

## *27th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Catholics in the United States were proud to welcome Pope Francis to our country and to witness the positive reaction he received from so many people. The Holy Father addressed the joint houses of Congress, calling on their members to renew their commitment as public servants. He visited the homeless and challenged all of us to help those in need. He addressed the United Nations, calling upon all peoples throughout the world to foster peace. He celebrated the final mass of the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, where he praised the example of families and their service to society.

Pope Francis said that families are like prophets, standing up in the world on behalf of essential values such as love and sacrifice. Couples give a particularly strong witness in the church when they choose marriage instead of living together, and when they choose a church marriage, not just a civil one. Couples who open their lives to the gift of children also bear testimony to the world about the nature of love. True love is so strong that a married couple cannot contain it between themselves. They long to share it with children.

Pope Francis said that the presence of so many families at the gathering in Philadelphia was a kind of miracle in today's world, something that is itself prophetic. He asked families to be open to the miracles of love and to "overcome the scandal of a narrow, petty love, closed in on itself, impatient of others." Sometimes when we think we are being loving toward someone else, we are actually just making demands and loving only ourselves.

One measure of true love is the sacrifice we give, not the sacrifice we receive. Sacrifice is a testimony to love. Couples who have true love sacrifice for each other even when they do not feel like it. They also sacrifice for a child even when they are tired. At the time of need, it is hard to do. But most people find that when they sacrifice for the sake of others, they feel better afterward because they know they made the right choice.

Some families face special difficulties. For example, many single parents are raising their children. This sometimes happens because the father is absent and has decided not to support his own family any more. In those cases, the single parent who raises children gives another kind of witness, an example of personal sacrifice in the face of great hardship.

The ideal for marriage and family life appears in today's first reading and gospel. Jesus quotes the Book of Genesis when he answers a question about the permanence of marriage. The ideal marriage is a permanent commitment between two loving partners who welcome children into their home. Those families gain a special insight into the fruitful covenant of love that God has made with us.

Here at St. Anthony's we offer preparation for engaged couples not just for the wedding but for the marriage. Families have access to our religious education program, the monthly rosary and opportunities for service. We hope that families build on this foundation in their homes, praying as a family especially before meals and before bed. Pope Francis says it takes courage to be a family. When families keep Christ at the center of their lives, he will inspire the sacrifice that they give, and they will experience the happiness that comes from true love.

*Sunday, October 4, 2015*