

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE LAUNCH
OF THE BOOK 'FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT' BY DYLLIS MINANG**

WASHINGTON DC | DECEMBER 14, 2024

All protocols duly respected,
Good evening, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's a pleasure to be here today to celebrate the launch of the book ***Fighting the Good Fight - A 52-week Couple's Devotional*** by Dyllis Minang. I thank her, her husband, Jacob, as well as their team members and organizers for finding me capable of sharing a few words at this important gathering.

There is this story which some of us may have heard already, but let me tell you:

There was once a billionaire who loved to throw extravagant parties. At one such event, he gathered his guests near a big river, which was filled with live crocodiles. With a mischievous grin, he announced, 'My dear guests, I have a proposition for you. I will give one million dollars to the brave soul who can swim across this river. If they don't make it, their family will receive double the amount.'

The crowd gasped, and everyone looked at the water with a mix of fear and curiosity. Suddenly, there was a loud splash. To everyone's astonishment, a man was in the water, swimming frantically. The crowd watched in suspense as he dodged the snapping jaws of the crocodiles, his face was a mask of determination and terror.

Against all odds, he made it to the other side, exhausted but alive. The billionaire, impressed and amused, said, 'That was incredible! You have earned your reward. Do you want the million dollars or double for your family?'

The man, still catching his breath, looked up and said, 'I don't want your money. I just want to know who the hell pushed me into that water!'

As the crowd erupted in laughter, the man's wife stepped forward with a proud smile and said, 'Behind every successful man, there is a woman to give him a push.'

This story, while humorous, highlights an important truth about the power of support and encouragement in our relationships. This is precisely what Dyllis Minang's book aims to provide for couples, a guiding hand to help them navigate the challenges of marriage and find strength in their faith and in one another.

Let us fix our attention at this moment on three things: first, the amazing work Dyllis Minang has done; second, the importance and relevance of this work for us and our contemporary society; and third, what we take away from the book, especially for families and couples. These are the three things on which I shall comment.

THE WORK

First, let us commend Dyllis Minang for her incredible work. Writing a book is no small feat, and creating a devotional that spans an entire year requires dedication, insight, and a deep understanding of couples' spiritual and

emotional needs. Dyllis has poured her heart and soul into this book, offering couples a valuable resource to strengthen their bonds and deepen their faith.

We surely have someone to tell us about the book, and we ourselves are going to read it. So, let us not focus a lot on the deep content of this work.

Many people have written books on this subject. But something makes this one special: it is coming from a lived experience. Those who know Dyllis and Jacob personally, after reading this book, will realize that it is what this couple puts or tries to put into practice in their daily lives. We can imagine that Jacob stood behind Dyllis and gave her a push in the back: not the push into a river full of crocodiles, but to go through the process of putting their faith experience as a couple into this book to enrich all of us.

Dyllis's journey in writing this book is a testament to her passion for fostering love, understanding, and resilience in relationships. She has meticulously crafted each week's devotional to address couples' unique challenges, providing practical advice and spiritual guidance drawn from the Sacred Scriptures. Her ability to weave together personal anecdotes, scriptural insights, and thoughtful reflections makes this book a devotional and a companion for couples on their journey of faith.

Moreover, Dyllis's commitment to helping others is evident in the way she has structured the book. Each week offers a new opportunity for couples to engage in meaningful dialogue, reflect on their relationship, and grow together in their faith. This book is a labor of love, and we are all fortunate to benefit from her wisdom and dedication.

