

## The “Call” to Life and Vocation comes from the Family.

Here in the South, it’s a good idea to always begin your homily talking about **football** ... because you’ll at least have **people’s attention** for the first few minutes!

Well, following that model, I’m pleased to say that I attended the **Auburn / Ole Miss** Football Game yesterday in **Jordan Hare Stadium** there on **the loveliest village** on the plains! I’m **an AU Grad** and it was **my first time** back on campus in **almost 20 years** and it **truly was lovely** ...with the final score **Auburn 30 ... Ole Miss 22! War Eagle!**

**Walking the campus** for several hours before the game and **then cheering** with some **80, 000 fans** in the Stadium during the game gave evidence of truth to **one of the logos** that I saw for the school ... that said, “**AUBURN FAMILY ... all in!**”

And you know, **whether** you were an Auburn **student** or an Auburn **Alumni** or just an Auburn **fan**, there’s no denying **the feeling you get** there on campus ... the feeling of being part of a wonderful family ...

and that’s what I’d like to talk about today ... **wonderful families** ... which is why I opened with **the passage from Luke** that speaks of ... **the Holy Family** ... **the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.**

**Way back** when I was in **Catholic gradeschool**, the **Felician sisters** taught us to place the **initials JMJ** atop every one of **our assignments**. In this way, **each time** we began our work, we would call upon **the help of the Holy Family** ... Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

**This practice** has carried over to **the way** that I place my **Brown Scapular** on over my head each morning after I shower and as I dress I say,

*“Jesus, Mary and Joseph surround me with your love and protection!”*

**One thing** is for sure ... **the Holy Family** is there to help **all families in their efforts to follow** **the will of God.**

**The Holy Family** is there to help **all families** become **Holy Families** because **Holy Families** witness to **the abundance of God’s love** in **their openness to life**, and they create **the best environment** for **children** to discover **God’s plan** for them.

**The Holy Family** is there to help individual **families** that we call **the Domestic Church** and **large communities of families** that we call **the Parish Church** ... and the **worldwide community of families** known as **the Universal Church.**

Have you ever heard **the expression**, “*Back to Basics*”?

Its something that a **Good Football Coach** says to **his team** at the beginning of every season and perhaps several times during the season as he brings the players back to the **things** that are essential to success ... such as **blocking** and **tackling** properly.

**Well, the Basics** that are needed for success in our Church and in our Society ... involve the Family ... and striving to make it holy!

**Today** there are **large numbers** of broken families and dysfunctional families and there are **large numbers** of people who no longer go to Church on Sunday.

**That's a problem!**

Because you have to go to church to hear God's guidance that is offered in:  
The **Gospel** ... the **Homily** ... and the **support of the people of God.**

**God** who is **perfect** ... had a **perfect plan** for our **existence** and **happiness** when he created **the human family.**

It's there that we experience **the warmth** and **love** of God.

It's there that we hear the **voice** of God.

**The Family** is the **building block** of **the Church** and the building block of **Society.**

If the Family is **strong** ... society will be strong

If the Family is **broken** ... society will be broken.

I think you'll agree, **society** is very broken at this time.

You can't fix society by **the Government** throwing more and more programs at it  
**Society** must be transformed from within ... by returning to the guidance of God.

Once people **return to following** the **moral law of Christ** then

The **whole idea** of working to overturn permissive laws becomes less important ..  
**because people** would no longer be choosing to do bad things:

**If people** no longer bought **cigarettes** ... the **cigarette industry** would go away.

**If people** no longer looked at **pornography** ... the whole **porn** industry would go away.

**If women** no longer considered **abortion** ... the **abortion mills** would close.

And **where** do these type of **life giving messages** come from?

They must come from **holy families** ... the individual family and the parish family.

**Pope Francis** has launched out in describing the **relevance of The Church, and in one of his reflections, he referred to the Church in a beautiful way ... as a family.**

**Life** results from a family

**Love** is spawned in a family

And **Faith** is nurtured in a family.

Supreme Knight of Columbus, **Carl Anderson**, said at a national gathering this summer that "The family is where children learn from their fathers and mothers the life of virtue.

From Holy Families come:

- Holy Priests
- Holy Sisters
- Holy People of God

You know **of all the things** you can create during your lifetime,  
**nothing compares with your ability to create new life.**

That's something you don't do alone. You do it together with **God the Creator.**

**You provide the biological DNA**  
And **God** provides **the immortal soul.**

**And together** you procreate ...  
a **new human being** ... made in your image ... to a degree ...  
**but most especially made in** ... the **image and likeness of God!**

**Wow!** There's no **sculpture** or **painting**,  
there's no **building** or **bridge**,  
there's no **car** or **truck** or **boat** or **motorcycle**  
that can compare with a **new Human Being**,  
**who has the ability to bring life and love to others!**

**In a world** gone crazy for accomplishments,  
**how can it be** that **the ability to bear life** isn't treasured ...  
as **the greatest accomplishment of all?**

Is has to do with **the finished product, a baby**, bearing the resemblance of God.  
You see, **the Devil**, who has eternally lost his chance for Heaven,  
hates God ... and hates all who are made in His image ... that's us.

**So** he tempts people to keep babies from being born through the **evil of abortion.**

And in a **move more sinister** than that, **the Devil** tempts people to prevent babies from  
even being conceived ... through the **evils of Contraception and Sterilization.**

**For the last 40 years**, the **Devil** has had the assistance of our **Government** and **many Church Leaders** who say that **Abortion, Contraception and Sterilization** are **legal** ...  
which **gives many people all the permission they need** to participate in them.

**But the Devil** is not stronger than God ...  
**nor** is he stronger than God-fearing people!

And **so we go forward full of hope** ... knowing that if we unite ourselves with God,  
**we will overcome the temptations and deceptions of the Devil.**

**When Married Couples** entrust themselves to God and **His plan,**  
**then the world is blessed with Holy Families**  
that remain solid building blocks of both **the Church and Society.**

And here's **another important point** ...

- Not only do Holy Children come from holy families
- But Holy Vocations come from holy families too!

**Back in July, Bishop Baker** celebrated in memorial Mass for his Mother ,  
who died on **Divine Mercy Sunday** up in Fostoria, Ohio.

**Many of you** were there to add your prayers to the prayers of the Church for the  
**repose of her soul** and the **comfort of Bishop's family.**

Afterward, **many of you** gathered for a Reception in the Cathedral Life Center.

I remember walking in the main room and seeing many children sitting at the big  
round tables, eating and drinking their lunch while laughing and having fun.

It reminded me very much of what I saw growing up whenever the five kids in our  
family would get together with all of our cousins at **Gramma's house** on Sunday.

I spoke to **some of the Mom's of those children** and discovered that one woman had  
**7 of the children** and another woman had **8 of the Children** and **was expecting her 9<sup>th</sup>.**  
I commended them both for being open to life and for demonstrating God's abundant  
**love** for all of us.

One of the Mom's said, "You know Father, I can't go down to protest abortion in front  
of Planned Parenthood, but I can make my own statement for Life just by bearing life!"

**Wow! what a wonderful attitude!** How refreshing to hear that in our day and time.

You know **just 50 yrs ago** ... in **1965,** the **average family size** in America was **5 kids.**  
**Today, the average family size is 2 kids.**

**What's happened?**

**Sadly, many parents** have made the decision to cap the size of their family.

**Once** they get their two kids, they begin to contracept or sterilize themselves and essentially tell God they'll accept no more kids.

I overheard a **woman** at the **hair shop** telling her stylist,  
“*Once I have this baby, I'll have my boy and a girl, and I'm done ... I'll be through having kids!*”

**So much for** that line in the Lord's Prayer, “*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.*”

And **so much for God's first command** in **Genesis** when He said,  
“*Go, bear fruit, multiply and fill the earth.*”

It's from **this selfish mindset** that we come to see what **John Paul II** meant when he said that **Abortion** and **Contraception** are intimately connected ...  
like **fruits from the same tree!**

Yes, **both of them** spring from the intention ... “*I don't want kids.*”

This is in opposition to God's design for Marriage ///  
that it be a communion of life and love.

This **mindset** is one that often arises when people stop attending Church and **therefore stop hearing God's word** and stop considering Church teaching.

