

ORDINARY SUNDAY XXVII "B"
OCTOBER 6/7, 2018

This weekend's Gospel passage and the first reading from the Book of Genesis put the sacrament of marriage front and center.

In *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), Pope Francis' 2016 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation following the synod of the Church on Marriage and Family Life, the Holy Father states: *The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since "their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church. (#72)*

Earlier in the document the Holy Father, echoing the words of Jesus in today's Gospel, gives them application stating: *The indissolubility of marriage—'what God has joined together, let no man put asunder' (Mt 19:6)—should not be viewed as a 'yoke' imposed on humanity, but as a 'gift' granted to those joined in marriage....God's indulgent love always accompanies our human journey; through grace, it heals and transforms hardened hearts, leading them back to the beginning through the way of the cross. (#62)*

As a parish we take seriously this consistent teaching and practice of the Church in regard to the Sacrament of Marriage. Over the last year we have strengthened our marriage preparation formation. We have begun implementing "Witness to Love", into our Sponsor Couple formation process. Rather than being assigned a "Sponsor Couple" from a group of people who have volunteered for this ministry, the couple being prepared for the sacrament of marriage is asked to choose a married couple from the parish who they personally know or have met whose example of marriage they admire to serve as a mentor couple for them. If you are asked by a couple preparing for marriage to journey with them in their formation process, I urge you to say "yes." This couple's invitation to you is a sign of their affirmation respect for you and the example you give. Jarrett Wendt our Pastoral Associate will work with you to supply materials and encouragement as you journey with your couple. Who better to prepare a couple for marriage than another couple who are actively, committedly, and joyfully living out their commitment?

For the past few years our parish also sponsors a monthly “Date Nite” coordinated by Deacon Ron. “Date Nite” is for couples across the age and anniversary spectrum to strengthen and grow the bond between them. For many years, “Teams of Our Lady” and the “Christian Family Movement” (CFM) couple-to-couple discussion, prayer and support groups have been a part of our parish. Contact the parish office for information. We’ve also begun a program for Grandparents pioneered by Deacon Gary and Kay Aitchison, as well as supporting the archdiocesan programs of marriage and family enrichment regularly noted in the Bulletin and our other communications.

As the Church continues to proclaim and uphold the understanding and practice of marriage revealed in Scripture, it also is sensitive to situations that despite the best intentions and efforts of married persons, the ideal of marriage is not able to be realized. Addressing this situation, Pope Francis reminds us : *“The Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love, by restoring in them hope and confidence”*. ...*Let us not forget that the Church’s task is often like that of a field hospital.* (#291). In addition to our programs of marriage preparation and marriage enrichment our parish also has resources available to you. If your marriage is experiencing difficulty it does not have to end in divorce. Please reach out to me, one of the deacons, or Jarrett Wendt. If your marriage has ended in a divorce, you are not castaways from the Church. We are here to walk with you. We are here to help you, not judge you.

The Church upholds and promotes marriage and family life received from God because it is a living, physical sign of who and what we the Church are-- the family of God, the Body of Christ. When marriage and family life are sound, the Church is sound.

As we continue to pass through these difficult and trying days confronting sin and wounds in the family of the Church, today’s Scriptures call us to renewed commitment to Jesus the Bridegroom and are consoled in his unending commitment of love to us, his Bride.

7 October, 2018
Father Jim Deora