

RESOURCES FOR PREACHING
World Marriage Sunday
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 11, 2018

First Reading: Lev. 13:1-2, 44-46

Responsorial Psalm: Ps. 32:1-2, 5, 11

Second Reading: 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1

Alleluia: Lk. 7:16

Gospel: Mk. 1:40-45

This year, World Marriage Day (celebrated on the second Sunday of February) coincides with the World Day of the Sick (Feb. 11). The liturgical readings for February 11, 2018 are appropriate for both occasions as they provide an opportunity to reflect on the forgiveness and compassion of God who stretches out His hand to heal our wounds when we approach Him with confidence. Marriage and sexuality are gifts that often need redemption and healing. May we include these in today's Prayer over the Offerings that this Eucharist would "cleanse and renew us." Below are a few suggestions for preaching on the theme of physical and spiritual healing.

Possible Themes, Reflective Questions, Resources, Quotes

- The wound of leprosy kept the leper isolated from society. Sometimes the wounds in our lives or the lives of others may keep us away from the Church or from our neighbors. By touching the leper, Christ boldly reached out to him in his isolation and offered him consolation in his distress.
 - *Am I or someone I know afraid to return to the Church because of divorce or separation? Have I reached out to someone suffering from domestic abuse or violence or infertility or miscarriage?*
 - On domestic violence – USCCB: [“When I Call for Help”](#) (2002).
 - “Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings.” Pope Francis, [Evangelii Gaudium](#), no. 44.
 - “We cannot forget that ‘mercy is not only the working of the Father; it becomes a criterion for knowing who his true children are. In a word, we are called to show mercy because mercy was first shown to us’. This is not sheer romanticism or a lukewarm response to God’s love, which always seeks what is best for us, for ‘mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness which she shows to believers; nothing in her preaching and her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy’. Pope Francis, [Amoris Laetitia](#), no. 310.

- The law regarding leprosy is given to Moses and Aaron in the first reading. However, in the Gospel, Christ, ‘the great prophet’ restores the health of the leper who approaches with faith and confidence. We all have forms of leprosy in the form of spiritual illness but the mercy of God is always available to those who ask it.
 - *What kind of leprosy do I bear? Where do I need healing? Are there wounded areas of my marriage that can be healed? What areas of my sexuality need healing? Do I need to ask for or grant forgiveness to my spouse?*
 - On forgiveness – Article: [“Forgiveness Fundamentals”](#) on *For Your Marriage.org*
 - On lust and pornography – USCCB: [Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography](#) (2015) and *Clean Heart series of pamphlets* (2016)
 - On homosexuality – USCCB: [Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination – USCCB Pastoral Guidelines](#) (2006)
 - On healthy sexuality within marriage – Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [Humanae Vitae](#), 1968.
 - “[...] the family is a great training ground for the mutual giving and forgiving without which no love can last for long. Without self-giving and seeking forgiveness love does not last, it does not endure.” Pope Francis, [General Audience](#), Nov. 4, 2015.

- The responsorial psalm reminds us to *turn to the Lord in time of trouble and He will fill us with the joy of salvation*. We all experience times of trouble, devastation, and difficulty. Marriage can also turn from a time of joy to sadness. Christ desires to heal these troubles and offer the joy of salvation. He does this through the sacrament of reconciliation and with the help of the sacramental grace received on your wedding day.
 - *Have I turned to the Lord and to the sacraments for help in time of trouble? Am I mindful of the grace received for my marriage in the sacrament of matrimony? To whom will I turn in the Church in my time of need?*
 - On divorce – USCCB: [“Divorce and the Church’s Healing Ministry”](#) (2010).
 - On marriages in crisis – *For Your Marriage* [list of ministries](#) that help married couples in difficulty or crisis.
 - “The history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family. [...] the family is placed at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. To the family is entrusted the task of striving, first and foremost, to unleash the forces of good, the source of which is found in Christ the Redeemer of man. Every family unit needs to make these forces their own so that [...] the family will be ‘strong with the strength of God’.” Pope St. John Paul II, [Letter to Families](#), no. 23.
 - Pope Francis, [Amoris Laetitia](#), no. 232-238.

- In today’s second reading, St. Paul reminds us that in whatever we do, “do everything for the glory of God.” If we are mindful of this exhortation, our lives can

experience a transformation, as well as our marriages and families. God is glorified when our lives are guided by faith, hope, and charity in all that we do.

- *How can I be more aware of doing everything in my life and vocation for the glory of God? Do I see my marriage as an opportunity to glorify God? Am I building my family into a domestic church of faith, hope, and charity?*
 - “Christian marriage, like the other sacraments, ‘whose purpose is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God,’ is in itself a liturgical action glorifying God in Jesus Christ and in the Church.” Pope St. John Paul II, [*Familiaris Consortio*](#), no. 56.
 - “The celebration of the sacrament must have this co-responsibility of family life in the Church’s great mission of love. And thus the life of the Church is enriched every time by the beauty of this spousal covenant, and deteriorates every time it is disfigured. The Church, in order to offer to all the gifts of faith, hope and love, needs the courageous fidelity of spouses to the grace of their sacrament! The People of God need their daily journey in faith, in love and in hope, with all the joys and the toils that this journey entails in a marriage and a family.” Pope Francis, [*General Audience*](#), May 6, 2015.
- In today’s Gospel, the man with leprosy approaches Jesus to ask for healing. Jesus is not afraid to reach out to touch one considered to be “unclean” by everyone in the community, even though this carried the risk of having the community consider him to share in that “uncleanness.” Today, the truth about marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman is not always popular in our contemporary community, but it needs courageous witnesses whose faith is stronger than public opinion.
- *How do I approach the subject of marriage with peers? Am I unafraid to defend the truth of marriage as the union of one man and one woman? Do I need to be better educated on the reasons for this?*
 - Visit [*Marriage: Unique for a Reason*](#) for videos, study guides, and catechesis about the authentic meaning of marriage.

“In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God’s plan in all its grandeur.” Pope Francis, [*Amoris Laetitia*](#), no. 307.

Other Resources

- Pope Francis’s [*Catechesis on the Family*](#), January 7, 2015 – November 18, 2015.
- USCCB, Pastoral Letter [*Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*](#), 2009.
- USCCB, *For Your Marriage* website: foryourmarriage.org
- USCCB, *Por Tu Matrimonio* website: portumatrimonio.org
- USCCB, *Marriage: Unique for a Reason* website: marriageuniqueforareason.org