



Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
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Pastor's Column

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Embracing the Joy of Love

Earlier this year, Pope Francis issued an authoritative teaching document on marriage and family life which is entitled *The Joy of Love*.

Reflecting the consensus of bishops at two separate international synods during the past two years, *The Joy of Love* seeks to invite Catholics throughout the world to enhance their understanding and promotion of marriage and family life, precisely because family lies at the heart of the Christian life in the world.

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*) can be read online at the Vatican Web site. Just visit <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html> and click on "Apostolic Exhortations." It can also be purchased in book form at Amazon.com or at your local bookstore.

Pope Francis is encouraging Bishops to find ways to promote *The Joy of Love* in the life of Catholics in their own Dioceses.

In our Diocese, Bishop McElroy has decided to convene a Diocesan Synod which will focus exclusively on the topics of marriage and family life. The Synod will be held on October 29-30, 2016.

A Diocesan Synod embraces the dimensions of theological reflection, pastoral insight, visioning, and governing, all within the context of a deep spiritual orientation to the wider life of the Church.

The Synod in October will focus on five major challenges contained in *The Joy of Love*:

1. *The Challenge to Witness to Both the Beauty and Realism of the Catholic Vision of Marriage and Family Life*
2. *The Challenge to Form a Culture of Invitation and Hospitality to Unmarried Couples*
3. *The Challenge to Welcome, Nurture, and Form Children*
4. *The Challenge to Provide Authentic Pastoral Support for Those Who Are Divorced*
5. *The Challenge to Bring Spiritual Depth to Family Life*

Each of the 100 Parishes of our Diocese will have a representative in the Synod.

The majority of the representatives will be lay men and women, which is particularly important on this topic of marriage and family life.

In the time preceding the Synod, there will be preparatory sessions in which Synod participants who have been assigned to one of the five "Challenges" will meet to discuss their topic.

I have asked Sheila McKinley to be St. Thomas More Parish's Synod Representative, and she eagerly agreed.



She has been assigned to the working committee to deal with "The Challenge to Bring Spiritual Depth to Family Life."

The committee of which Sheila is a member will be meeting soon. The questions on which they are to deliberate are these:

1. *How can our Parishes bring prayer more into the center of family life, with specific attention to the multi-cultural dimensions of this challenge?*
2. *What steps can our Local Church take to increase the participation of families at Mass, particularly in their identities as families?*
3. *What specific steps can the Diocese take to build a spirituality of care, consolation, love, and realism in our families?*
4. *How can we promote a substantial spiritual life shared between husbands and wives?*
5. *What can lead to a spirituality of evangelization and solidarity in family life rather than a spirituality of insularity?*

In preparation for Sheila's participation, our Parish will hold a "Listening Session" on Sunday, September 4, at 12:30pm in our Parish Center Upper Level.

It is Sheila's desire, and mine, that Parishioners will take some time to reflect on the above questions and offer suggestions and advice that she can bring to the Synod when it meets in October.

We hope that many Parishioners will come to this meeting to share their thoughts and to offer advice. If you are not able to be present, feel free to send in your thoughts to either Sheila or me.

They can be mailed to the Parish Office, dropped in the offertory collection at Mass, or emailed to:

michaelr@stmoside.org.

If you would like to read Bishop McElroy's Pastoral Statement on "Embracing the

Joy of Love" describing the purpose of the Synod in greater detail, please go to: <http://tinyurl.com/gwhqnvq>.

Sheila and I look forward to your participation in this very important event. It is not necessary to have read either Pope Francis' or Bishop McElroy's documents in order to attend the "Listening Session."

Please, most importantly, pray for the Synod's success that it may invigorate and strengthen family life and love in all our Catholic families!

Fr. Mike