

The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

On the first Sunday of each month, our priest does a blessing of marriages for those couples who have an anniversary that month. Each month, he reminds us that marriage is the icon of the Trinity. Just as God is a Trinity of persons—a community—marriage also is communitarian. *Gaudium et Spes*, a document of the Second Vatican Council, states that couples form a permanent, life-giving community.

I had long thought of the sacrament of marriage as a means of grace to help the couple be more successful in their marriage. But each month, our priest emphasizes that marriage is also a means God uses to flood the society around us with His grace. In marriage, the couple's life, love, and witness can make Christ visible to others. All sacramentally married couples are invited to reveal Christ's loving presence and generous action in the world. ***In other words, God pours out His love and grace to the world around us through our marriages.***



Christian marriage is that sacrament which builds up the community of the Church and of society. Marriage has been inscribed in creation's design by God, and, by his grace, countless Christian men and women have lived married life fully.

— Pope Francis —

AZ QUOTES

Yet how desperately our marriages today are in need of the mercy of God. While weddings are growing more and more extravagant, our marriages are more and more impoverished. And with US divorce rates hovering around 50%, fewer and fewer young people today are even bothering with a legal marriage, opting instead to simply live together in relationships that vary from somewhat committed to very transitory.

According to CDC.org, 40.6% of all live births in the United States are being born to unmarried women. The chaos that this instability, insecurity and economic trauma causes in the lives of our children weaken every part of our society. Just observe any public school for a few days and witness the disintegration of basic standards in manners, discipline, or even a joy of life—things that kids would learn in a stable home. This chaos carries to the workplace. I don't know how many times I have heard the complaint that employers can no longer find good workers. Workers come late, they don't show up, they don't do their jobs—and they are surprised when they get fired.

With "marriage" now being defined as anything other than God's plan for marriage (a death-do-us-part relationship of a man and women that welcomes new life into the world), and our culture moving farther away from God and His will, it should be no surprise to us that people all around us are hurting, broken, unfulfilled and in great need of God's mercy. When God's plan and God's will are not followed, people always get hurt. That's the way it is. Why? Because we have a perfect parent who loves us so much that He puts up the perfect fences to keep us from danger and guide us into becoming the best version of ourselves. When we ignore the fences, we get hurt.

So now Christ has given us still another gift, another resource, another help to lift us back over to the right side of the fence. It is the Year of Mercy—a year to encourage us to come back to God's plan, to untie the knots in our lives, to find forgiveness and resets and start-overs. That's mercy. A year to say to God, "OK, this time I will trust You and do things Your way, because I believe that You truly love me."

Hear the words from Hebrews 4:14-16. *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.*

*So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy
and to find grace for timely help.*