

27th Sunday Ordinary Time

October 7-8, 2018

Readings: Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16

I noticed a change ten years ago in my ministry with engaged couples. I began approaching my marriage preparation sessions with them a little differently. Depending upon the circumstances and schedules, I tried to arrange the first meeting at a coffee shop, or at least one of the meetings. It is a much less threatening atmosphere in which to visit. I also made it a point to thank these couples for seeking matrimony within the Church.

As I did that, they began sharing with me just how out of the mainstream their convictions were amongst their peers. They appreciated the encouragement for swimming against the stream, and pursuing marriage in the best possible way, by living a healthy and holy life as a single.

There were more marriages in the USA in 2000 than in the most recent year for which statistics are available. In other words, despite the fact that there are nearly 30 million more people in our country, there were 200,000 fewer marriages. It does not take a Ph.D. in statistical analysis to realize that something is wrong. In 1970, about seven-in-ten U.S. adults ages 18 and older were married; in 2016, that share stood at 50%. That is a sharp drop by any measure of analysis, and it ought to concern us.

For one thing, Americans are staying single longer, with the median age at first marriage rising to 29.5 for men and 27.4 for women. Secondly, by 2016, about 18 million were living together without benefit of marriage, an increase of 29% just in the past decade. One in three kids (32%) are living with either a single parent or unmarried ones.¹ So the picture of two parent households is rapidly changing.

All told, more than 16 million U.S. parents with no spouse at home are now living with their child younger than 18, up from 4 million in 1968. I grieve when a young couple chooses to forego marriage, not seeing a value in the primordial sacrament of family life. I am convinced that we need to encourage our young people to see marriage in a positive light, to see it as

¹ See www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/04/25

the best path for happiness and family stability. In no way am I denigrating those single parents who act heroically, sometimes in circumstances not of their own choosing. They are to be commended.

But there is something about the institution that has turned off a generation, and we have to discover a better way to break into their mindset, so that we can truly help them see its beauty. We also need to show them the value of sacrifice, that it is **not** a bad word. Look at the runners making their way down Summit Ave. today. They endured tremendous sacrifice because they believed it was worth it.

In the sacrament of matrimony, “a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”²

That same document also acknowledges the difficulties of married life, sure to the fact that we are all sinners. It says that the union of man and woman “has always been threatened by discord, a spirit of domination, infidelity, jealousy, and conflicts that can escalate into hatred and separation.”³

You have a crucial role to play here. We need you to educate early and often– encourage your nieces, nephews, grandchildren, whomever. I ask you to prayerfully reflect upon and consider the crucial role you play as members of the lay faithful in promoting marriage. You are the best witnesses that marriage is a noble choice, that sacrifice is not a scary idea, but one that enables us to fully embrace our calling.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. # 1601

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. # 1606