

Pastoral Message Marking the 10th World Meeting of Families

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Sunday marks the end of the Year of the Family which Pope Francis inaugurated in 2021. The conclusion of this Year is marked by a gathering in Rome, the 10th World Meeting of Families, and as part of his Sunday Angelus Pope Francis will bless all families throughout the world.

One of the greatest insights of the Second Vatican Council is that everyone is called to holiness – to become a saint. In this Sunday’s Gospel (Luke 9.51-62) Jesus gives a clear if challenging message about the urgency of following Him - whoever we are and whatever the cost.

But holiness does not simply equate with one particular way of life. Pope-emeritus Benedict once said that there are as many paths to heaven as there are people. Though it is always Jesus Christ, ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life’ who leads the way and opens the door, our journey is unique to each one of us. If we try and follow another person’s path, we will soon lose our way and grow disheartened. Instead, we must allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit on the path that is meant for us.

Depending on our own particular vocation, our work or our family life should not be an obstacle to holiness but rather the very means by which God wants to make me holy.

We all find ourselves in very challenging times- including war in Europe and increasing economic uncertainty. Pope Francis in his *Letter to Married Couples* [2021] recalled Jesus’ miracle of the calming of the sea and said, “Marriage, as a vocation, calls you to steer a tiny boat – wave-tossed yet sturdy, thanks to the reality of the sacrament – across a sometimes stormy sea. Let us never forget, though, that by virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony, Jesus is present in that boat; he is concerned for you and he remains at your side amid the tempest”.

Whenever we find ourselves in stormy waters we have the wonderful guarantee that Christ, Who alone fills us with joy, is always with us.

With all good wishes and prayers,

In Christ and Mary,

+Alan Williams, sm
Bishop of Brentwood