



The Family: A community of life and love

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*Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Keynote Address
"Dare to Dream" gathering of Catholic families*

Good morning. It's great to be here. You know, I've been to Australia before as a young Capuchin, and it's really a beautiful country. I had breakfast with some old friends from Wagga Wagga yesterday, though, and they reminded me that on one of my visits, I ended up shearing sheep. I didn't see that on today's agenda . . . or has that been added?

Seriously, I want to thank Archbishop Faulkner and all my brother bishops here in Australia for their generosity in inviting me. In a special way I want to thank Archbishop Pell, whom I know as a friend and whose love for the Church I very much admire. Being a bishop in today's Church is a big joy but also a big challenge.

In fact, I hope I don't scandalize anyone, but there's a joke among American bishops that a bishop died and went to hell . . . but he didn't realize he was there for three days, because hell is so much easier than being a bishop. No matter what you do as a bishop, the needs of your people are always greater than your abilities, or your resources, or both. So I salute your bishops for undertaking this kind of conference. It's important. It's a witness to their faith and to your faith. And it will bear wonderful fruit if you let the message of this gathering take root in your hearts and grow. You can help that happen first of all by praying for each other and for your bishops every day. Remember that our theme this morning is "The Family: A Community of Life and Love," and that's what the Church is: a family. And like the father of any family, a bishop needs the love, support and prayers of his family to serve with the courage God intended. Being faithful to Jesus Christ can be just as hard for a bishop as it is for laypeople. Bishops are very human. We're all human. We all face fatigue and doubt. We all get lonely. And the only deliverance from these obstacles are the love we receive from God, and the love we find in the family we all share.

Families are bound together not just by emotion but by blood. And in our case – the family we call the Church – it's the blood of Jesus Christ. We're all redeemed by His blood . . . and therefore we're all in the Gospel vocation together: deacons, religious, laypeople, priests and bishops. We all have the task of bringing Jesus Christ to the world, and the world to Jesus Christ. So if we accomplish nothing else this weekend, let's go out from this conference committed to acting like a family, in our homes, in our parishes, and also in our national community of faith.

That means treating each other with the affection and obedience to the truth which flow naturally from love. That means supporting each other — each according to his or her own unique vocation — in the work of converting the world. Priests need to be better priests. Married couples need to be better married couples. Both need to encourage and reinforce the vocation of each other. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you . . . By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35). If Jesus died for us . . . we can surely at least live for each other.

Now, I've had a reason for these opening thoughts. They come from my own experience in the United States. And they offer a framework for my comments today. Americans really do feel a special friendship for Australians. We tend to think of you as a younger and more attractive version of ourselves . . . cousins with really neat accents and really great beaches, except for the sharks. Our countries differ in some significant ways. But we're similar in *many more* ways. And that's the point. Where my country has gone, yours may follow. So it's very important for you to learn from the good we've accomplished . . . and to avoid some of the mistakes we've made.

Today, in the United States, only one in four families can be described as intact and "traditional" – in other words, two parents, single income, with children living at home. This kind of family, which is more or less the classic Christian model of a family, has *declined by nearly half* in less than 30 years. Meanwhile, the percentage of children living with single parents has *quadrupled* since 1972. Out-of-wedlock births are far more common than three decades ago. Divorce is much more widely accepted. And unmarried couples with no children make up one-third of all American households — in fact, they are now the largest single category of U.S. households.

The results aren't surprising. Wounded families make a wounded culture. In fact, for more than a decade, research by Judith Wallerstein, Sara McLanahan, Barbara Defoe Whitehead and others has clearly shown that easy divorce and so-called "diverse" forms of family structure just don't work. Step-parent and single-parent families in the United States do *not* reinforce the social fabric. Rather, they unintentionally weaken it — and they have a long-term effect. Children from broken families find it harder to build permanent marriages themselves. They have a tougher time excelling at school; avoiding crime; finding intimacy in relationships; and holding steady employment. And the list of problems goes on.

None of this information is new. None of it is secret. The only remarkable thing is *how little positive effect it's had* on the unraveling of American family culture. The evidence hasn't changed anything. In other words: *We know better* . . . but too few people seem to care. And when people do care, they can't agree on what to do about it. Meanwhile, the legal definition of marriage continues to be challenged — as with the homosexual "civil unions," which our State of Vermont recently approved.

