

Sunday Homily  
25<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time B  
Wisdom 2:12, 17-20; James 3:16-4:3; Mark 9:30-37

By Deacon Jeff Claar

A few weeks ago, I was at a volleyball tournament in Michigan and I noticed a fellow fan whose tee shirt had a most interesting saying. The shirt proclaimed:

*I can only make one person happy each day; I choose Me.*

I am somewhat acquainted with the fan who wore this shirt; middle-aged, a failed marriage, children struggling with life, can't hold a job, lives with her mother; one could conclude it is awful hard to keep one person happy. (And you Buckeye fans are thinking, "well you were in Michigan...!")

St. James reminds us "*where selfish ambition exists, there is disorder...*" you aren't kiddin'! But that is our human nature isn't it? It seems like God's plan for us is almost always the exact opposite of what our plan is doesn't it?!

St. James reminds us, "*wisdom from above is...good fruits*". He is telling us that the more we embrace God's plan for us, the happier we will be and the more peaceful our lives will become. How can we learn to bear this "good fruit" in our lives? I say, learn from only the best, learn from Jesus.

Mark tells us Jesus' way: "*the first shall be last*". In other words, the more we give of ourselves, the more we will receive and the happier our lives will become! Now that is a leap of faith! But all we have to do is look at those areas of your own lives where we are happiest and I am sure that this holds true for you and me. Let me give you one example I work with all the time: the young engaged couple.

Every young engaged couple who approaches the Church to get married wants the same thing: to live happily ever after as husband and wife. But almost always, they are totally unprepared for the sacrifice that will be necessary to make that dream come true.

Through little fault of their own, they have been raised in a society that has bombarded them and thoroughly saturated them with messages of "selfish ambition" that proves time and again to lead to "disorder and every foul practice." Half live together before marriage, many have viewed pornography, there is a sense of "yours" and "mine", not "ours". These are a few examples of the normal disorder that is a part of their lives. All of this is so toxic to their dream and they don't even know it. I always tell them that if they live their marriage according to society's plan, your chances for success are a coin toss.

But there is a way to almost guarantee your success: God's plan for your dream marriage.

It is a proven fact that those couples who marry in the Church, attend Mass together and embrace the teachings of the Church have improved their chance of success dramatically; some studies say 85% or higher.

Even more successful are those couples using God's plan for spacing the birth of their children, called Natural Family Planning. This natural way is just as effective as any artificial way, in addition to fostering a deeper sense of love, communication, and togetherness between the couple; so much so that couples that add NFP to their marriage plan improve their chances for a happy life to over 95%.

This is just one real life example – and there are examples in every aspect of our lives. If we look closely at our time, our talent, our treasure, we will conclude that the old saying is true – “the more we give, the more we get”. Our God guarantees that.

Our challenge today is to love ourselves enough to believe that God's plan for our lives is better than our own. We should pray for the courage to share ourselves generously and abundantly, even to the point of sacrifice, with everyone in our lives. When we do this we will be given the gift of greatness that Jesus promises to those who would be last.