

# A Word From Fr. Tom Niehaus

February 16, 2020

**Hot Topic: Marriage & Divorce** The Psalmist this week sings out in Psalm 119, “Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.” And with eyes fixed on heaven proclaims, “Open my eyes that I may consider the wonders of your law.” It is this song of the heart that points to a deeper meaning for all of us, “Give me discernment, that I may observe your law and keep it with my heart.” Our scriptures this weekend from Sirach 15, Psalm 119, 1 Corinthians 2 and Matthew 5 point to a truth that for those who fear the Lord, they will be on the path of wisdom where they will find opportunities to trust in God and seek to follow His laws with love in their hearts. In this week’s Gospel from Matthew we read about the topic of marriage and divorce. Jesus teaches his disciples about the truth of marriage and the importance that the bond of matrimony has for the husband and wife in relation to the law of the Lord. “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife—unless the marriage is unlawful—causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew 5:31-32).” The union of a man and woman in the eyes of God is sacred and should not be broken up by anything until by “death do the couple part.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy—heavier than the law of Moses. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to ‘receive’ the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ’s cross, the source of all Christian life (CCC 1615).” There are many crosses in life that married couples are given and by the grace of God, they will be helped to persevere through all temptations and trials. There are some marital situations that are effected by abuse, alcoholism, mental illness, addictive behaviors or other sensitive issues that can cause great strain on the marriage. In our current age of “no-fault divorce” even lesser causes become grounds for some marriages to end in divorce. The Church teaches that, “There are some situations in which living together becomes practically impossible for a variety of reasons. In such cases the Church permits the physical separation of the couple and their living apart. The spouses do not cease to be husband and wife before God and so are not free to contract a new union. In this difficult situation, the best solution would be, if possible, reconciliation. The Christian community is called to help these persons live out their situation in a Christian manner and in fidelity to their marriage bond which remains indissoluble (CCC 1649).” In our contemporary culture it seems more rare for one man and one woman to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony in the Church. Along with this under valuing of



the Sacrament of Matrimony there seems to be a trend for younger couples to not get married or for those married in recent years that at the first sign of conflict they end quickly in divorce. Still there are others who were married in the Catholic Church, divorced and then remarried without an annulment—a

condition of irregularity as described by Jesus in the Gospel—that prevents those persons from receiving the Sacraments validly until the nature of the first marriage is discovered according to God’s design for marriage. In a culture where marriage is broken, we need Jesus Christ to heal the hearts of struggling married couples and to encourage all of our Catholic couples to receive the Sacrament of marriage so that they would receive the blessing and strength from God. If you are in a struggling marriage or were divorced some time ago and would like some prayer and support around this area of your life, I would be happy to visit with you about your situation and pray with you for healing.

**Lent 2020** Ash Wednesday is on February 26, 2020 and begins the season of Lent. For the Christian Lent is the annual time of spiritual exercise as we grow in our love for God through participating in spiritual disciplines that sharpen the mind, body and soul to our need for God. During this 40 day pilgrimage toward the Easter mystery, we should take time individually and as a community to participate in Confession, the Stations of the Cross, praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, increased prayer, fasting, almsgiving and taking on other sacrifices as directed by our Lord, pastor or spiritual director. In our Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice & St. Patrick Parish Cluster Wednesday Nights will have a special schedule with one site per week hosting a 6 pm Soup Supper, 7 pm Stations of the Cross with Confessions for Faith Formation Students before Stations of the Cross and Confessions offered for parishioners afterwards at 7:30 pm. Also with the closing of the Knights of Columbus Hall in Faribault, St. Patrick’s-Shieldsville will be hosting three Lenten Friday Fish Fry events. Please see the bulletin and websites for exact details on Lenten events. What is the Lord asking of you this Lent in the way of prayer and sacrifice?

**Catholic Services Appeal** The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis kicks-off the Catholic Services Appeal or CSA this weekend. The funding from this appeal is important for the running of the Archdiocese and for the departments and support staff who help us in carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ in our area parishes and schools. Please consider giving a contribution to this vital fundraising effort for our local Archdiocese. One can also utilize online giving for the CSA by going to [GiveCSAF.org](http://GiveCSAF.org).

**Special Guest at the Cana Dinner** On February 22, 2020 there will be a Cana Dinner for married couples in our area. This will be a night where the gift of marriage will be honored as the true gift of God that it is. Coming to celebrate the 5 pm Mass at Most Holy Redeemer on that special night will be Bishop Andrew Cozzens. He will also be offering a special message on marriage for all those in attendance at the dinner. Please join me in welcoming Bishop Cozzens to our Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice & St. Patrick Parish Cluster!