

My Dear Parish Family,

On behalf of all my family I wanted to send a note of thanks to all of you for your prayers and condolences that you gave with the death of my grandmother. I offered the Funeral Mass for the repose of her soul over in Muskegon last week. Thank you for remembering her in your prayers. I've done many Funeral Masses, but it's a little different to offer one for your own family member.

We moved my grandmother over to Saginaw a few years ago so that she could be closer to us and we could help take care of her. It was great having her closer during her last years.

It was a blessing that her last days were very peaceful. My grandmother was 97 years old when she died (almost 98), but we always thought that she would make it to 100. She is the last of my grandparents to die. *May the Divine Assistance remain always with her and may her soul through the mercy of God rest in peace.*

You may have been following the Synod of the Family where the Bishops of the Church are gathered in Rome. They are discussing issues related to marriage, the family, and the human person and are looking for ways to bring the unchanging message of the Gospel to these areas that are in such desperate need of the Truth of Jesus Christ and to be refreshed with His Divine Grace.

The Bishops are currently meeting behind closed doors and have not released their official discussions yet. There was what is called *Relatio post disceptationem* or the Report after discussion that was released to the media that is causing confusion among the faithful and in the media themselves, because it seems to discount the Divine Law from God Himself and it makes it seem that this Synod is about to change His Law.

But it is good to remember that the Church does not have any authority to change the Divine Law and it will not do that here at the Synod. Marriage is indissoluble as we see from our Lord Himself in the Gospels (Mark 10: 2-13) and so divorce and remarriage as the Divine Law says is not possible in a valid marriage unless it was determined by a Church Tribunal that the marriage was not valid to begin with, which is called a Decree of Nullity (Annulment) which would allow them to get married.

Other areas discussed were related to those with same sex attraction. There was talk in the media that the Church was going to change its teaching, but the Church cannot change what it has received from God, she can only hand on and defend the Truth of the Divine and Natural Law. The inclination in itself is not sinful, but acting out on the temptation is.

The Church receives this teaching from Divine Revelation as we see in the Book of Genesis 19:1-29, St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:20, and 1 Timothy 1:10 and we see these Scriptures and the Natural Law help define the Catechism of the Catholic Church # 2357 - 2359.

The family is the foundation of our culture. The Synod is asking how can we build up our culture on this foundation that has been wounded. What was released in the *Relatio post disceptationem* is only a small part of the discussions and does not represent Magisterial teaching, it does not have any authority. Most of what the Synod Bishops spoke about was not released to the public.

Some areas that the Synod will look at include: How can we help our culture see the dangers and the harm to couples who cohabit outside of bonds of marriage? How can we help those who have divorced and remarried civilly in their irregular situation? How can we teach them the truth of the indissolubility of marriage and how do we lead them there? And how do we reach out and help those who struggle with same sex attraction to remain chaste, just like all are called to be chaste outside of the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman.

Ultimately the Church is a Mother who wants to protect her children from harm, she wants to help her children avoid sin. That is why the Synod on the Family will not change teachings as some are portraying, but rather is looking for ways to pastorally reach out to our culture to encounter the Truth, to see the beautiful gift created from the very beginning by God Himself. It is as our Lord says in the Gospel of John, *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

Pray for our Bishops as they gather in Rome for this Synod on the Family. The media as they report do so with a certain agenda and so be aware of that when they report on the Church, while the Church herself seeks the Truth and always has at heart the gift that God has for the human person.

May God Bless you and Mary keep you,
Fr. Christopher Coman