds in our lives or the lives of others may keep us away from the Church or from our neighbors. By touching the leper, Christ boldly reached out to him in his isolation and offered him consolation in his distress.
 - Am I or someone I know afraid to return to the Church because of divorce or separation? Have I reached out to someone suffering from domestic abuse or violence or infertility or miscarriage?
 - On domestic violence – USCCB: “When I Call for Help” (2002).
 - “Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 44
 - “We cannot forget that ‘mercy is not only the working of the Father; it becomes a criterion for knowing who his true children are. In a word, we are called to show mercy because mercy was first shown to us’. This is not sheer romanticism or a lukewarm response to God’s love, which always seeks what is best for us, for ‘mercy

is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness which she shows to believers; nothing in her preaching and her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy'. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 310.

- The law regarding leprosy is given to Moses and Aaron in the first reading. However, in the Gospel, Christ, 'the great prophet' restores the health of the leper who approaches with faith and confidence. We all have forms of leprosy in the form of spiritual illness but the mercy of God is always available to those who ask it.
 - What kind of leprosy do I bear? Where do I need healing? Are there wounded areas of my marriage that can be healed? What areas of my sexuality need healing? Do I need to ask for or grant forgiveness to my spouse?
 - On forgiveness – Article: "Forgiveness Fundamentals" on For Your Marriage.org
 - On lust and pornography – USCCB: Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography (2015) and Clean Heart series of pamphlets (2016)
 - On healthy sexuality within marriage – Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, 1968.
 - "[...] the family is a great training ground for the mutual giving and forgiving without which no love can last for long. Without self-giving and seeking forgiveness love does not last, it does not endure." Pope Francis, General Audience, Nov. 4, 2015.
- The responsorial psalm reminds us to turn to the Lord in time of trouble and He will fill us with the joy of salvation. We all experience times of trouble, devastation, and difficulty. Marriage can also turn from a time of joy to sadness. Christ desires to heal these troubles and offer the joy of salvation. He does this through the sacrament of reconciliation and with the help of the sacramental grace received on your wedding day.
 - Have I turned to the Lord and to the sacraments for help in time of trouble? Am I mindful of the grace received for my marriage in the sacrament of matrimony? To whom will I turn in the Church in my time of need?
 - On divorce – USCCB: "Divorce and the Church's Healing Ministry" (2010).
 - On marriages in crisis – For Your Marriage list of ministries that help married couples in difficulty or crisis.
 - "The history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family. [...] the family is placed at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. To the family is entrusted the task of striving, first and foremost, to unleash the forces of good, the source of which is found in Christ the Redeemer of man. Every family unit needs

to make these forces their own so that [...] the family will be ‘strong with the strength of God’.” Pope St. John Paul II, Letter to Families, no. 23.

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 232-238.
- In today’s second reading, St. Paul reminds us that in whatever we do, “do everything for the glory of God.” If we are mindful of this exhortation, our lives can experience a transformation, as well as our marriages and families. God is glorified when our lives are guided by faith, hope, and charity in all that we do.
 - How can I be more aware of doing everything in my life and vocation for the glory of God? Do I see my marriage as an opportunity to glorify God? Am I building my family into a domestic church of faith, hope, and charity?
 - “Christian marriage, like the other sacraments, ‘whose purpose is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God,’ is in itself a liturgical action glorifying God in Jesus Christ and in the Church.” Pope St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 56.
 - “The celebration of the sacrament must have this co-responsibility of family life in the Church’s great mission of love. And thus the life of the Church is enriched every time by the beauty of this spousal covenant, and deteriorates every time it is disfigured. The Church, in order to offer to all the gifts of faith, hope and love, needs the courageous fidelity of spouses to the grace of their sacrament! The People of God need their daily journey in faith, in love and in hope, with all the joys and the toils that this journey entails in a marriage and a family.” Pope Francis, General Audience, May 6, 2015.
- In today’s Gospel, the man with leprosy approaches Jesus to ask for healing. Jesus is not afraid to reach out to touch one considered to be “unclean” by everyone in the community, even though this carried the risk of having the community consider him to share in that “uncleanness.” Today, the truth about marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman is not always popular in our contemporary community, but it needs courageous witnesses whose faith is stronger than public opinion.
 - How do I approach the subject of marriage with peers? Am I unafraid to defend the truth of marriage as the union of one man and one woman? Do I need to be better educated on the reasons for this?
 - Visit *Marriage: Unique for a Reason* for videos, study guides, and catechesis about the authentic meaning of marriage. “In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God’s plan in all its grandeur.” Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 307.