The lesson here is pretty simple. The day is gone when Catholics in the United States could count on the Christian instincts of our public culture. We still think of ourselves as a more or less Christian people; more that 90 percent of Americans still pray and describe themselves as believing in God; and American church attendance is still very high by Western standards. But the *content* of our experience has changed a lot. We claim to be more "spiritual" . . . but less formally religious. God, as *The New York Times* reported in 1997, has become "decentralized" because the "new breed of worshiper [looks] beyond the religious institution for a do-it-yourself solution."

What this means is that *communities* of faith — which have the solidarity and resources to turn their moral beliefs into public influence — are slowly being replaced by unconnected individuals with looser spiritual yearnings . . . individuals who "want to reshape religion for themselves" and who experience God in a narrowly crafted, private way. As a result, the power which traditional Christian belief always had in shaping American culture is fading. And with it goes the trust Americans once had that our civil environment would be at least neutral — if not friendly — to our faith.

What's this got to do with Australia? Well, like that big unhappy fallout cloud in the novel *On the Beach*, our problem is clearly heading your way . . . if it hasn't arrived here already. Canada, the United States, Western Europe, New Zealand and Australia all share the same democratic ideals and similar Christian roots. And none of us is really insulated from the others. When John Paul II wrote in his *Letter to Families* back in 1994 that ". . . a civilization inspired by a consumerist, anti-birth mentality is not — and cannot ever be — a civilization of love" (13), he was probably talking about all our countries . . . and the material comforts we take for granted.

How do we change that? How do we build a civilization of love? First of all, by doing what we're doing right now — building friendships across borders between our local Churches. That's important, and I hope it continues beyond today. We're on the brink of a world culture whether we like it or not, and we'll either preach Jesus Christ and teach the Catholic faith to the world *together* . . . or we'll fail separately.

In that regard, I'm grateful to you for inviting one of my younger colleagues, Mr. Christopher West, to this conference. I do hope you can take a few moments to listen to him later, because he says things about human love and the meaning of human sexuality which we all need to hear. You know, Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Of Human Life (Humanae Vitae)* is one of the most underrated but important Catholic teaching documents of this century. It has such a true understanding of the beauty of human sexuality — and we need to recover it as a foundation for all of our marriage preparation work.

In Colorado, Christopher is part of that effort. He's married with two young children of his own, and he's the director of our Office of Marriage and Family. Christopher was also a big help to me in crafting my own pastoral letter on human life two years ago . . . and in the long run, I believe that Christopher, and people like him from both our countries, can play a big role in helping Catholic married couples recover their vocation.

And that's very important for the Church. I want you to remember this formula. Without the *Church*, there is no witness of Jesus Christ in the world. That's why Our Lord created her — the Church is Christ's bride, who continues His mission here and now. But without the *eucharist*, there is no Church, because the eucharist is the source of our life as a Christian community. And without the priest, there is no eucharist, because the *priest* is the minister specially called by God and ordained to act *in persona Christi* — "in the person of Christ" — not just in the eucharist and the other sacraments, but also in preaching the Gospel. That's why we need priests so urgently.

Now, that's the formula. That's the chemistry of Catholic life. But there's a piece missing. What is it? It's obvious. Without faithful Catholic *families*, there are no priests. Without faithful Catholic married couples who are open to new life; who create loving homes; who nourish their children with the sacraments and the Word of God; who create in their sons and daughters a zeal for Jesus Christ — without these faithful laypeople, we can forget about vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. Why? Because God's call to the priesthood *will very rarely be heard* by a young man . . . unless his heart has been cultivated by the faith of his parents.

We don't have a "vocations crisis." We have a hearing problem. God's calling *plenty* of young men to the priesthood and *plenty* of young women to religious life. But they don't answer because they can't hear . . . or they're afraid . . . or they don't recognize God's voice. And that's because all of us, in a way, have forgotten our *primary vocation to be missionaries*, beginning within the family itself. You know, Augustine has a great line somewhere in *The Confessions*, I think, where he prays, "Oh God, deliver me from my sin — *but not today.*" And it reminds me of our own prayers for vocations. For 30 years in the United States we've been loudly begging the Lord to send us more priests. But what that usually means is, "Lord, send us more priests — *from somebody else's family.*"

Now obviously, God created families to be much more than "priest factories." Families have the much larger mission of being a leaven of the Gospel in the wider world. In fact, each of us in this room today is a missionary. There are no exceptions. Evangelizing isn't something we can just delegate away to priests and nuns. It doesn't work like that.

