

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 276

"the first revolution...is through inner holiness"

Francis 'off-the-cuff' on marriage and reform



Mistaken views about marriage and its true meaning, our temporary or throw-away culture, the need to be courageous and daring, Mary's missionary role, the disunity of the devil and why the concept of solidarity is under attack. These were just some of the wide-ranging issues which Pope Francis spoke about in his off-the-cuff remarks during the question and answer session with the Schoenstatt pilgrims held in the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall on 25 Oct 2014.

Asked about marriage and what advice he can offer to those who don't feel welcome in the Church, Pope Francis stressed the need for priests to stay close to each one of their flock without becoming scandalized

over what takes place within the family. He said a bishop during the recent Synod on the family asked whether priests are aware of what children feel and the psychological damage caused when their parents separate? The Pope noted how sometimes in these cases the parent who is separating ends up living at home only part-time with the children which he described as a "new and totally destructive" form of co-habitation.

He said the Christian family and marriage have never been so attacked as they are nowadays because of growing relativism over the concept of the sacrament of marriage. When it comes to preparing for marriage, Pope Francis said all too often there is a misunderstanding over the difference between the sacrament of marriage and the social rite. Marriage is for ever, he said, but in our present society there is a temporary or throw-away culture that has become widespread.



Turning to the missionary role of Mary, the Pope reminded people that nobody can search for faith without the help of Mary, the Mother of God, saying a Church without Mary is like an orphanage. When questioned as to how he maintains a sense of joy and hope despite the many problems and wars in our world, Pope

Francis replied that he uses prayer, trust, courage and daring. To dare is a grace, he said, and a prayer without courage or daring is a prayer that doesn't work.



Asked about reform of the Church, the Pope said people describe him as a revolutionary but went on to point out that the Church has always been that way and is constantly reforming itself. He stressed that the first revolution or way of renewing the Church is through inner holiness and that counts far more than more external ways such as reforming the Curia and the Vatican bank. Pope Francis also spoke about the importance of

having a freedom of spirit and warned against closing ourselves up in a mass of rules and regulations, thus becoming a caricature of the doctors of law.

The theme of our throw-away society was also touched on again by the Pope in another reply when he said our present-day culture is one that destroys the human bonds that bind us together. And in this context, he continued, one word that is at risk of dying in our society is 'solidarity' and this is also a symptom of our inability to forge alliances. Pope Francis also warned about the devil, stressing that he exists and that his first weapon is disunity.

Susy Hodges – Vatican Radio
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item 277

my November reminiscence



The ***Movember*** movement, promoted by the global Movember Foundation, for changing men's health concepts, currently active in more than 30 countries in the world, is definitely a highlight of November. A special feature of this campaign is that men activists grow their mustaches during the month as a mark of solidarity with the movement. They engage in charity work, fund-raising and awareness campaigns by focusing on men's health issues like cancers, mental health etc.

November is also very important to the Catholic Church and a few other Protestant denominations, like Anglicans, as they solemnly celebrate 'All Saints Day' on 1st November, also called the Feast of All Saints. Remembering saints and martyrs on a special day has been a Christian tradition since the 4th century AD.

St Pope John Paul II on the All Saint's Day in 2003 stated: "We celebrate today the solemnity of all Saints. This invites us to turn our gaze to the immense multitude of those who have already reached the blessed land, and points us on the path that will lead us to that destination".

Saints and martyrs, known and unknown, are stars in the heavenly firmament, within the solar system of the eternal sun, the Son of God. They were all mortals like you and me, but their lives were immortalized by the Church as they proved to be the torch-bearers and captains of the pilgrim Church. They surrendered their lives entirely to follow their supreme commander, God Almighty, and the Church acknowledged their dedication by placing them as role models for the faithful.

'All Soul's Day' on 2nd November, commemorates the faithful departed, the day to remember all our predecessors who have proceeded before us in hope. On this special day, celebrated in the Church since

the 10th century AD, we pray for the souls in Purgatory so as to get them remission for their venial sins that come in the way of their vision of God in heaven. Through our prayers and self-denial, we will be able to help the souls gain this Beatific Vision, which is the final goal of all of us. "For souls in Purgatory, the wait for eternal happiness and for meeting the Beloved is a source of suffering, because of the punishment due to sin which separates them from God. But there is also the certitude that once the time of purification is over, the soul will go to meet the One it desires" (letter of St John Paul II on the Millennium of All Soul's Day).

"All Saint's and All Soul's feasts are time to renew hope" said Pope Francis on the All Soul's Day Mass celebrated on 1st November evening in Rome. He continued "If today we are remembering these brothers and sisters of ours who lived before us and are now in heaven, they are there because they were washed in the blood of Christ. That is our hope, and this hope does not disappoint. If we live our lives with the Lord, he will never disappoint us." The Pope also reminded us to pray for the departed, including "those no one remembers."