Other Resources

- Pope Francis’s Catechesis on the Family, January 7, 2015 – November 18, 2015.
 - USCCB, Pastoral Letter Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, 2009.
 - USCCB, For Your Marriage website: foryourmarriage.org
 - USCCB, Por Tu Matrimonio website: portumatrimonio.org
 - USCCB, Marriage: Unique for a Reason website: marriageuniqueforareason.org
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Homily Notes for Cycle B – Diocese of Trenton

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Leviticus 13: 1-2; 45-46

- We are called to do the right thing, even if it is unpleasant.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

- Do all things with the intent of honoring God, no matter how small or simple the task.
- Be an example of living for God to others.
- Be respectful to all.
- We are called to be “responsible” in our Christianity, in both things we do and refrain from doing.

Gospel: Mark 1: 40-45

- The man may have been acting irresponsibly when he shared the miracle with others, based on Jesus’ request to tell no one.
- Even though the man was ordered to keep his healing a secret, perhaps he simply could not contain himself.
- The man shared his joy for what Jesus gave him with many people.

Food For Thought:

I wonder if the man who was healed in the Gospel really meant to disobey Jesus, or if he was simply so overjoyed about being healed that he could not contain himself? Maybe he felt so compelled to share the gift that Jesus gave him that he had to tell others. Perhaps there is something we can learn from the man. If we took the time every day to recognize the gifts Jesus has given us, how could we not be overjoyed as well? While the first and second readings remind us of our need to be responsible and respectful of others, both in our life and in our Christianity, perhaps the Gospel reminds us that it should be hard for us to control our Joy about the love of Jesus in our lives!

Story:

A young girl went shopping with her mother for a Father's Day gift for her dad. When she came home from the shopping trip the mother reminded her not to tell her father about the gift, as it was going to be a surprise. The little girl agreed and ran into the house. As soon as she saw her dad she ran up to him, smiling from ear to ear, and jumped up into his arms for a hug. With her arms wrapped around his neck she began to whisper in his ear. Unable to stop herself, she told him what the Father's Day gift would be, but quickly followed it by "but it's a secret!" Even though she knew not to tell her dad about the gift, her excitement was too much for her to keep it in.

Petition:

That we may recognize the gifts God has given us and to share the joy of our Lord with others, we pray to the Lord.

Bulletin Announcement:

There are many things in our lives we get excited about, but is our faith one of them? What can you do to share your faith with great joy?

Sunday Connection (from Loyola Press)

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle B

Sunday, February 14, 2021

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:40-45

Jesus cures a person with leprosy, who reports his cure to everyone.

Family Connection

Today's Gospel invites us to think about the choices we make as individuals and as a family. Jesus was faced with a choice in today's Gospel. By choosing to heal the man with leprosy, Jesus showed God's compassion for the sick and the outcast. The man knew that Jesus had a choice and that Jesus could reject his request. He may have expected that Jesus would not help him. The social taboos regarding leprosy certainly gave him little on which to base his hope. In the person of the man with leprosy, we see an image of all those in need. The sick and the outcast of our world are watching us, to see if we as Christians will choose to extend ourselves to others in need of healing and compassion.

Gather with your family and talk about some of the choices you have made as a family. (where to go on vacation, what activities to do together, how to spend our evenings, and so on) How

does your family go about making these decisions? What do your choices communicate to others about your family's values? In today's Gospel, Jesus was faced with a choice. Read today's Gospel, Mark 1:40-45. In choosing to heal the man with leprosy, Jesus chose to show God's compassion and mercy. All our choices reflect our faith, and others are watching. Conclude in prayer together, asking God to help your family show compassion to others in your family decisions. Pray together today's Psalm, Psalm 32, or pray the [Prayer for Vocations](#).