RELEVANCE

Secondly, we must consider the importance and relevance of this work in our contemporary society. Couples, marriage, and the family face numerous challenges in our world today, and it is actually a long list of these challenges:

1. **Redefinition of marriage:** efforts to redefine marriage away from the traditional understanding of a union between one man and one woman which have even brought actual marriages under attack.
2. **Relativism:** the belief that truth and moral values are not absolute but relative to the persons or groups holding them, which undermines the stability of marriage and family life.
3. **Culture of the ephemeral:** a focus on temporary and fleeting pleasures rather than long-term commitments and values.
4. **Lack of openness to life:** contraceptive practices and a general lack of openness to having children, which can weaken the family structure. Even some young couples might now tend to think that pets can replace children.
5. **Economic pressures:** financial stress and economic instability that can strain relationships and family dynamics.
6. **Work-Life imbalance:** the demands of modern work life that leave little time for family bonding and prayer, and nurturing relationships.
7. **Secularization:** the diminishing influence of religious values and practices in daily life, leading to a weakened spiritual foundation for families.
8. **Divorce and separation:** high rates of divorce and separation, which disrupt family stability and children's well-being. Even while we are here now, many couples in the United States and all over the world are on the verge of it.

9. Media influence: Negative portrayals of marriage and family in media, promoting unrealistic expectations and unhealthy behaviors within the family
10. Individualism: a focus on personal fulfillment and self-interest over the well-being of the family unit.
11. Technological distractions: overuse of technology and social media, which can reduce meaningful family interactions and communication, disorientate children's focus, and make room for even more individualism.
12. Substance abuse: issues related to alcohol and drug abuse that can lead to domestic violence and family breakdown.
13. Mental health issues: increasing mental health challenges that can affect family dynamics and relationships.
14. Lack of community support: erosion of extended family and community support systems that traditionally helped to sustain families.

More things can be added to this list. Faced with all of this, what can couples and families do in order to live holy and healthy lives, and have a strong domestic Church in their homes? This is where the contribution of this book comes in. It is a great resource to help couples root their lives in God, and combat all these things that seek to destroy the family and the sacred institution of Marriage.

EXHORTATION

I mentioned we would focus on three things. We have so far looked at two of them, namely, the work of this book and why it is relevant for us today.

Here is the last thing: What should we do? What do we take away from this celebration, this encounter, this launch?

Of course, the first thing we take along with us is a copy of the book! The core message of *Fighting the Good Fight* is that a strong marriage is rooted in God. By dedicating time each week to reflect on the teachings of this devotional, couples can cultivate a deeper spiritual connection and find the inner peace that surpasses all understanding.

The second thing we take away with us today is our commitment. Let us be resolved to deepen the faith, love, and harmony in our various families. I encourage every couple to embark on this journey together, to support and uplift each other, and to let God's grace illuminate their path. This devotional is not just a book to be read, but a guide to be lived. It calls on couples to actively engage with its teachings, to pray together, to discuss their hopes and fears, and to grow together in their faith. Let us have couples who give each other a push from the back (you remember our story at the beginning?), and move forward together in all aspects of their lives. As Saint John Paul II reminded and taught us, the family is the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children. (Cfr. *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 21)

Remember, with faith and love, we can overcome any obstacle and build marriages that are not only resilient but also filled with joy and fulfillment. Let this book and this function here be a reminder that we are not alone in our journey. With God's guidance and the support of your spouse, you can navigate the challenges of life and find true peace and happiness in your marriage.

To conclude my remarks, by God's providence, this launch is taking place in the holy season of Advent. And in fact, one of the activities for this weekend has been the Advent Retreat. It is a call for all of us to renew ourselves in the faith, and reexamine our commitment to our faith journey. Whatever faith community we belong to, this is our reminder that although the material preparation for Christmas is important, the true meaning and fulfillment of our lives as believers is spiritual. This function is also our reminder, in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6). The right time is now.

As we do so, let us celebrate the launch of this remarkable book and the positive impact it will have on countless couples and families. Let us thank Dyllis Minang for her dedication and vision, and let us commit to rooting our marriages in faith, love, and mutual support. May ***Fighting the Good Fight*** guide you on a journey of transformation and discovery.

May God's blessings be upon all of us and upon our families, friends, associates, and loved ones. I wish everyone a fruitful Advent preparation and a meaningful celebration of Christmas.

+ Most Reverend Jerome Feudjio

Bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands