

# Preaching the Gospel of Life and the Gospel of the Family

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## Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- Yesterday, Pope Francis issued a decree recognizing the martyrdom of the Franciscan Martyrs of Georgia, Pedro de Corpa and his four companions, who were killed in hatred of the faith along the Georgia Coast September 14-17, 1597.
- This happened a generation before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, two centuries before St. Junipero Serra brought the Gospel to California. They landed in Saint Augustine (1565) and, preaching the Guale language and living peacefully, established five missions in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.
- They were martyred because the friar assigned to the Tolomato Mission (near Eulonia, Georgia) didn't allow a baptized man, Juanillo, heir to the Guale chiefdom, to take a second wife. Juanillo killed him and then hunted down the Franciscans in the other missions to martyr them, too.





# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- We know that St. John the Baptist, the precursor of the Lord and the friend of the Bridegroom, was imprisoned and martyred out of fidelity to marriage, for telling Herod Archelaus it was unlawful for him to have his brother's wife (and his niece) as his wife.
- We know that Jesus himself first got others to begin plotting his death because of his preaching about the Sabbath and he told his first bishops/priests/deacons that proclaiming repentance for the forgiveness of sins would lead to their being brought before civil and religious leaders, hated by all, and some of them killed.
- We see that all but one of the original apostles, and the first several generations of popes, were all likewise martyred.

# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- Yet each of us, knowing that we are following a Crucified Preacher, knowing that he promised that they would treat us the way they treated him, knelt down before our ordaining bishop, who put the Book of the Gospels in our hand and said, “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have now become. Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. And practice what you teach.”
- The Lord has called us, ordained us, and sent us out to preach the Gospel – the whole Gospel – with faith and courage, convinced of its power to save, and likewise convinced that when we suffer for it, when we’re dragged before leaders, it will “lead to [our] giving testimony” and our being given a “wisdom that all [our] adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.”





# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- Everything begins with our faith.
  - Do we believe that the Gospel is really good news?
  - Do we believe that the truth Christ has entrusted to us really sets us free?
  - In the area of preaching the Gospel of Life and the Gospel of the Family, do we believe that Christ and the Church guided by the Holy Spirit are right? Or do we believe that Hugh Hefner, Dr. Ruth, Fr. Charles Curran, Fr. Robert Drinan, Sr. Jeanne Gramick and the other heralds of the sexual revolution in reality have a better grasp of the path to happiness?



# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- More specifically do we believe that the following teachings of Christ and his Church are “good” news?
  - That because we’re called to holiness, we must avoid all *porneia*?
  - That divorce and remarriage is adultery
  - That someone who looks on another with lust is guilty of adultery of the heart?
  - That we should only become one flesh with those to whom God has joined us in one flesh?





# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- More specifically do we believe that the following teachings of Christ and his Church are “good” news?
  - That marriage is the indissoluble bond of one woman and one man until death?
  - That every conjugal act must be open to life to be truly loving and that the use of contraception is always immoral?
  - That God intends the command “to increase and multiply” to inform Christian consciences and lead them to a generous openness to life?
  - That we are called to chastity and purity of heart always?



# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- More specifically do we believe that the following teachings of Christ and his Church are “good” news?
  - That chastity before marriage means continence and that masturbation, fornication and other forms of lustful activity are grave matter?
  - That those with same-sex attractions are called to love (*agape*, *philia* and *storge*) but not to give into fallen *eros*?
  - That the single state, per se, is not a vocation without a true gift of self, and that the vast majority of Christians have received the vocation to marry?





# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- More specifically do we believe that the following teachings of Christ and his Church are “good” news?
  - That creating a child in a laboratory regardless of one’s desire and motivation is always contrary to the Creator’s plan and the child’s dignity?
  - That abortion – surgical or chemical – is always the taking of an innocent human life made in Jesus’ own image and likeness?
  - That deliberately ending the life of someone suffering, or taking one’s own life, is gravely sinful?





# Preaching the Gospel in Season and Out of Season

- We know that many in our culture and in the Church do not materially accept Christ's and the Church's teachings in these areas, some because they don't know the teachings at all because they've never heard them, others because they don't know the "why" behind the "what" because they have never been explained to them, others because they just don't want to believe and convert or ask those they care about to convert.
- But they have a right to the Gospel and we have a duty to proclaim it. But this duty is not just to teach it as a take it or leave it proposition, "God's way or the highway [to hell]," but to help people to embrace it as good news, as liberating truth, as something that will save their souls and lead them to peace.