At a personal level, besides mine and my wife's birthdays falling in this month, November also has a special significance for me. 4th November is the 4th death anniversary of my beloved mother who died at the ripe age of 98. Whether 98 or 980 the departure of the mother figure from our life is a fact that is difficult to reconcile with as long as memories last.

My mother was an ordinary woman, born in the early part of the century, with limited education, vision and ambitions and married at a young age of 13 years. She became the mother of 10 children. She had to live under strenuous economic and social conditions. Being part of a strong patriarchal family system, prevalent in those days in the Travancoor part of Kerala, care of children would have been almost entirely the mother's domain, of course, not ruling out assistance from related corners. Our father, busy with his profession in music and related areas, would not have been a big child-mentor either. In those days, husbands would be deeply engaged in the bread-winning efforts, especially in agriculture, and wives would look after the children and attend to all other domestic chores. This life pattern in most Christian families was accepted as the social norm of the times and families moved on without complaint. They never felt they were doing anything extraordinary in life.

Though frail and short in stature, there was something special and extraordinary about our mother. It was her strong and solid faith in God, which she inherited from her parents. Her prayers and reliance on God kept her in good stead through all her tribulations and challenges. We were lucky to see our mother with her rosary while we went to sleep and could see her with the same rosary when we opened our eyes in the morning. She slept only after we were all asleep and woke up before any of us did. This spirit gave us great enthusiasm to go to our parish church at Ayyampara, situated on top of a huge hill some 2.5kms away from home.

God rewards the faithful at His own volition and at His own time. God recognized my mother's sacrifices after she crossed 60 long years of faithful living. Then the mantle of God's grace fell on the youngest of her

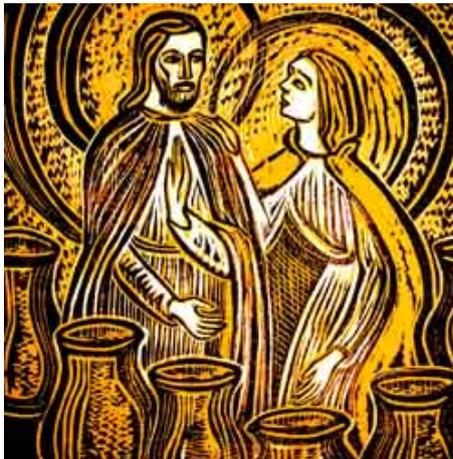
five sons. Jacob, who was known in close circles as Chackochen, was called to priesthood. As if it was a premonition, he became a priest in the Pallottine congregation in 1981. Much later, after his election as Rector General, one of his colleagues exhorted him `from now on your mother will have to increase the number of daily Rosaries for you'. True, she may have done exactly that.

Mission accomplished, it was time for God to call her back to His kingdom. She was well prepared to go. God also had reserved a last blessing for her. She breathed her last at 11.30 p.m. on 4th November 2010.

She is not visible to us now, but her legacy lingers on. The influence of a mother on the lives of children can never be fully gauged, so also it is hard to understand the depth of a mother's love for her children. Threat, sickness, inconveniences or even death will never deter the mother from choosing the best for her children at all times.

Our mother had her moments of happiness in her life and she acknowledged them as gifts from God for which she was always grateful. Her sense of justice and righteousness was always visible in everything she did. She would resist any wrong-doing from any corner, even though it would make her unpopular. This character continues to influence us when we are faced with different options in life. She had a strong message conveyed through her life full of sacrifices, which she peacefully endured without losing her focus on bringing up her children in faith and discipline. It involved great mental and physical challenges for her in ensuring her children become responsible adults in life.

This is the story of my mother. My mother was not a miracle mother; she was just like the mothers of most of us. If our weak and humble earthly mothers could change the world in their own limited way, think about our heavenly mother. What could this mother, who is the mother of God, not do for us? Could she



not change the whole world for us? She can and she does, provided we are worthy to be called as her children. She could get humanly impossible things done with the intervention of her Son. Is it not what happened in the marriage feast at Cana (John 2:1)

Attachment to our earthly mothers is sentimental and emotional which may have very little place in our relationship with the Holy Mother. This spiritual motherhood, as we know, is far superior and everlasting. It is not limited to our longevity on earth, but for ever as heaven is the perpetual abode for God's children. Let the Holy Mother fill up the gaps created by the exit of our earthly mothers and give us a glimpse of the happiness and peace God has in store for His chosen ones.

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05.11.14
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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #144 Like Pope Francis, it's great that you provide a space for various views to be ventilated.

MB 02.11.14

Thanks. Both articles were excellent as always. They also showed the real struggle of people in the real world to hold on to their faith and not be judgemental.

GS 05.11.14