

Fr Ryan Homily 7/24/22

Read: Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2:12-14; Luke 11:1-13

We all know there are days on the calendar that are there to either honor someone or commemorate something, create awareness for. We've got Mother's Day and Father's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, all those classics but then there's also those less common, or shall we say a little more days, that are on the calendar. Like you may not know there is a national clean your refrigerator day, or national eat ice cream for breakfast day, national thank your mailman day. I found this one national eat a slider day – May 15. If you're a fan of White Castle you know what that means. Or national junk food day. Of course I could keep going there's all sorts of these days and sometimes they get a little bizarre. Like this one – national if pets had thumbs day; what does that even mean? If pets had thumbs, it's bizarre, but all these sorts of days are on the calendar. And the church of course also has these awareness days. Many of the days on the calendar are feasts of the saints. We also have weeklong awareness weeks like poverty awareness week or Catholic schools' week, vocations awareness week. This week the church celebrates NFP awareness week so if you're sitting there thinking NFP, what the heck is NFP? Hence the reason the church has an awareness week for it. More on what NFP is in just a minute. The good news of the gospel, the good news that Jesus reveals for us today is that we can call God father and we know He is a good father because He created us with one goal, one end in mind and that one end is to share in God's life forever in Heaven. And we know the good news that the Father sent His Son to die for our sins on the cross is needed because there's also bad news. The bad news is we have an enemy and he has one goal as well which is to disrupt our Father's plan. To keep you and me from the end for which we have been made. He wants to frustrate you and to deceive you. And one of, if not the biggest area, he lies to us about and tries to deceive us in is in the area of our sexuality. The enemy whispers lies to us to deceive us as without doubt he did to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because the sins that brought down Sodom and Gomorrah, which this first reading that we heard today is eventually lead to, were not just random sins, they were by enlarge sexual in nature. So the lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah is that how we use the gift of our sexuality or misuse it can either bring us closer to God or it could separate us from him forever. Fortunately we know how it ended for

Sodom and Gomorrah, with their destruction. But, and this is important, it didn't need to end that way. God gave them opportunity after opportunity to repent and to change. They simply chose not to. Same for us because remember God is a good Father and when we misuse the gift of sexuality, God puts forward opportunities for us to change our ways, to repent, to embrace and live His ways because the enemy lies and says God isn't a good Father. He's keeping something good from you. He has rules and commandments that are keeping you from enjoying life when in reality the Father knows exactly how to bring us true happiness. His commandments bring us to the fullness of life. Jesus tell us in the gospel today what kind of father would give a child a scorpion when he asks for an egg? What kind of a father would hand a child a snake when he asks for a fish? No father on earth would do that He's saying. And Me as your creator who is just wildly in love with you, who is a good father, if they're not gonna do it certainly I'm not gonna do that. He loves to be generous. Everything about God is generous. His ways are generous. His ways are always for our benefit even in times we don't get it, or we don't like it, or we don't agree with it. Why? Because He's a father and He's a good father. I'm routinely reminded by my little niece and nephew, especially John who's four - his little sister Ellie who wants to be like him even in all the bad ways. He wants to eat nothing but candy all day and then his parents have to come and be mean and say no you have to eat real food. To him that's being mean but they're being good parents. Many of the lies that the enemy whispers in our ear, again, are in the area of sexuality. All we have to do is take a quick look at what we find on the tv or the magazine rack, music on the radio, the internet, and see that as a society we have devalued sex and decreased it's worth. Meaning we bought into the lie, and we bought into it full force that sex can only be for pleasure. And the damaging effects of that way of thinking are seen all over our society. When we devalue sex that leads to devaluing life and discarding persons whether that be in the womb or some other place. And the reason why this particular lie from the enemy comes to my mind today is because this Monday, tomorrow July 25th, it's gonna be the anniversary of an encyclical, or a letter, that was written by St Pope Paul VI back in the 1960's entitled *Humanae Vitae*. And *Humanae Vitae* is just a Latin phrase that means on human life. And *Humanae Vitae* simply reaffirmed what the church has always taught that contraception and or implementing a contraceptive mentality is contrary to the genuine love between a husband and a wife. And Paul VI, he was a prophet and

being able to foresee all the damage to the family and society that wide scale embracing of contraception would have in our day and age. Many people wrongly think that this is only a Catholic thing and are surprised to learn that every single Christian denomination, every single one, up until the year 1930 held this same belief. Every one of the reformers, Martin Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, they all held contraception was harmful to married love because God's design in the marital act is for each spouse to make a total and complete gift of oneself to their beloved and with contraception that doesn't happen. Because we hold back from the other that which is the most amazing gift which God allows us to participate in, the gift of procreation. And the humbling and wild thing that the creator of all life chose to design it that in the marital act we become co-creators with God. Now that isn't to say spouses can't look at their situation and say that due to health or finances or any number of other just reasons they prayerfully as a couple say I don't think the Lord is calling us to have a child right now. Spacing children and discerning family size is legitimate. The church isn't asking anyone to have 30 kids. Pope Paul VI actually gave a phrase to that in *Humanae Vitae*, it's called responsible parenting. What we are simply called to do is not hinder or stop the gift of children by refusing that total and complete gift of oneself in the marital act. And so discerning family size is not a sin but the means by which that's done could be. The way we go about it makes a difference and it matters. And that brings us back to what in the world is NFP awareness week? NFP stands for natural family planning. And that's sort of an umbrella term that encompasses different methods that looks at when the wife is fertile and if the couple decides at that moment that God isn't calling us right now to have a child, then for those days they refrain from the marital act. I know many couples over the years who practice natural family planning and they always wanna share with other couples and they say to me father whenever you talk about NFP remember to always mention the benefits of it. How good it is. You have to tell people the benefits of what it's done for our marriage. Tell them it's effective. With the science now and the different methods it's 99.7% effective. Tell them that it's safe and natural for the woman. Tell them that it builds joyful marriages. It promotes constant communication between the spouses, open dialogue. The divorce rate of couples that do practice NFP vs those that contracept is significantly lower for NFP spouses. And so during this NFP awareness week I simply want to put that in front of you, the beauty of God's teaching in this area. Because NFP, unfortunately, is

all too much a mystery to a lot of people or it's misunderstood. There is a lot more, of course, to NFP than one homily can or even should get into. This is just scratching the surface here. So I encourage you, I implore you, to delve into this topic whether you're married right now, or you hope to be one day. Maybe start by listening to people's testimonies. Couples who have joyfully practiced and embraced NFP. People like Jason and Crystalina Everet who are national speakers, they're on YouTube, easy to find, they talk about what it's done for them. They give that witness. Please read *Humanae Vitae*, the short encyclical on human life if you haven't done so. It's beautiful. Go on the US Bishops website usccb.org, there are tons of resources especially this week right up front for you to study this. I encourage you, everyone this week to visit those resources, to study this issue. And to remember if you're unsure about embracing this aspect of our church's teaching remember that God is a good father. And the most powerful prayer we can offer Him is to say thy will be done. It can be challenging because you gotta let go. You have to trust in the greater wisdom of God because God is that good father who has a vision and the perspective that you don't have. God can see not just what you need today but tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. And to trust Him is a great freedom. And if you entrust the entirety of your sexuality to Him and His ways and say those words thy will be done and really mean it then you will be embarking on a journey and a way of life that the father will abundantly bless.

Amen