# Reminders from the Talk on the Theology and Art of Preaching

- We would do well to remember various of the propositions from the first talk about the theology and art of preaching in general:
  - True reliance on the Holy Spirit in us preaching and seeking to be at work within the listeners.
  - The importance of praying before preaching, that those with whom we will share God's word will receive it as it really is, God's word at work in those who believe.
  - The need not just to proclaim the truth but to motivate them to conversion by the power of God and God's word in Sacred Scripture "with entreaties and reproaches, exhortations and words of restraint, and whatever other things that avail."
  - It's not fundamentally a question of rhetorical skill but of knowing Christ, who is Wisdom.





# Reminders from the Talk on the Theology and Art of Preaching

- We would do well to remember various of the propositions from the first talk about the theology and art of preaching in general:
- We need to teach what is consistent with Christ and unteach what is not. We are the “mouthpiece of Christ.”
- We must preach about the God we know and his milieu and draw people out of worldliness why they remain in the world. We must help them remember the much bigger picture!
- We need to focus on our own manner of life and whether we proclaim the truth of the Gospel to others’ eyes before their ears.
- We must adapt so that the listeners really learn the teaching, so that they’re more than catechized but *evangelized*.





# Reminders from the Talk on the Theology and Art of Preaching

- We would do well to remember various of the propositions from the first talk about the theology and art of preaching in general:
  - We must help them to see that all preaching, including in these areas, are part of the call to conversion and holiness, to actualize the Gospel, to be faithful to God's covenant, to encounter Christ speaking live and strengthen us by the Sacraments.
  - We must show that we are ready for a dialogue if they have questions and difficulties, and manifest by our demeanor that we believe what we are teaching is the way to joy because we enjoy passing it on. The Gospel is first and foremost a gift!
  - We must look beyond others' faults and see why Jesus would lovingly died for them.
  - We must really know those whom we address, their mind and heart, their yearnings and fears.





# Reminders from the Talk on the Theology and Art of Preaching

- We would do well to remember various of the propositions from the first talk about the theology and art of preaching in general:
  - We must help them to see that Jesus is with them to help them live by his teachings.
  - We must be well-prepared, on fire with love, humble, simple, clear, practical, positive, show the beauty, eschatological, and maternal.
  - We must be attentive to their resistance as well as to the rocks and thorn in their receptivity.



# How To Do This

- In 1985, St. John Paul went to the Netherlands. During a talk with young people, he was interrupted by protestors with signs and chants decrying the Church's teaching in areas of sexuality. He took advantage of the time to preach about the Gospel of Life and Love within the context of the Gospel as a whole. It was an off-the-cuff, but very well remotely prepared, example of preaching while in the lion's den:
- “Dear friends, allow me to be very frank with you. ... Are you really sure that the idea you have of Christ fully corresponds to the reality of his person?”





# How To Do This

- “The Gospel, in truth, presents us with a *very demanding* Christ who invites us to a radical conversion of heart, to detachment from earthly goods, to the pardon of offenses, to the love of enemies, to the patient endurance of abuses, and even to the sacrifice of one’s life for love of neighbor.
- “In particular, concerning the sexual sphere, the firm position taken by him in defense of the indissolubility of marriage and the condemnation pronounced even regarding simple adultery of the heart are well known. And how can we fail to be struck by the precept to ‘gouge out one’s eye’ or ‘cut off one’s hand’ if these members are an occasion of ‘scandal.’





# How To Do This

- “Having these precise Gospel references, is it realistic to imagine a *permissive Christ* in the realm of married life, in the question of abortion, of pre-marital, extra-marital or homosexual relations? ... In her teaching the Church never pronounces a judgment regarding concrete persons. But at the level of principles she must distinguish good from evil. Permissiveness doesn't make man happy.”
- “Young friends, this then is my response: love Christ and accept the demands that the Church makes upon you in his name, because they are the demands that come from God, the Creator and Redeemer of man. Accept these demands in your lives and you will discover their value.”





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message. Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as "good news" to the people of every age and culture” (1).
- “The Church has received the Gospel as a proclamation and a source of joy and salvation. She has received it as a gift from Jesus, sent by the Father "to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). She has received it through the Apostles, sent by Christ to the whole world (cf. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19-20). Born from this evangelizing activity, the Church hears every day the echo of Saint Paul's words of warning: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!’ (1 Cor 9:16). As Paul VI wrote, ‘Evangelization is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.’ (78)
- “Evangelization is an all-embracing, progressive activity through which the Church participates in the prophetic, priestly and royal mission of the Lord Jesus. It is therefore inextricably linked to preaching, celebration and the service of charity. Evangelization is a profoundly ecclesial act, which calls all the various workers of the Gospel to action, according to their individual charisms and ministry. (78)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “This is also the case with regard to the proclamation of the Gospel of life, an integral part of that Gospel which is Jesus Christ himself. We are at the service of this Gospel, sustained by the awareness that we have received it as a gift and are sent to preach it to all humanity, ‘to the ends of the earth.’ With humility and gratitude we know that we are the people of life and for life, and this is how we present ourselves to everyone. (78)
- “We are the people of life because God, in his unconditional love, has given us the Gospel of life and by this same Gospel we have been transformed and saved. We have been ransomed by the ‘Author of life’ (Acts 3:15) at the price of his precious blood (cf. 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet 1:19). Through the waters of Baptism we have been made a part of him (cf. Rom 6:4-5; Col 2:12), as branches which draw nourishment and fruitfulness from the one tree (cf. Jn 15:5). Interiorly renewed by the grace of the Spirit, ‘who is the Lord and giver of life,’ we have become a people for life and we are called to act accordingly. We have been sent. (79)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “For us, being at the service of life is not a boast but rather a duty, born of our awareness of being ‘God's own people, that we may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light’ (cf. 1 Pet 2:9). On our journey we are guided and sustained by the law of love: a love which has as its source and model the Son of God made man, who ‘by dying gave life to the world.’ We have been sent as a people. (79)
- “Everyone has an obligation to be at the service of life. This is a properly ‘ecclesial’ responsibility, which requires concerted and generous action by all the members and by all sectors of the Christian community. This community commitment does not however eliminate or lessen the responsibility of each individual, called by the Lord to ‘become the neighbor’ of everyone: ‘Go and do likewise’ (Lk 10:37). Together we all sense our duty to preach the Gospel of life, to celebrate it in the Liturgy and in our whole existence, and to serve it with the various programs and structures which support and promote life” (79)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “To proclaim Jesus is itself to proclaim life. For Jesus is ‘the word of life’ (1 Jn 1:1). In him ‘life was made manifest’ (1 Jn 1:2); he himself is ‘the eternal life that was with the Father and was made manifest to us’ (1 Jn 1:2). By the gift of the Spirit, this same life has been bestowed on us. It is in being destined to life in its fullness, to ‘eternal life,’ that every person's earthly life acquires its full meaning.
- “Enlightened by this Gospel of life, we feel a need to proclaim it and to bear witness to it in all its marvelous newness. Since it is one with Jesus himself, who makes all things new and conquers the ‘oldness’ that comes from sin and leads to death, this Gospel exceeds every human expectation and reveals the sublime heights to which the dignity of the human person is raised through grace. (80)
- “Gratitude and joy at the incomparable dignity of man impel us to share this message with everyone: ‘that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us’ (1 Jn 1:3). We need to bring the Gospel of life to the heart of every man and woman and to make it penetrate every part of society. (80)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “This involves above all proclaiming the core of this Gospel. It is the proclamation of a living God who is close to us, who calls us to profound communion with himself and awakens in us the certain hope of eternal life. It is the affirmation of the inseparable connection between the person, his life and his bodiliness. It is the presentation of human life as a life of relationship, a gift of God, the fruit and sign of his love. It is the proclamation that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ. It is the call for a ‘sincere gift of self’ as the fullest way to realize our personal freedom. (81)
- “It also involves making clear all the consequences of this Gospel. These can be summed up as follows: human life, as a gift of God, is sacred and inviolable. For this reason procured abortion and euthanasia are absolutely unacceptable. Not only must human life not be taken, but it must be protected with loving concern. The meaning of life is found in giving and receiving love, and in this light human sexuality and procreation reach their true and full significance. Love also gives meaning to suffering and death; despite the mystery which surrounds them, they can become saving events. Respect for life requires that science and technology should always be at the service of man and his integral development. Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person's life. (81)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “To be truly a people at the service of life we must propose these truths constantly and courageously from the very first proclamation of the Gospel, and thereafter in catechesis, in the various forms of preaching, in personal dialogue and in all educational activity. Teachers, catechists and theologians have the task of emphasizing the anthropological reasons upon which respect for every human life is based. In this way, by making the newness of the Gospel of life shine forth, we can also help everyone discover in the light of reason and of personal experience how the Christian message fully reveals what man is and the meaning of his being and existence. We shall find important points of contact and dialogue also with non-believers, in our common commitment to the establishment of a new culture of life. (82)
- Faced with so many opposing points of view, and a widespread rejection of sound doctrine concerning human life, we can feel that Paul's entreaty to Timothy is also addressed to us: ‘Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching’ (2 Tim 4:2). (82)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “This exhortation should resound with special force in the hearts of those members of the Church who directly share, in different ways, in her mission as ‘teacher’ of the truth. May it resound above all for us who are Bishops: we are the first ones called to be untiring preachers of the Gospel of life. We are also entrusted with the task of ensuring that the doctrine which is once again being set forth in this Encyclical is faithfully handed on in its integrity. We must use appropriate means to defend the faithful from all teaching which is contrary to it. We need to make sure that in theological faculties, seminaries and Catholic institutions sound doctrine is taught, explained and more fully investigated. May Paul's exhortation strike a chord in all theologians, pastors, teachers and in all those responsible for catechesis and the formation of consciences. Aware of their specific role, may they never be so grievously irresponsible as to betray the truth and their own mission by proposing personal ideas contrary to the Gospel of life as faithfully presented and interpreted by the Magisterium. (82)
- “In the proclamation of this Gospel, we must not fear hostility or unpopularity, and we must refuse any compromise or ambiguity that might conform us to the world's way of thinking (cf. Rom 12:2). We must be in the world but not of the world (cf. Jn 15:19; 17:16), drawing our strength from Christ, who by his Death and Resurrection has overcome the world (cf. Jn 16:33). (82)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “Because we have been sent into the world as a ‘people for life,’ our proclamation must also become a **genuine celebration of the Gospel of life**. This celebration, with the evocative power of its gestures, symbols and rites, should become a precious and significant setting in which the beauty and grandeur of this Gospel is handed on. For this to happen, we need first of all to foster, in ourselves and in others, a **contemplative outlook**. Such an outlook arises from **faith in the God of life**, who has created every individual as a “wonder” (cf. Ps 139:14). It is the outlook of **those who see life in its deeper meaning**, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility. It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead **accept it as a gift**, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person his living image (cf. Gen 1:27; Ps 8:5). This outlook **does not give in to discouragement** when confronted by those who are sick, suffering, outcast or at death's door. Instead, in all these situations it feels challenged to find meaning, and precisely in these circumstances it is open to perceiving in the face of every person a call to encounter, dialogue and solidarity. (83)
- “It is time for all of us to adopt this outlook, and with deep religious awe to rediscover the ability to revere and honor every person. ... Inspired by this contemplative outlook, the new people of the redeemed cannot but respond with songs of joy, praise and **thanksgiving for the priceless gift of life**, for the mystery of every individual's call to **share through Christ in the life of grace** and in an **existence of unending communion with God our Creator and Father**. (83)





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “To celebrate the Gospel of life means to celebrate the God of life, the God who gives life. ... Like the Psalmist, we too, in our daily prayer as individuals and as a community, praise and bless God our Father, **who knitted us together in our mother's womb**, and saw and loved us while we were still without form (cf. Ps 139:13, 15-16). We exclaim with overwhelming joy: ‘I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works. You know me through and through’ (Ps 139:14). ... In every child which is born and in every person who lives or dies we see the image of God's glory. **We celebrate this glory in every human being**, a sign of the living God, an icon of Jesus Christ. (84)
- “We are called to express wonder and gratitude for the gift of life and to welcome, savor and share the Gospel of life not only in our personal and community prayer, but above all in the celebrations of the liturgical year [and] the Sacraments” (84).
- “As part of the spiritual worship acceptable to God (cf. Rom 12:1), the Gospel of life is to be celebrated above all in daily living, which should be filled with self-giving love for others. In this way, our lives will become a genuine and responsible acceptance of the gift of life and a heartfelt song of praise and gratitude to God who has given us this gift” (85).





# How To Do This (Evangelium Vitae)

- “It is in this context, so humanly rich and filled with love, that heroic actions too are born. These are the most solemn celebration of the Gospel of life, for they proclaim it by the total gift of self. They are the radiant manifestation of the highest degree of love, which is to give one's life for the person loved (cf. Jn 15:13). They are a sharing in the mystery of the Cross, in which Jesus reveals the value of every person, and how life attains its fullness in the sincere gift of self. ... There is an everyday heroism, made up of gestures of sharing, big or small, which build up an authentic culture of life. Part of this daily heroism is also the silent but effective and eloquent witness of all those brave mothers who devote themselves to their own family without reserve, who suffer in giving birth to their children and who are ready to make any effort, to face any sacrifice, in order to pass on to them the best of themselves. ... We thank you, heroic mothers, for your invincible love! We thank you for your intrepid trust in God and in his love. We thank you for the sacrifice of your life ... In the Paschal Mystery, Christ restores to you the gift you gave him. Indeed, he has the power to give you back the life you gave him as an offering.” (86)







# Opportunities for Preaching and Teaching This Part of the Gospel

- To preach the Gospel of Life and of the Family is not just about our Sunday homilies, although it does involve them. It can also encompass the following means:
- Feasts of the Saints, especially married saints, the Holy Family, saints of life like St. Gianna Molla, and other liturgical feasts.
- Other commemorations like National Adoption Day in November, the anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* (July 25), the *Dobbs* decision (June 24), Respect Life Sunday, World Marriage Sunday Bulletin, website, the parish's social media outreach, emails.
- OCIA, Adult Education, Confirmation Classes.
- Remote preparation, in an age appropriate way, in religious education classes.





# Opportunities for Preaching and Teaching This Part of the Gospel

- Fliers, like those done by OSV.
- Books given at Christmas, Easter and other occasions.
- Podcasts, websites, YouTube videos and more.
- Baptismal homilies and baptismal and Godparent preparation sessions.
- Nuptial Masses and ceremonies – and obviously marriage preparation sessions and courses.





# Focus on Marriage Preparation

- Among the various sessions of marriage preparation, I give couples 12 essays, the last of which is on life, which allows me to get into openness to live, generosity, the relationship among love, marriage, sex and family, natural family planning, the immorality (and imprudence!) of contraception, adoption and many other issues.
- “The goal of marriage preparation is for the priest to meet you where you are at and help guide you to where the Church hopes that you will be on the day of your wedding. Every couple is different and therefore marriage preparation is a little different for every couple.
- “That is why I’ve put together this short series of questions, to help me to get to know you better and to understand how you look at several of the topics that will come up in the course of our conversations together.





# Focus on Marriage Preparation

- “Your answers will also help me to get to know some of the history of your relationship together, which will allow me to start to see the hand of God working in your love. What you write will not only help me to prepare you more effectively, but also to preach the homily at your wedding in a much more personal way. Please write *at least a few sentences* for each answer.”
- Please briefly tell me about yourself. What is your family like? What do you do for a living? What are your major interests, hobbies, activities or involvements?
- How did you meet each other? When did you start to date? How did you know the other was the “right one”? When and how did the proposal happen?
- What does marriage mean to you?





# Focus on Marriage Preparation

- Why do you think Christian marriage is a *sacrament*? What is the purpose of a sacrament?
- What role does God have in your life today and in your relationship?
- How would you define or describe love? How is marital love different from other types of love?
- What do you love about the other?
- In what ways has the other shown you how special you are to him/her?
- How has the other inspired and helped you to change for the better?





# Focus on Marriage Preparation

- What positive lessons about love and marriage did you learn from your family growing up? Were there any negative experiences (like a death in the family, or a separation or divorce, or fighting or other family problems) that you had to endure and learn from?
- What is your relationship like with the other's family and friends? What have you learned about him/her through them?
- Do you love children? Are you planning to try to start a family right away after you're married?
- On this last question, the most common answer is, "Yes, I love children, but want to wait for 2-3 years," which allows a good opening to proclaim the Gospel of Life, Love and Family.





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **The Church's sexual teaching in general** – It's a Gospel of Love, not using. It's a path to happiness and wholeness, as the statistics show in comparison with those who live by the principles of the sexual revolution. God who is love knows how to make love truly loving. We've been made for love but not all claims about love are true or lead to the fruit of love, joy.
- **Chastity** – Need to understand clearly the difference between chastity, continence and celibacy. Everyone is called to chastity. Not just tied to integration and self-control, but also to love, purity and piety. It's the virtue that helps keep love unselfish and truly self-giving.
- **Pornography** – Holiness involves "avoiding all porneia," which changes the intentionality of a person from a giver made in God's image to a taker, from a lover to a luster, from a protector to a predator, even if consensually. Eight out of ten men use pornography regularly; we can't duck mentioning this adultery of the heart!





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **Divorce and Remarriage** – This is Christ’s teaching, not the Church’s, and the Catholic Church is the only Christian Church to have remained faithful. Need to ground the teaching in the human person’s having been created in God’s image and likeness to live in a loving communion of persons, in our Builder’s marrying us, in Christ’s marrying the Church as the source of the Church’s teachings about indissolubility, faithfulness and fruitfulness. Need to be simultaneously forthright and compassionate about those who have been abandoned, those who are living with the consequences of previous decisions and help people choose to live by the Gospel out of faithful love for God and for their salvation and sanctification and for those of they love.
- **Marriage outside of the Church** – Marriage is not a human institution but divine, as we see in the first pages of Scripture. It’s bigger and more beautiful than human imagination can fathom. We’re called to unite our love life, and especially our biggest decisions, to God faithfully within the Church he founded.





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **Declarations of Nullity** – This is one of the greatest examples of how far the Church seeks to accompany people who have suffered divorce to try to help them align their life continuously to God. It is also one of the greatest witnesses to how the Church takes seriously the Sacrament of Matrimony and what is necessary for a valid marriage. It takes faith and courage to go through the process, but we can share the examples, and joy, of so many who have completed the process. This is a source of hope the Church offers to those who are in “second” unions (or “third”...).
- **Openness to Life** – The greatest natural miracle of all is the conception of a new human person destined to live forever, the image of God and of the mother and father! It’s an expression of a mom’s and dad’s love, which is why we call the conjugal act “making love.” St. Ignatius in his discernment of choices urged us to look at decisions from eternity, and wouldn’t we want to spend eternity with more family members than fewer?





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **Contraception** — Conjugal relations are meant to express in body language what a couple articulates in their vows, that they give themselves wholly and entirely to each other, holding nothing back. In the use of contraception, rather than total self-giving and acceptance, there's a rejection of the maternal meaning of a woman's existence and/or the paternal meaning of the man's in the very act made by God for those identities to be expressed. Rather than uniting in love, there's a built in partial rejection of the other, which corrodes rather than makes or builds up love. Contraception also introduces fear into love and makes the mom and the dad fear a child should contraception fail.
- **Natural Family Planning** — Periodic continence involves accepting the other person fully, including the woman's God-given cycles of fertility, having recourse to them when there are serious reasons to try to delay conceiving a child. NFP can be used selfishly, but this would be wrong at the level of ultimate intention (*finis operantis*), not at the level of the act itself (*finis operis*), as in the use of contraception. Normally the practice of NFP remedies selfish motives. The use of NFP dramatically reduces divorce rates as well.





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **Premarital Sex** – The Church calls people to remain faithful to God and to their future spouse not just after exchanging vows but before. It is a real sign and expression of love.
- **Masturbation** – Circumcision in the original covenant with Abraham shows how (concretely!) our sexuality is meant to be consecrated to God. Our sexual organs are meant to bring us into communion of persons, not to isolation, to help us to love not lust. Masturbation quickly becomes an addiction and sometimes even before one has learned its morality. The Church wants to prevent people from this and all addictions that, like pornography, can turn us inward rather than outward in love. The Church teaches a way of freedom from addiction and freedom for love.
- **Same-sex sexual activity** – Those with same-sex attractions are called to a life full of love, but, like everyone, also called to chastity. The purpose of human sexuality is love and life in the one-flesh union of marriage (one flesh in a child!); there's no right, for those with SSA or anyone, to sex with whomever and however we want. The chaste celibate continence of priests witnesses that life without sexual relations is doable and joyful.





