

Reminders and Resources for week two of the summer Homily Series:
Building Stronger Relationships — Marriage, Family, and Friends

In week two we focused on *Healthy Sacrifice*, with a special emphasis on *family*.

Reminders:

Healthy Sacrifice:

- Eventually the family bond will require a self-emptying love
- Sacrifice is part of the territory, the goal is to embrace that in a healthy way
- Pope Francis said “A peace without a cross is not the peace of Jesus.” Our culture aims for an artificial peace that is self-focused, without tribulations or sacrifice. The real peace of God bears suffering, sustains us, and endures beyond the challenges.

Families:

- There are all kinds of families, some biological some chosen
- Family is a group of people living under one roof, interacting with each other, functioning as a unit together; whatever group you “do life” with is your family
- Ideally one’s family is a system of care and support, where you feel safe, loved, and like you belong
- The family structure only works as well as its participants; everyone plays a part

Three ways to practice Healthy Sacrifice:

1. Identify your offering and make it

- The word sacrifice for Christians often conjures up images of the cross. Yet think of Jesus’ years of active ministry before then — he identified his gifts as one who could teach humanity about God, and he made that offering.
- When considering how you might sacrifice for your family, think of it in terms of the offering you can make; it’s about what you can bring forward to contribute
- You have something another member doesn’t — a special quality, a skill, a talent
- Just as a community brings their gifts to the altar at Mass, so too are we to bring our gifts to the “table” of our families
- Love by its very nature is other-centered
- We can offer to consciously lay down our need, desire, opinion, etc. in order to make a choice for the other
- Let your offering “hurt” a little, a sacrifice that gives not just your “leftovers” but part of your “meal” too. Let it stretch you a bit and help you grow.
- Just as Jesus had agency to choose to make the sacrifices he did throughout his earthly ministry and death, so too do we have agency to make sacrifices

2. Respect boundaries — others and your own

- An important part of healthy sacrifice is boundary work, boundaries keep us from violating others’ limits as well as our own
- Healthy relationships recognize when someone else is hitting their maximum output and needs a break
- Boundaries help each of us stop to fill our own tanks so that we don’t burn out

- Respecting each other's boundaries keeps us balanced, ensuring we'll all have something to give
- Think of Jesus' example. He respected the boundaries of his friends by stopping for rest and food when they needed it. And he recognized when he needed to retreat from the crowds himself to recharge.
- If it's hard for you to say no, then you need to do less; if it's hard for you to say yes, then you need to do more
- If you're not sure how healthy your boundaries are, just ask your spouse, child, or sibling where you may be out of balance

3. Consider the greater good for the group

- Healthy sacrifice is not about "me" but for the greater good of the whole
- In families we are called to be solidarity with each other, part of one unit
- What's best for the group are mature choices that uplift the family
- Think of Jesus, who regarded all of humanity as his family. He considered the greater good countless times and his actions flowed from that value. For example, the way he would stand in solidarity with the marginalized had to be difficult, yet it was necessary for the deposit of good he would make in the world.
- Family, when working well, can be a mutually beneficial system
- It's a huge blessing to be part of a healthy family. For when one has a problem (e.g. a health crisis), all share in the struggle. Likewise, when one has a victory, all share in the glory. We are affected by one another and ideally there for each other.
- Ask yourself, "Where can I be of service to make things flow better for all involved?"
- Think of your family as a special assignment from God — to intentionally love these people with whom you've been placed here on earth
- As Christians we are called to grow in our love for others, to develop a maturity like Christ. Family life gives us a lot of practice!

Resources:

- Simplicity Parenting — counter-cultural parenting tools: <https://www.simplicityparenting.com/>
- *7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* — Stephen Covey
- *Boundaries* — Henry Cloud and John Townsend

* Note: Many of the resources shared for week one (re marriage) are useful for families.