

NOTES FROM THE DESK OF FR. MARK ARNZEN

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We are created for joy. “Catholic teaching about marriage and the family flows from the heart of our faith...Our God is not inaccessible and remote; we believe that God reveals himself in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the source for the hope, faith, love and joy that should animate Catholic family life. He is the reason we can trust the wisdom of Catholic belief.” (1)

The above quote comes from the opening chapter of *Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, which is the text for catechesis for the World Meeting of Families offered to us from the Bishops of the United States.

I have used texts from this book several times over the past few months but now that the meeting is happening in Philadelphia it may be good to retrace a few steps and also ask a question.

In the final Mass that Pope Francis celebrated in Cuba he asked us this one question, “Do you believe that Christ can transform your life?” This is a question of faith. It is a question of trust. It is a question of hope in the world. We ask this question because for many people God is remote and inaccessible. God is distant from our daily lives and we stumble and fall in lost hope for the goodness in life. The question the Pope asked in Cuba is the center of the life of the family because if we do not believe that God transforms our lives then what’s the point.

If we do believe then we believe that the Sacrament of Marriage also transforms the husband and wife. In fact, if we look at it backwards, we know the marriage of a man and woman radically transforms them as they grow in love and children are born into the marriage, even if we take God out of the equation. Place God at the center, when we believe he transforms us, then let the miracles begin. God’s transformation of the family is the radical gift of mercy, love, compassion and forgiveness lived with joy. We are all sinners and in God’s transformative grace we are able to seek the mercy, the love, the compassion and the forgiveness of God through the beloved sharing, giving and receiving this wondrous grace transform us.

And yet, we come back to the question, “do I believe?” If we believe then we must live and practice what we believe. If we believe then we will be transformed and made new...even in our sinfulness.

As the U.S. Bishops quote in the opening chapter of *Love is our Mission* from Pope Francis’ Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, “To those who suffer, God does not provide arguments which explain everything; rather, his response is that of an accompanying presence, a history of goodness which touches every story of suffering and opens up a ray of light. In Christ, God himself wishes to share this path with us and to offer us his gaze so that we might see the light within it. Christ is the one who, having endured suffering, is the ‘pioneer and perfecter of our faith.’” (9) Always remembering that mercy, forgiveness and compassion fulfill love.

Let the Church say AMEN.

God Bless

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