

October 4, 2015 – 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Hope for the Family

Let me start with a brief personal story.

When I was a little boy my family lived in an apartment above my Mother's parents.

After supper on Friday evenings I would go to the basement to help my Grandpa sweep the basement floor.

Grandma was going to wash clothes there on Monday morning and she wanted a clean place to hang the laundry to dry!

My Mother told me in later life that I went down there because Grandpa would give me some kinds of treats - like cookies - for helping him.

Grandpa was a cabinet maker who worked as a finish carpenter in new home construction.

My Mom was very proud of his strength and skilled carpentry.

My family went to church with Grandpa and Grandma on Sunday mornings.

When I was seven years old my family moved into our own home and Grandpa, a few uncles and my Dad improved the attic by building 3 bedrooms, 2 closets and a half bath ... all with beautiful hardwood flooring.

And I was there to watch and help ... like blowing off the sawdust so Grandpa could see the line where he was cutting the wood.

Grandpa's childhood life had been a bit different than my own traditional family experience.

Grandpa was born in Austria.

His mother was a never-married, single parent. [Lucky me: no abortion!]

There was NO dad in his experience.

Grandpa learned the cabinet-making trade and then came to Chicago.

He and Grandma had three children.

Then they got married in a Catholic church.

Grandpa and Grandma had four more children.

They ended up with a beautiful family with 23 grandchildren.

There is a saying: "Your past does not determine your future."

[That's a key point made frequently in the The Encounter program.]

How true it was for Grandpa: "Your past does not determine your future."

There is *hope*, always *hope!*

Today's Scriptures talk about **God's hope** and **God's** plan for marriage, children and families.

As Jesus tells us, in the Garden of Eden God created male and female with the intention of them being supportive to each other because God recognized that it was not good for us human beings to be alone.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God they were sent out from the Garden of Eden ... but, they did not stop needing each other.

If anything, they needed each other all the more since they now needed to work to feed themselves, ... clothes themselves, ... house themselves, ... and yes, to raise those children.

They needed *hope* to keep their lives together.

In the Bible we saw them struggle from generation to generation.

Noah had the flood.

Moses led the people out of slavery from Egypt.

The Israelites carved out a territory with God's guidance.

King David struggled with many military foes.

God sent prophets to encourage them and to remind them of God's love ... and their need to love God in return... and to keep up their *hope*.

And then they were taken off into captivity in Babylon ... *hopes* dashed.

After the Persians allowed them to return to Israel they encountered one conqueror after another.

The prophets kept promising a Messiah and God kept that promise with Jesus. Jesus, *hope* reborn!

In today's Gospel Jesus is challenged about marriage and family life. Jesus reminds them about God's initial intentions for them back in the Garden of Eden:

- you need each other,
- you need support from each other,
- you need to stay true to each other,
- your children are precious to God, so keep them close to God.

There is *hope*.

"Your past does not determine your future."

So, what can we do to guide our children into the future?

What can we do so that our grandchildren will develop and have a firm foundation of faith in Jesus Christ?

What can we do? Care for them!

Support each person in your families!

And, yes, develop in them a love of God ... and a love of neighbor!

And realize that you cannot do that alone.

It takes a village.

It takes a parish.

Here are some down-to-earth suggestions for raising our children up to heaven.

1. Have our children baptized into the faith.
2. Bring the children to Mass each week.
3. Make use of great programs like Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for pre-schoolers (here during 11:00 Mass on Sundays) or for school age children (here on Sunday mornings at 9:00am).

4. Bring our children to sacramental preparation when they are ready for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and their First Holy Communion - usually in second grade.
5. Bring our children to sacramental preparation when they are ready for the Sacrament of Confirmation, typically in 7th to 9th grades.
6. Support the faith formation of the children by maintaining an atmosphere at home,
 an atmosphere where love and support are prevalent,
 where that love extends to others outside the household,
 where talking with God is more than just a Sunday event.
7. Come here to church and bring the whole family for *Generations of Faith*, the way we all learn how to better fit into God's plans for us, plans that God had for us all the way back in the Garden of Eden.

Challenging? Sure!

Possible? Absolutely!

Hopeful? Indubitably!

Are we all alone in these challenges? ... NO!

The Church worldwide is hoping to do even more for us.

At this very time, for three full weeks from Oct 4th to 25th, in Rome the bishops are meeting for a "Synod of Bishops on the Family".

They are asking the question: what does the Church need to do to guide and support families here and now in the 21st Century?

Suggestions, ideas, plans, and efforts are coming to them from around the world.

Let us all pray for the bishops in the Synod!

In the beginning God had a plan for human beings: -- love and support.

There is **hope!**

"Your past does not determine your future."