Married life and parenting are missionary vocations. We find the proof of that both in Scripture, and in the teaching of the Church. Those of you who attended Mass at your parish before coming here this morning heard what I mean in the readings of the day. When you go home tonight, read the passages for Easter Saturday: The First Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter four, verses 13-21. The Responsorial Psalm is from Psalm 118. And the Gospel is from Mark, chapter 16, verses 9-15. I'm not going to read the full texts here, because it would take too much time.

But listen to this from the First Reading: "The priests and elders were amazed as they observed the *self-assurance* of Peter and John, and realized that the speakers *were uneducated men of no standing.* Then they recognized these men as having been with Jesus." And a few lines later, Peter and John say, "Surely we cannot help speaking of what we have heard and seen."

And this from Psalm 118: "My strength and my courage is the Lord . . . I shall not die but live, and *declare the works of the Lord.*"

And finally from Mark's Gospel: Jesus appears to the Eleven and tells them to, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation." Notice that Jesus *didn't* say, " . . . proclaim the good news to all creation . . . *unless you have children, or unless you have a stressful job, or unless you and your spouse are really busy.*" Notice that you don't need a theology degree, either. It can help, but it isn't necessary.

Peter and John were “uneducated men of no standing,” but they were bursting with the self-assurance and joy of faith: “Surely we *cannot help* speaking of what we have heard and seen.” Which echoes the zeal of the Psalmist: “I shall not die but live, and *declare the works of the Lord.*” Faith demands to be shared, or it dies. That’s what St. Paul meant when he wrote, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.” It’s not that God will punish him if he doesn’t talk about Jesus Christ. It’s that he *cannot be happy* unless he shares Jesus with others. *That’s* the mark of an apostle, and *that’s* what each of us is called to.

The Second Vatican Council says the same thing in *Ad Gentes*, its *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity*. The Council Fathers write that “. . . the obligation of spreading the faith falls individually on every disciple of Christ . . . ” (23), and “. . . the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization [is] the fundamental task of the people of God . . . ” (35). And finally, “. . . all the faithful have an obligation to collaborate in the expansion and spread of [Christ’s] body . . . ” (36).

Now, all this sounds true and good . . . but also pretty unrealistic. How can a married couple, or a family with lots of responsibilities, really begin living as missionaries? I have two answers to that. First of all, we have . . . what . . . probably a couple of hundred families here today? I’d wager my ticket home that God is calling *at least* half a dozen of you to be active missionary families, either here in Australia among the poor, or in some other country. What’s so outlandish about that? Protestants have been doing it for years.

In my own diocese in Colorado, we have at least three foreign missionary families working among our people right now. Two couples come from the Christian Life Movement in Peru, both have young children, and both do wonderful work with our Hispanic people. The third couple has five children, they come from the French Community of the Beatitudes, and they help prepare our people for marriage. All three of these families left their friends and their homes behind. All three came to Colorado to “preach the good news to all creation,” and all three are succeeding. And I can assure you that we North Americans need Jesus Christ preached to us just as urgently as anyone in the Congo or Papua New Guinea.

Going to the missions as a couple or as a family is *not* impossible — or rather, it’s only *impossible* if you never listen for God’s call. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has run a lay missionary program for many years, and I’m sure similar opportunities exist here in Australia. If they don’t exist through your dioceses, they do exist through the renewal movements and apostolic groups which have broken out all over the world since Vatican II. The Neo-Catechumenal Way, for example, has families on mission in more than 80 countries.

Of course, going on mission implies a *community effort*. Every missionary family lives on faith — faith in God . . . and faith in the people who support them in their work. Every missionary family needs three things: prayers, friendship and material support. So if six of the families here today were to go on mission, surely 60 more could tithe to support them. That’s not a burden; that’s a *gift* to the families who stay behind, because in their support, they take a direct hand in spreading the Gospel. And why is that important? *Because souls depend on it.* In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II writes that what’s at stake in the “new evangelization” is “a struggle for the soul of the world.” Converting the world to Jesus Christ *matters*. It matters eternally. The salvation of individuals, cultures and the world depends on it.