Homily for World Marriage Sunday - Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

(Written and delivered by Fr. Phillip Bloom, Pastor
St. Mary of the Valley Parish, Monroe, Washington)

We have a quite challenging Gospel for this Sunday. As a lead into it, I would like to cite some of Pope Benedict's words about marriage. He notes how the first chapters of the Bible describe man's original solitude. Even though he was in a magnificent garden and had the care of animals, to whom he gave names, he still felt lonely. Therefore God cast a deep sleep over him and took out a part of him, a rib, and built it up with flesh. When the man awoke he saw the woman and cried out, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

Pope Benedict then makes a surprising reference to a Greek myth found in the writings of Plato. The myth imagines that man was initially spherical (shaped like a globe or a soccer ball) but because of his pride, Zeus split him in two parts. Afterwards, the man went searching for his other self, his other half. The pope noted that man is incomplete and feels driven to communion with someone of the opposite sex. Then he quotes that verse of the Bible which is so vital for us today, "For that reason a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and the two become one flesh." (Gen 2:24)

Today's Gospel also highlights man's incompleteness. It underscores that insufficiency in a radical way: the case of man with the disease of leprosy. It is hard for us to appreciate what that meant. An early Christian writer named Gregory of Nazianzus described leprosy in vivid terms. He tells about how the disease ate away the flesh and bones of the victims to such an extent that they were unrecognizable. To identify themselves, they would say, "I am the child of that man; that one is my mother; this is my name; once upon a time you were my friend and intimate with me." But now all that had changed. As Gregory wrote:

"They can no longer make themselves recognizable by their features, by what was formerly characteristic of their face. Gnawed by the disease, they have lost their fortune, their parents, even their bodies."

Gregory goes on to describe the horrible smell which repels even the most compassionate person. "A mother," he says, "would like to embrace her child, but she dreads the flesh of that child as she dreads an enemy." Laws forbade lepers from entering cities, from traveling on public roads or from touching streams, ponds and wells.

After describing the misery and isolation of lepers, Gregory then recalls what Christ did for them. As we heard in today's Gospel, he did not shrink from them. Rather, he touched the leper. That gesture must have amazed Jesus' followers. It no doubt caused a chill to run down the spines of St. Gregory's congregation.

For us it is difficult to think of a comparison. Leprosy holds no terror today since we know that antibiotics can effectively treat the disease. AIDS perhaps offers a certain comparison, but no knowledgeable person fears someone with that affliction. I have HIV-positive friends with whom I spend time, hug and share a plate of food.

To find a modern analog for a leper, one would have to go to a different level. There are people we have difficulty embracing. Perhaps even in our own families, we flee from certain ones. But there is a person whom none of us really wants to approach. We have walked with that person all our lives. There are aspects of ones self that one do not want to see. We do not want to admit we are diseased.

I have read that it is common for people to lie to their doctor because they do not want their doctor find out they have some disease. If we have a hard time facing a physical disease, how much more difficult is it for us to face a spiritual illness.

A writer who noticed this tendency was Edgar Allen Poe. Many of you have read short story, *The Masque of the Red Death*. It is about a prince during the time of the plague, who invited people to a party where they all wore colorful masks over their faces. They ate, drank and danced, believing they were safe from the disfiguring disease which ravaged the countryside. Suddenly they noticed a man with the gruesome mask of plague victim. It disgusted the guests and when the prince approached to rip the mask from the man's face, he fell to the carpet, deathly ill. The other guests soon followed. The plague was within the castle.

Poe had a piercing sense of how we humans can carry on, oblivious to a disease which grows inside us. There is a kind of leprosy which affects us all. Poe saw it more clearly than most men and it drove him to despair. But that need not happen. There is someone who wishes to touch, even to embrace you, despite your disfigured condition. He is the one who today stretches out his hand to the leper who cries out for help. To him he says, "I will do it. Be made clean."

This great love of Jesus ties in with what we are observing this weekend: World Marriage Sunday. God instituted marriage as an essential part of his plan to teach us love. It is easy to love someone when they are on their best behavior, but – your married couples know much better than I – it is harder to love someone when you live with them day in and day out. The mask inevitably comes off and you see less pleasant aspects of that person. Now, I am not saying the person you married is a leper, but all of us have wounds and diseases which sometimes make it difficult for others to draw near us, to embrace us.

Married couples give us an example of that depth of love. Some of the couples here have been married for decades, fifty or sixty years. What a beautiful witness of love they give! We honor them this Sunday. We also pray for them and all married couples, especially young married couples. They face challenges they parents probably never had. And the devil seems to be working overtime to destroy young marriages and families. We need to pray for them and to support one another.