We might never overturn the **availability of Abortion** by legislation.  
**But we can certainly overcome it by Holy Families.**

**Holy Families** guide their children to see **Babies** as **blessings** and not burdens.

**Holy Families** teach their children to see **married love** as the way to participate in the most wonderful creative act in the world!

And **so when their kids enter adulthood**, they **would never even think of aborting** or contracepting children.

You know, there's something else holy families do ...  
they guide their children to listen for God's call and follow it!

This is **especially important** because **the noise of the world is so loud** which means that many hear the world before they hear God!

**Jesus** gave us **His promise** that He would not leave us orphans and so we trust that He is calling exactly the number of men and women that are needed to lead His Church.

The **only question is ... are we guiding our kids to listen for his call and direction?**

As **Jeremiah** describes his experience of **being called** by God, he **reveals** something very profound. **God says** to him, *“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”*

God has a call, a mission, a vocation in mind for each and every person from **all eternity**. This **means** that **deciding** what **we** are to do in life isn't merely the result of us intellectually weighing some options and then picking what we like.

It's **much more weighty** than that. **Deciding** what we are to do in life should come only after listening to what God has to say about the matter, since He's already decided for us! Yes

**holy families** positively influence their children to discover God's call.

The **premise** is that God is calling us. He says to each and every person, *“Come follow Me!” “Come follow the plan I've had in mind for you from all eternity!”*

**This premise** is very likely going to involve a **change in mindset** for **many parents**.

- **Instead of asking** their kids, *“What do you want to be when you grow up?”*
- The **far better question** for them to ask would be,
  - *“What do you think God wants you to be when you grow up?”*
  - *“Where do you feel God is calling you to serve Him in the world?”*

This gets them thinking right away that **all the pressure** is not on them to make a choice ... that they actually have supernatural assistance available to them.

The **right answer** has already been made by God ... they **just need** to discover it!

The **Married, Single or Religious Vocations** are all good ... and so the **challenge for your child** is to simply discern the one that is **the Greater Good**.

Here are some of the things that **families can do** to enable their children to hear God's call in their lives

1. Encourage them to participate in **retreats**.
2. Visit **holy places** on vacation. (Distant places or local sights)
3. Visit **Monasteries** and **Friaries**, talk to the **Religious** interns and externs
4. Have your kids take Summer jobs and Part time year round jobs at the Church.
  - Let the kids work at the church office, counting money, sorting, filing, stuffing bulletins cleaning, answering phones
5. **Interact** with the **parish priests**. Not just a Sunday contact at Mass.
6. Get involved in Sports and other parish and community events
7. Have religious **books** around the house:

## Talk about it.

- Have priests over to the home for dinner or to watch a game or cookout

Show **home videos** of the great saints as well as those movies that present the Church and its ministers in a good light.

- The Bells of St. Mary's
- Boys Town
- The Trouble with Angels

Watch **EWTN** especially the special presentations on **Church** and **History** such as the apparitions of the BVM, Padre Pio, etc.

How important it is to live in accord with God's plan for one's life. It's **the best thing** that **parents** can do for their children. It goes hand in hand with getting them to Heaven. Following their true vocation will enable them to maximize the joy they experience here on earth and it will best assist God's plan of Salvation.

To do this, **Parents** have to temper **their own plans** for their kids, and they have to surrender those plans **to God's plans**.

## Be open to the will of God

Have them make their **Consecration to Mary**.

- Pray vocation prayers "*Mary, what I ought to do!*"
- Call upon her powerful intercession.

Keep them close to **the sacraments**.

**The family is the key to the future of our Church and our Society!**

We just put a **big Banner** up in the football stands of a local high school that read:

We are Pro-God.

We are Pro-Family.

We are Pro-Life.

We are the **Knights of Columbus** !

**As we go forth** I hope you'll contemplate my favorite quote from **Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI** He said,

*"Dear Friends, may no adversity paralyze you.*

*Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future ... nor of your weakness.*

*The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history, so that, by your faith, his name will continue to resound throughout the world."*

Close by praying together **the Family Prayer** on the Knights of Columbus prayer card