

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday (B)

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021

'Rosary, Marriage, Family'

Gen 2: they become one body      Ps 127: your wife like a fruitful vine; your  
children like shoots of the olive      Heb 2: *sanctifier and sanctified are brothers*  
Mk 10: 2–16: *what God has united, man must not divide*

We began peacefully before Mass today with a simple decade of the Holy Rosary. It's the month of October, and in May & October — months with a special Marian feel — we will take this opportunity to invoke together, as a chaplaincy, the powerful intercession of the greatest of all the saints in heaven, Our Blessed Lady, Mother of Christ / Mother of the Church. The opening decade of all the mysteries of the rosary sets the scene for the rest which follow: the 'Annunciation' shows us Mary accepting the will of God in her life, saying 'yes' to God's plan for her; saying 'yes' to both virginity and motherhood; saying 'yes' to faithfulness in the troubles of life ahead. As soon as we enter into the Rosary, then, we are asking Our Lady to help us do as she did: to accept God's will in our lives, to imitate her holiness in all things, and in particular her faithfulness to the vocation that God called her to.

Let's not be under any illusions that Our Lady's life was anything other than a challenge. As we pray the mysteries of the Rosary, beginning from this episode of the Annunciation, we discover her life completely intertwined with the sufferings of Jesus her Son. The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today lays out some of those sufferings of Jesus, as He submitted Himself to His Passion and Death. Mary shared in those from the start, even as she had to endure the journey to Bethlehem, and fleeing from the murderous King Herod. At no point could we ever say, then, that Our Lady does not understand fully the rigours of a human life. She does! — and she is the perfect intercessor for us, therefore, who live from day to day the joys and sorrows of human life.

But Mary our Blessed Lady is also is the most powerful intercessor for us as we look to live and perfect our Christian living-out of *family life*. Just as Our Lady is utterly attuned to Jesus's life and sufferings, as His greatest disciple, so as Mother of the Holy Family she is also our role model for God's timeless truths regarding marriage and family. As wife and mother — and not just for you

young ladies, but for you young men too — she has much to teach us. She faced with St Joseph the challenges they had to live through as a couple, beginning with the questions of living out chastely their sexuality; then the unexpected pregnancy; the birth away from the comforts of home; the desperate protection of the child in various situations of threat; their nomadic existence as migrants and refugees for a long while. And how did they do that? How did they cope with all that? Throughout it, their unbreakable faithfulness was founded on their joint relationship with God. Any and every marriage is, like theirs, made all the stronger by that *triangle* of faith and fidelity: man & woman & God. God is utterly faithful to us as individuals, and inspires us to love Him in prayer; but when a man & woman enter into the marriage relationship, with that vowed commitment to faithfulness and prayer as a couple, then what strength that acquires! It's a series of bonds — prayerful bonds — that make sense, and make solid, the marriage covenant. As Catholics, then, we would be really looking to imitate Our Lady & St Joseph in our

relationships of dating and marriage: in other words, founding that love on a joint relationship with God. I remember, years ago, a friend of mine chatting to my parents, who already then were married 35 yrs or so. She said, “How do I know whom I should marry?” And they said, with barely a moment's hesitation, “Someone with whom you can pray.” OK — it's not only that, and it's not quite as simple as that, but it certainly says a great deal. If you're looking to marry — if you believe that that is your vocation — ask God for someone with whom the foundation of your relationship is your joint love of God and prayer to God.

We read in the Gospel, today, of Jesus's firm teachings on marriage and family life. As Son of God, with His divine authority, He upholds the *sanctity* of marriage between a man and a woman; He teaches that it is to be a *lifelong* union; and He teaches that children are to be welcomed, nurtured, and brought to Him ... “for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs,” He says. Now, each of us has grown up in a family: whether or not

we will go on to have a spouse and children of our own, yet we know the strengths and the struggles of the relationships that make up a family. No family is perfect — we have all struggled at times in our families; no marriage is perfect — it has its real ups and downs; no children are perfect — they will give us big worries sometimes. And yet, the family is the bedrock of a good society: the loving relationship of husband and wife, mirroring the love God has for us; the joy of bringing children into the world echoes the fruitfulness of God's creative love, and they give continuity to society and to the Church; the mission of the family is to be the *school* for learning to grow in love, selflessness and forgiveness.

How much we each need to have prayer as the foundation for our families — the families that we have come from, and the families that we might hope for! Invoking Our Lady's prayers in the Rosary for our families is perhaps the *ideal* prayer, for it is a prayer for the home and a prayer for the journey! Our Lady was crucial to the Holy Family with Jesus and Joseph, on the journey and in

the home at Nazareth. She it was who, by her openness to God, meant that the Holy Family existed at all. So let's ask her crucial intercession in this month of October to pray for our families. Let's use our rosaries daily (ask me for one! ... take a rosary card! etc.) — or just count on your ten fingers at a convenient break in the day — so as to offer up a tidal wave of prayer to heaven for our families this October. Let's pray for those we know of who need some direction in their vocational discernment; let's pray for those who struggle in their marriages; let's pray for those we know of with worries about their children; let's pray for those we know of who have families with longstanding disputes and divisions that need healing ... Let's ask Our Blessed Lady, and St Joseph her faithful spouse, for their concerted efforts in union with our own prayers, to bring about peace and reconciliation, renewed love and affection, tolerance and understanding, patience and forgiveness.

The chaplaincy is a *family* of those away from their families ... we gather together each Sunday to strengthen one another and pray for one another, and to bring to the

altar of Jesus's sacrifice all the needs we have. Let's make sure that this praying family of our Newman House Chaplaincy reaches out fervently in prayer to the members of our family in special need of direction, consolation and reconciliation. Let's never forget that Our Blessed Mother wants all her children to be at peace with one another, and united wholly in faith in the Church. Let's call to mind those, particularly of our families, and of *this* family, who are most in need of prayer at this time ... [pause] ... ...  
*Holy Mary, Mother of God — Mother of the Holy Family, Mother of our vocations — pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*