

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Romans 12:2. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.



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This is a beautiful passage for all of us to look at. When I read it many things come to mind. This is a passage that warns us of moral relativity. Many people think that whatever makes a person happy is OK. If it makes them feel good and is pleasing to them, it's OK. The prevailing attitude of society is, "it's all about me." We see other people doing things and we might think that it's alright to do them, too. Our culture presently has a fifty percent divorce rate because people think that marriage is only a contract. According to society, when you're not in love anymore, you move on to be happy. In the present age women have babies inside of them, but if that's not convenient we kill them. Many people see this as acceptable because they see others doing it. The legality of it has become our moral compass instead of God being our compass.

Families are being attacked, but we don't see it because we are so busy. We've allowed our children to sit in front of the TV or the computer and we've allowed ourselves to be involved in activities from seven in the morning until ten at night. We don't sit down to family dinners. When Sunday comes, instead of giving the Sabbath to our Lord and resting, praying and honoring him, we cram in more activities that we couldn't get done in the week because we were too busy.

We're at a time in our lives when material things mean a lot. We feel we need these things because we've forgotten the difference between wants and needs. We work more to get these things and we work more so we can buy even more. Then we work all the more to keep our lifestyles up. All cultures have had similar issues.

I find that we're too busy for God. It's not that most of us don't want to have God in their lives. We do. We say, "Oh, I should pray more. I should go to church more. Someday I'm going to get there." But "someday" never comes because we put our need for possessions in front of our need for God. We seem to put God on a shelf and save Him for an hour on Sunday and say, "That's good enough for now. I'll work on my relationship with God later." Maybe we don't

even think about God until something terrible happens, like September eleventh, or we experience some other crisis in our lives. In times like that we either decide to forget totally about God, or we finally get on our knees and pray to Him.

This passage speaks about renewing our mind so that we can discern what is pleasing to God. When we're on the go we don't put Christ at the center of our lives. Today's culture tells us that we can't be perfect, so we shouldn't even try. We can't be perfect on our own, but with the Grace of God we can try to be holy and good for Christ. We can try to be better people by loving him.

This passage is clearly not about other people. It's written for us. It doesn't ask us to judge others, but invites us to look at our own everyday lives and transform them into something pleasing to God.

The Church runs counter-cultural to society. In society, we have so many people on anti-depression medication. Children are committing suicide and there are shootings in the schools. People who follow society's rules aren't happy, but they are not willing to come to God.

When Todd and I got married we were ready to start our jobs. We weren't ready to start a family, so we used contraception. We had plans. We had our house and we had to work constantly because we felt we couldn't have children until we had enough money saved and our house was right and we had good vehicles.

Then the day came and we decided to have a baby. I thought I would take a year off, and then go back to work. But God sent us this baby and it changed our lives. Our child forced us to slow down because of everything you have to pack to go anywhere with an infant! I think this was a blessing from God.

Then we began to learn about Natural Family Planning (NFP). We started to realize that we didn't need new cars or a bigger house. These things didn't matter. Our little house was big enough no matter how many children God would send us. I decided to stay at home to be with the children.

When we had new clothes and new cars, our lives were empty. God came into our lives and allowed us to see that he needs to be in control and in the center. When we put God in the center of our lives we are able to push other things away. We've replaced our TV in the living room with a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. We also have the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary there along with our family bible. When I walk into the house, I'm reminded of what is important in our lives. I'm reminded to ask myself whether I have praised and acknowledged the Lord today.

Very early in our marriage we were involved in worldly matters. It's only by the grace of God that we are able to step back from that. My favorite quote is, "Live simply so others can simply live." I'm trying to teach that to my children. We live

in a small house, so we can't have a lot of things and that's good for us. It keeps us grounded in what we need versus what we want. We have only one income, which forces us to look only at what we need.

I'm so grateful for all of that. We've slowed our lives down. We spend time together as a family on Sunday, reading, giving the Sabbath to the Lord, trying to break away from the world and break into Christ.

This is not always easy. Some people judge us negatively when they walk into our house. But it just makes us pray more because God is beautiful and great and our life and our marriage have never been better. The emptiness we experience before has been filled.

God is clearly telling us his plan for us. We simply need to slow down and listen. This can be a hard thing to do. Because we have adopted this way of life doesn't make us perfect people. We still have to make that choice each and every day. We have to choose to be good and holy and pleasing to the Lord on a daily basis and it can be a struggle. We have to put the will of God first into our decision-making and let him lead us.

If you would like further information with regard to Pregnancy Services or Natural Family Planning, or the Familia Program, please contact the parish offices at 653-2377.