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **The Vocation to Marriage** – Because many young people, having experienced broken hearts, families and lives, no longer are attracted to the lifetime commitment of marriage, and because the sexual revolution has given people ubiquitous permission to some of the goods of marriage without commitment, many young people are not getting married. There's a need to promote the vocation to marriage with the same vigor the best vocations directors promote the priesthood, diaconate or religious life. We need in particular to persuade men to be mature and responsible men, prepare for the commitment of marriage, to date with the intention of marriage (rather than to use), and to be willing courageously to give their lives vulnerably in a commitment to a woman for the rest of their life. We likewise need to be able to speak, tenderly but truthfully, to those who want to marry but haven't yet found their corresponding vocation, that the single life per se is not a vocation, because a vocation always involves a gift of self, rather than simply the permissive will of God based on the collateral damage of a world war, the sexual revolution, etc.





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **In Vitro Fertilization** – The desire of married couples to have children is beautiful and it's a challenge to the culture of abortion that so many couples struggle to have children of their own. But by God's design from the beginning, children are always a gift from God, not a possession. We do not have a right to children, whether conceived naturally or by other means. For the good of children, of marriage, of a husband and a wife, a child is meant to be conceived within the loving embrace of a mother and a father, not manufactured in a laboratory. As Bishop Michael Burbidge just beautifully elucidated in his Jan. 22 pastoral letter *The Christian Family, In Vitro Fertilization and Heroic Witness to True Love*, IVF not only involves the separation of life from love but also the freezing and destruction of many children and siblings, of reductive abortions, of the exploitation of surrogacy, of the commodification of human life, of the destruction of embryos for research or organs, and of the promotion of an industry that is basically unregulated. In its place, we need to promote the culture of adoption!





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **Abortion** – Many times women conceive a child they are not expecting and for which they may not be prepared. We sympathize and seek to accompany these women always. But just as it's never moral to end the life of a child born, so a child at the same stage of life we once were in our mother's womb. Jesus calls us to receive every child in his name and as we would him as our least and littlest brother and sister. In preaching on this, we need to change the narrative to the women who have chosen life against all advice and are so grateful they did. We likewise need to address the heroism of saints like St. Gianna Molla or moms like the Servant of God Chiara Petrillo. We need to preach with mercy, rather than judgment, and give hope and healing to the many in the pews who have been directly impacted by abortion. We need to inspire every Catholic to be willing to respond to the news that a relative, or friend, or girlfriend is pregnant with the words, "How can I help you bring this child into the world to bless it?"





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **Euthanasia** – We need to be aware of how many are afraid of losing control, of being in unmitigable pain, of being a burden on others, at the end of their life, and we must proclaim a real Gospel of Love, of compassion (“suffering with”), of Good Samaritans, who cross the road and sacrifice for those in need. Against individualism and exaggerated autonomy, against the culture of suicide, we show the beauty of solidarity and sacrifice. Against utility and looking at human beings just on the basis of productivity, we look at love and the capacity to offer one’s life, even in suffering, as a blessing to improve the lives of others. Rather than taking the place of God as Lord of Life, we humbly turn to him, and seek to help others turn to him. We need to treat and alleviate the pain, not end the life of the one in pain. We can relate all of this to the sufferings of Christ on Calvary and their redemptive power, and the way Mary and the Church accompanied him to the end.





# Preaching Challenging Parts of the Gospel of Life and Family

- **The Death Penalty** – While the Church has acknowledged that the death penalty can be morally licit when bloodless means are incapable of rendering aggressors incapable of continuing to commit harm, and also that it has had the purpose of dissuasive education of the gravity of certain crimes against others and reparation, the Church has grasped that at a time in which many treat life as cheap, we do not advance a culture of life by deliberately choosing to take the live of others. While there is a distinction between taking innocent life and guilty life, between intrinsically evil actions and those that under some circumstances can be permitted, it's hard to promote a culture of life while advocating that some of God's sons and daughters be legally or extra-legally killed before the time appointed by God.





# Call To Action

- In *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics* (1988), the U.S. Bishops said, “The Gospel of Life ... [has] serious implications for every Christian involved in any way in the public life of the nation.
- “As bishops, we have the responsibility to call Americans to conversion, including political leaders, and especially those publicly identified as Catholic. ... [It] is part of our pastoral ministry to see to it that [the Church's] moral teaching is faithfully handed down, and to have recourse to appropriate measures to ensure that the faithful are guarded from every doctrine and theory contrary to it. As chief teachers in the Church, we must therefore explain, persuade, correct and admonish those in leadership positions who contradict the Gospel of life through their actions and policies. Catholic public officials who disregard Church teaching on the inviolability of the human person indirectly collude in the taking of innocent life. A private call to conversion should always be the first step in dealing with these leaders. Through prayer, through patiently speaking the truth in love, and by the witness of our lives, we must strive always to open their hearts to the God-given dignity of the unborn and of all vulnerable persons....





