

## Be Fruitful – Series 5

Good morning. Here we are, month five. We have journeyed through some human questions and issues that our faith has held the answer to.

Questions such as: Why are we here? What is our purpose?

I would argue that the sacramental meaning behind it all can be summed up in that infamous nursery rhyme:

**First comes love. Then comes marriage. Then comes the baby in the baby carriage.**

If you haven't guessed it already; chapter five in the catechism titled **'Creating the Future'**.

I have a sister who for years would say "I know I will not have children. I don't have the patience and I am sure I would mess it up. Kids annoy me."

And for years I would say "Oh just wait. Something will come over you and your mind and heart will change." Fast forward a decade and this same advocate for a childless life is now married and learning the ropes as a new nursing mother.

After she met and married her husband, my sister would say; "I don't know what it is, but I just love Matt {her husband} so much. It makes me want to have babies" She was befuddled by this change of heart. What was the cause of her transformation?

I would say that this feeling is not just a whim or a fleeting romantic thought. This feeling of wanting to create love is in the example and image of God himself. It is our one chance to be a part of a miracle. When spouses take that leap and add mom or dad to their name badge, a blessed change occurs. These new parents get a glimpse into the connection between Gods creation and the marriage sacrament. There is a joy in realizing that this connection is more visible than ever before. How many here have looked into the wide eyes of a child or watched an infant sleeping and thought "this is what it is all about". And it truly is!

In these children our future is visible. In these children our purpose becomes clearer. In these children our vocation becomes evident.

Now wait, parenting as a vocation? Many would say that parenting is a full time JOB or a lot of WORK but a vocation? What is the difference between doing work and having a vocation?

The definition of vocation is; a particular calling. A divine calling. A strong impulse to follow a particular activity.

Our Catechism speaks to how being a parent is a true vocation. Sure there is work but I feel the more emphasis that is put on the vocational calling of parenthood the better. This is something that I have struggled with myself. Kids and all the "stuff" that comes with them can be a lot of work. And a person, me included, can get off track and bogged down if they make the work of parenting their only reality.

The reality is that we are called to bring people into this world. We are drawn to raising and loving that child just as God intended. When a husband and wife have children following the example of Christ's love for us; this same love also reveals to the new parents the need to facilitate their children's education and spiritual formation.

Pope Francis while he recently baptized 32 babies was quoted to say; “These children are links in a chain. You parents have a baby son or daughter to be baptized, but, in several years, it will be they that have a baby to baptize or a grandchild; and so, the chain of faith!”

There is evidence of this chain of faith that reaches back a millennia. Twice a day Jewish prayers open with the ancient Sh’ma- this ancient prayer is found in the book of Deuteronomy.

It reads:

*Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.*

Our catechism repeats- Recite them to your children. It continues on to say; “at the heart of this command, this foundational responsibility, is the daily reaffirmation of the covenant between God and his people [Israel]. Parents should nurture and usher children into their community’s relationship with God.”

In Deuteronomy it also says: Recite and share the glories of God with our children. Jesus says the same thing: Let the children come to me. Both Deuteronomy and Jesus are saying:

*Make sure the children in your care have a relationship with God and the people of God. Teach children to pray and contemplate the Lord. Nurture this daily in your home. And do not create obstacles to it.*

We must understand that our children will only learn what they are taught. Whether they are taught by you, their parents, or the world is up to those that have taken up this vocation of parenting. Our children must see the importance of having a daily relationship with God. They need to understand the great value of silence. Because it is in those moments, quiet and before our Lord that we best hear his voice. This relationship begins and is fostered in the domestic church, or our homes. ‘Parents, godparents, relatives, fellow parishioners, elders, teachers and catechists need to model spiritual literacy. Spiritual literacy means knowing the facts of the faith. But is it even more important to teach children how to pray, and give them role models.’

Brothers and sisters we must help one another. Give strength and grace to those families that need it and accept help when it is offered. Remember that the family and parish depend on each other. The challenges of family life require support- no family can flourish on its own. To flourish, families need their parishes, and their parishes need them.

I want to share with you an excerpt from the catechism for the World Meeting of Families:

Parenting has a way of deflating pretenses- *as a side note, I would agree. Anyone who has been awake for a 2am feeding or drug their screaming 3 year old from the candy isle at the store understands this.* ~ Parenting also has a way of making us see that we are not self-sufficient but need help and strength from God, family, parish and friends. The way a family responds to adversity and sickness, or gathers for meals and devotions, or makes financial decisions and sets priorities, or the way a family makes a choice about leisure, the parents’

jobs or careers, the children's academic education, even bedtime routines- these and many other daily aspects of "home economics" shape the imaginations and horizons of the children. Domestic routines can be "thin places", places where the Spirit shines through, where an attitude of gentleness and Christian hospitality leavens all life.

When I was preparing for this talk I had writers block. I love the information that I am reading about but I was having a hard time putting my joy into words. I wanted to express that we need to extend church beyond Sunday mornings. And how we treat each other will determine if our parish is fulfilling it's mission.

I had so much to communicate but I couldn't figure out how to get it all out. So I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit "give me the words!" Shortly after my 'Amen' I walked out of the office and looked up on the wall. There it was. A poster that has been in the school hallway all year. I walk past it numerous times a week. But this time, thank God, I did more than just see it. I read it. And I thought, "This is it!" So I want to share it with you now.

Children Learn What They Live.

*If children live with criticism,  
They learn to condemn.  
If children live with hostility,  
They learn to fight.  
If children live with ridicule,  
They learn to be shy.  
If children live with shame,  
They learn to feel guilty.  
If children live with encouragement,  
They learn confidence.  
If children live with tolerance,  
They learn to be patient.  
If children live with praise,  
They learn to appreciate.  
If children live with acceptance,  
They learn to love.  
If children live with approval,  
They learn to like themselves.  
If children live with honesty,  
They learn truthfulness.  
If children live with security,  
They learn to have faith in themselves and others.  
If children live with friendliness,  
They learn the world is a nice place in which to live.*

And I would add: If children live with the Word and Love of God, they learn their purpose and the ultimate joy that comes from that knowledge. To reinforce the strength in this chain our Archbishop has offered to participate at the baptism of children born into families of

three or more. The strength of family is at the forefront of our church. He is coming to our parish on July 5<sup>th</sup> at 11.00 am mass to baptize the children. They are gift to us.

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