I promised you two answers, though, to that question of “how can a family *actually* begin to live as missionaries?” Here’s the second answer.

If you’re like families in my own diocese, many of you are struggling just to meet the demands of everyday life. Raising a family is heroic work. I know. I was in one. I helped turn my mother’s hair white. So for most of you, God *isn’t* calling you to move to Zimbabwe with your Bible. But you still have the duty to preach Jesus Christ to the world. How do you do that?

Here’s the clue, and it comes again from Vatican II’s *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity*: “. . . let everyone be aware that the primary and most important contribution he [or she] can make to the spread of the faith is to lead a profound Christian life . . . ” (36). In other words, living the Gospel ardently *where you are*, is missionary. Living the teachings of the Church joyfully and loyally *in the specific circumstances of your life*, is missionary.

That's why a frail young French nun in a cloister can become a doctor of the Church and co-patroness of the universal missionary activity of the Church. Therese of Lisieux was one of the great missionaries of all time — and she never went to the missions. Instead, she brought the missions to her cloister by including the whole world in her prayers. And she radiated Jesus Christ to the women she *did* live with, day in and day out, in a way that converted their hearts. So if Therese could evangelize all alone from behind the walls of a convent . . . surely a married couple can evangelize their children, their friends, their coworkers and their political environment.

I'm not asking to see hands, but how many of you have *consciously* tried to bring someone outside your immediate family into the Catholic Church in the last year? If you haven't, you're hurting your own faith by preventing Jesus from reaching others through you. Again, no hands . . . but how many of you talk about God with your spouse and your children? How many of you worship as a family every Sunday? In this group the number is probably pretty high. But in my diocese, it's very common for teachers in our Catholic schools to tell me that *at least half* their students don't attend Sunday Mass regularly.

That's in our *Catholic* schools, which aren't cost-free in the United States. Tuition is expensive. So we have this contradiction of some Catholic parents — in fact, too many Catholic parents — who are willing to sacrifice part of their income to get a good moral education for their children . . . but then don't follow it up in the home and with regular participation in the Liturgy, which is where the *really crucial* Catholic education always takes place. So these children grow up, go out into society as voters, and then don't understand why a slogan like "a woman's right to choose" is really just a public relations alibi for killing the unborn.

Again, remember that our theme this morning is "the family as a community of life and love." God ordained the family to be the place where the life of Christ, *life in abundance*, takes root in the human heart and spreads outward to embrace the world. God ordained the family to mirror His own love, the community of love within the Trinity . . . and to be the *school of love* which soul by soul, generation by generation, builds up the Church and advances her work of salvation.

The council said that pursuing the missionary vocation we all share requires us to live a "profound Christian life." For families, that means committing yourselves to the *particular vocation* of marriage and the family. Now, the Church has plenty of resources to help you achieve that, but I've always heard that the quickest way to lose an audience is to tell them to read a document. So I won't. Instead, since I'm your guest, and it's early, and you still have a generous spirit . . . I'm going to tell you to read *four* documents. Not today, but let's say within the next six months . . . and then maybe you can come to Denver, and I'll give you a test.

I don't want you to just read them, by the way. I want you to think and pray over them. I want you to discuss them with each other. Peter and John were "uneducated men of no standing" when they began their ministry. But they didn't *stay* that way. They matured into serious leaders — and so must you. Your faith should be cultivated and deepened throughout your lives. That's part of our duty as adult Catholics . . . we should never stop learning about our faith.

So, four things to pray over — all of them very easy to read — before November 1. That's a good Jubilee project. And then write me and tell me what you've learned, and I promise to write back.

First, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. In Latin, the title is *Gaudium et Spes*. It means "Joy and Hope," and it comes from the first line of the document: "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish, of the men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish, of the followers of Christ as well." If you're looking for a manifesto for your life as a Catholic — this is it.

Gaudium et Spes isn't a "good" read . . . it's a *wonderful* read. But for our purposes, try to focus on Nos. 47-52, which deal especially with the dignity of marriage and the family. The council says that "the well being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life" (47). When you look at so many of the problems in Western societies, the truth of this passage becomes pretty obvious, doesn't it?

