



## **Homiletic Guide – Children: The Unexpected Gift**

September 22, 2024 – Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**First Reading:** Wisdom 2:12,17-20 – God will defend him and deliver him.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 54 – The Lord upholds my life.

**Second Reading:** James 3:16 – 4:3 – Wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits.

**Gospel:** Mark 9:30-37 – Whoever shall receive one child such as this in my name, receives me.

The following notes are provided as a leadoff for your reflection—it is not necessary to address every bullet point in your homily. With that in mind, here are some thoughts to ponder:

- **Children are a true gift from God** that flows from the mutual life-giving love of a man and a woman.
  - In the male-female couple, their biological distinctiveness serves a marvelous complementarity: “It becomes the source of that miracle that never ceases to surprise us: the arrival of new human beings in the world.” - *Dignitas Infinita*, 58
  - Like the very best gifts, children always come as a surprise, even when they are sought and meticulously planned. Each is unique; the qualities, talents, joys and sorrows they bring are unrepeatable, contributing to the richness of our lives.
  - Just as husbands and wives are called to help each other get to heaven, children are gifts from God bestowed upon parents so that mothers and fathers can ultimately return their children to the Lord as saints for his glory (*GS*, 51).



- Children are welcomed and made pure in Christian holiness through Baptism, infusing the family home with sacramental grace as a “domestic church” to learn together the wisdom of Christ that brings peace, gentleness, mercy, and good fruits (Jas 3:17).
  - Wars, conflicts, and vice (Jas 4:1-2), as well as virtues such as purity, gentleness and mercy (3:17): the source of all these is often found within the family.
  - When families live as Jesus teaches in the Gospel—each putting the good of the other before him/herself, valuing even the least—then we will know true peace.
  - Married couples and families: be great in God’s sight, and you will know God’s peace and happiness. In this way, you will bring about in this world “a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace” (Preface for the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe).
- Jesus tells us, “Whoever shall receive a child such as this in my name, receives me” (Mk 9:37). We are called to do this as a Christian community through Baptism, as well as through the transmission of human life by our married couples.
  - Thousands of Catholic couples in California have postponed baptism for their children in the last few years since COVID-19. Let us all invite our loved ones to bring their children to Jesus by baptizing them! Baptism ushers the couple as well as the child into the merciful and protective dominion of Jesus.





- The world around us is becoming skeptical about the enduring value of having children. It tells us: there are too many mouths to feed already; consider all you will have to give up. In contrast, the Church has always taught that Marriage entails a mission to transmit human life through responsible parenthood (Gaudium et Spes, [50-51](#) and CCC, [2366-2369](#)).
- When it comes to responsible parenthood and the spacing of pregnancies, fertility awareness for natural family planning offers countless benefits to women, couples, and families that contraception cannot duplicate. [Learn more](#).
- More and more couples these days are struggling with fertility. For them, fostering or adopting children can be profoundly meaningful. Others support life as married couples through hospitality or spiritual motherhood/fatherhood.
- The **Radiate Love** Marriage Initiative
  - The Catholic Church throughout California is progressing along the year-long Radiate Love initiative to deepen our appreciation for the gift of Marriage.
  - Highlight any activities that the parish will be sponsoring in the coming months, and invite couples and parents to explore the resources on the [website](#), especially those for marriage enrichment or designed for faith sharing at home.





**Note for homilists:** This Homiletic Guide is intended to help you encourage your people to invest in their marital relationship, share the faith with their children, and open their hearts to recognize the ways the Lord is leading them to radiate love out to the world, especially through the gift of children. The Marriage Fact Sheet 2024 offers some important background information for your review, but not necessarily to include in your homily. The social trends regarding marriage in California are not great right now, but it is important to be positive, practical, and personal.

This Homiletic Guide is one resource among many others designed for your parish ministries or your parishioners' home use. You may want to take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources for September (bulletin insert or announcement, prayer card, blessing, intercessions, videos, etc.) on the Radiate Love website: [www.radiatelove.info](http://www.radiatelove.info). In particular, be sure to make use of the Intercessory Prayers and the Blessing for Children after Communion at all weekend Masses.