# Call To Action

- “So also we must remind these leaders of their duty to exercise genuine moral leadership in society. They do this not by unthinking adherence to public opinion polls or by repeating empty pro-choice slogans, but by educating and sensitizing themselves and their constituents to the humanity of the unborn child.
- “At the same time we need to redouble our efforts to evangelize and catechize our people on the dignity of life and the wrongness of abortion. ... In all cases, bishops have the duty and pastoral responsibility to continue to challenge those officials on the issue in question and persistently call them to a change of heart.
- “Priests, religious, catechists, Catholic school teachers, family life ministers and theologians all share, each in their appropriate way, in the Church's task of forming the Catholic faithful in a reverence for the sanctity of life. We call them to a renewed commitment to that task. In their words and example, they should witness loyally and joyfully to the truth that every human life, at every stage of development, is a gift from God.”





## Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read.  
Teach what you believe.  
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
Fr. Roger J. Landry



### Most Recent Homilies

God's Comfort and the Conversion Required to Receive It, Second Sunday of Advent (B), December 6, 2020

Accepting, Following and Announcing Jesus without Offense, Second Sunday of Advent (EF), December 6, 2020

Walking the Way of the Kingdom Jesus Indicates, First Saturday of Advent, December 5, 2020

Running to Meet Our Light, Strength and Salvation, First Friday of Advent, December 4, 2020

Listening to and Acting on the Long Awaited One's Words, First Thursday of Advent, December 3, 2020

Going Hungry to Meet Christ in a Three-Fold Banquet, First Wednesday of Advent, December 2, 2020

Childlike Eyes to See, First Tuesday of Advent, December 1, 2020

Singing the Song of the Lamb, 34th Wednesday (II), November 25, 2020

Turning to the Lord Who Comes to Judge the Earth, 34th Tuesday (II), November 24, 2020

Following the King and Lamb Wherever He Goes, 34th Monday (II), November 23, 2020

### Most Recent Articles

Our Duty and Salvation, The Anchor, November 27, 2020

Living the Reality of the Kingdom of Christ, National Catholic Register, November 19, 2020

The Knights Our Age Needs, The Anchor, November 13, 2020

Remembering Andrew Walther, November 7, 2020

Just a Parish Priest, The Anchor, October 30, 2020

Coming to Know the Original Three-Dimensional Carlo Acutis, The Anchor, October 16, 2020

A Good Shepherd Full of Christian and Priestly Virtues, The Pilot, October 5, 2020

Returning to the Sacrament of Divine Love, The Anchor, September 18, 2020

The Pastoral Malpractice of Liturgical Abuse, The Anchor, September 4, 2020

The Chosen, The Anchor, August 21, 2020

### Most Recent Talks

Receiving the Lord Jesus as Mary and Joseph, Advent Day of Recollection for the Leonine Forum, December 5, 2020

Novena in Preparation for the Immaculate Conception, Leonine Forum, November 28 to December 8, 2020

Blessed Michael McGivney and the Call to Holiness, McGivney Festival Young Adult Prayer Vigil, October 31, 2020

Apprenticeship in the Art of Living, Duc in Altum Virtual Schools Summit, October 28-30, 2020

Preaching on Marital Love and Accompanying Couples toward the Full Embrace of the Church's Teaching, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Divorced and Remarried, Challenges and Triumphs in Pastoral Care, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Heart of the New Evangelization: Meeting, Knowing and Loving Jesus Back, New Zealand Evangelion's In his Name Virtual Conference, October 10-11, 2020

Christian Anthropology: The Human Person in the Modern World, Leonine Forum Opening Lecture, October 8, 2020

Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, UNSRC Catholic Club, August 27, 2020

Making Better Confessions, Catholic Information Conference, July 24, 2020

# For the Slides of this Talk

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# Preaching the Gospel of Life and the Gospel of the Family

Msgr. Roger J. Landry  
Clergy Days for the Diocese of Tulsa  
January 28, 2025