Later the council says, "Marriage and married love are by nature ordered to the procreation and education of children. Indeed, children are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the good of the parents themselves" (50). And finally this: "But marriage is not merely for the procreation of children: its nature as an indissoluble compact between two people and the good of the children demand that the mutual love of the partners be properly shown, that it should grow and mature" (50). What that means is this: The procreative and unitive aspects of married love are not "either/or," but rather *both/and*. They can't be separated without killing them both . . . which is why contraception inevitably undermines both marriage and the family.

The second document builds on the first. Read John Paul II's apostolic exhortation from 1981, *On the Family* . . . *Familiaris Consortio* is the Latin title. It describes *marriage* as the beginning and basis of human society. It describes *the family* as the first and vital cell of society. And it also shows why the family *cannot* be an enclave and *cannot avoid* an active role in humanizing and Christianizing civil culture.

The Pope writes, "It is from the family that citizens come to birth, and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself" (42). In other words, the family is powerful. The family drives those issues which are most intimate to civil society. Therefore, any attempt to "redefine" family, or to disconnect the family from the social regulation of pornography, abortion, homosexual behavior and similar issues will *inevitably* hurt civil society.

The third document builds on the other two. In his 1994 *Letter to Families (Gratissimam Sane)*, John Paul II writes, ". . . how indispensable is the witness of all families who live their vocation day by day [and] how urgent it is for families to pray . . ." (5). Why? Because ". . . the family is the center and the heart of the civilization of love . . ." and ". . . only if the truth about freedom and the communion of persons in marriage and the family can regain its splendor, will the building of the civilization of love truly begin . . ." (13).

Fourth and final document, *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World. Christifideles Laici* in Latin. It sounds awkward, but I think this is one of the best written and most important Church documents of the century. It's a kind of constitution on the dignity, nature and need for lay leadership in the Church and especially in the world.

Listen to this from No. 40: "The lay faithful's duty to society primarily begins in marriage and the family . . . It is above all the lay faithful's duty to make the family aware of its identity as the primary social nucleus, and its basic role in society, so it might itself become always a more active and responsible place for proper growth and proper participation in social life. In such a way, the family can and must require from all, beginning with public authority, the respect for those rights which in saving the family, will save society itself."

Archimedes, the ancient Greek scientist, once said that if he had a fulcrum and a long enough lever, a single, small man could move the world. Children and families are not levers. They're human beings. They're subjects, not objects. But Archimedes' words are still useful. The formation which spouses give to each other and to their children — if it's done with love, courage, energy and persistence — can move the world and change society. That's the business you should begin again with this conference. And so in the time remaining to us, I'd like turn to some specific things you can teach within your families to help that happen.

First, *what you do is more important than what you say*. The greatest gift a father can give his children is to love their mother. And of course the same applies to wives loving their husbands. Personal example is the most powerful teacher in the world. Your children see everything. If you love each other, they see and learn love. If you love God, they see and learn faith. And if you skip Mass, and criticize priests and disagree with the Church on one issue or another . . . they see and learn that.

Second, *teach your children to seek real freedom, not a counterfeit*. A wider selection of minivans is not freedom. "Choice" is not an end in itself — and when it becomes its own excuse, it becomes a form of idolatry. Some choices serve the truth about the human person, and therefore serve human dignity. Some choices don't, and therefore are the enemy of human dignity. In John's Gospel, Jesus says, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32). Truth is the inner structure of freedom. They can't be separated. The more we debase the meaning of words like "freedom" to sell cars and computers and cell phones and abortion and assisted suicide . . . the more we debase ourselves.

Third, *teach your children to seek wisdom, not just knowledge*. Peter Drucker, the American management guru, wrote a couple of books about 10 years ago called *The New Realities and Post-Capitalist Society*. In those books he argued that the United States and countries like it are the first real “knowledge societies” in history. In other words, the real wealth and power of a country today depend not on armies, but on information. Knowledge. What Francis Bacon wrote 500 years ago – “knowledge is power” – has come true with a vengeance in our lifetimes. As a result, we’re more and more a culture obsessed with efficiency, productivity and competition. And we’re turning people into tools.

The problem is this: The most important thing about knowledge is *how we choose to use it*. And that requires wisdom. Fools with tools are still fools. Vatican II warned that “. . . the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming” (GS, 15). If you want to know just how serious the peril is, read Bill Joy’s article “The Future Doesn’t Need Us” in last month’s *Wired* magazine. Joy is a very well respected computer scientist and cofounder of Sun Microsystems, and what he writes about the direction of our genetic research, nanotechnology and robotics is very sobering. So put wisdom first in the hearts of your children, so that knowledge serves humanity . . . and not the other way around.

Fourth, *teach your children to see and to remember*. Help them to see marketing, advertising and propaganda for what they are – not necessarily bad things, but very powerful influences on the way we think and act. And help them to remember their own history. The Catholic faith has a rich and marvelous history, and its always under attack from people who want to reinterpret the papacy or the Crusades or Jesus Himself to prove the whole thing is a fraud.

Help your kids know who they are by teaching them Catholic history. A community without a sense of history is like a person with amnesia. Without a grounding in the past, the present has no purpose . . . and without purpose in the present, there can be no future. The genius of the Jewish people is their reverence for memory. Ehud Barak, the prime minister of Israel, greeted the Pope by saying, “Your Holiness, mine is a nation that remembers . . . because without memory there can be neither *culture* nor *conscience*.”

Fifth, *teach your children to develop the virtues of the heart*. *Fidelity* instead of broken promises; *patience* instead of restlessness; *simplicity* in place of confusion; *humility* instead of pride; *courage* in place of cowardice; *honesty* instead of excuses; *forgiveness* in place of revenge; *a hunger for justice* in place of apathy.

Sixth, *teach your children to revere the sanctity of life*. Reverence for life is the glue of human community. We can’t kill unborn children by the millions and piously help sick people to kill themselves . . . and then expect our young people to create a culture of life. That’s why the killings at Columbine High School last year — as terrible and tragic as they were — do make a kind of sense. We’ve created the environment where Columbines can happen, and we’ve done it by our own self-absorption and callousness.

Seventh, *teach your children how to live I Corinthians 13: “Faith hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Teach your children how to love*. Ask yourselves why, after 20 centuries, is an instrument of execution — the cross — still the world’s greatest symbol of hope? Scripture says that no greater love than this exists: that a man lays down his life for his friends. If we really want to be *free*, we need to *love* as Jesus did.

A few minutes ago, I quoted the Gospel of John: “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” The truth is not a database or an ideology. It’s a person. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). And He also said “pick up [your] cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24) because the road doesn’t end at Golgotha. It ends in Easter and in life. “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25). You and your children were made for freedom and for life, so teach them to love well and to choose well, remembering the words of Deuteronomy: “Choose life that you and your descendants might live.”

Let me close with one final thought.

It's easy sometimes to read the headlines in our newspapers and be tempted to lose faith in the basic goodness of people. But that's a mistake. There's so very much which is decent and honorable in our countries. They're worth the struggle to win them for Jesus Christ. I've always thought of America — and Australia too — as the Rich Young Man in Scripture who asks Jesus "What must I do to be saved?" Do you remember the story? Mark 10:17-22. He's a *good* young man. He has tried to live by the Commandments and walk in righteousness. And Jesus loves and respects him, so He invites the young man to sell what he has and "come follow me." But that's too much to ask. The Rich Young Man goes away sad, because he has many possessions . . . and he can't quite part with them.

Despite all our material advantages, we in the developed world live in societies soaked by the message that we don't have enough *things* . . . that we need more *things* . . . that we deserve more *things* . . . and that we should *get what we want, right now*. This is a recipe for sadness. *Learn the habit of gratitude, and teach it to your children*. What we have, is so much more than what we don't. *Gratitude unlocks joy*, which is maybe why we've had so little joy even within the Church for the last 30 years.

We've done a great job over the last three decades arguing about what's supposed to be *wrong* with the Church and her teaching. But we've done a pretty poor job being grateful for the Church as God's gift to us — a mother who guides us, corrects us and comforts us *out of love*, for the sake of our own salvation.

Gratitude unlocks joy . . . which is why Scripture is filled with praise and thanks to the Lord — from beginning to end. Listen again to Psalm 118, from today's Easter Saturday readings:

*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
for His mercy endures forever . . .*

*Open to me the gates of justice;
I will enter them and give thanks to the Lord.
This gate is the Lord's;
the just shall enter it.
I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior.*

This is the song of joy meant for every human heart . . . and the family is the school which God created to teach it. Teach it well.

God bless you throughout this gathering, and thank you for your kindness this morning.