

HOMILY 6TH SUN OT YRA 2017

I have a question for the married couples in the congregation today. How many people think marriage is really, really, really easy? No hands! Because it is not. If you have a good solid marriage it is a wonderful thing, but you always have to be working on your relationship. When you stop working on your relationship, you are going to get into trouble.

In the Gospel reading Jesus says that a man cannot divorce his wife unless the marriage was unlawful. Two thousand years ago in Israel, a woman could not divorce her husband for any reason, but a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all. And a divorced woman was pretty much an outcast. Jesus was telling them that all of that must stop. Divorce and everything leading up to it, anger, lust, and adultery are wrong. I think we would all agree that divorce is not a good thing, but the truth is that 50% of marriages end in divorce in our culture. So, how can we avoid divorce?

First of all I think we must recognize that marriage is a vocation and not everyone is called to marriage. In our culture, if you are single and not married by the time you are in your 30's there must be something wrong with you. We need to change that attitude. Many divorced people have told me that either they just should not be married or their ex-spouse should not be married. It would be great if we could find that out before the wedding. Single people can take all of that energy they would put into marriage and family and family and focus it upon something very worthwhile. They can do great things. We need to respect our single people.

I think living together before marriage causes some problems. First of all, only about 30% of the couples that live together eventually get married, so it is not a stepping stone to marriage. And couples who live together before marriage double their chances of getting a divorce. Part of the reason for that is the level of commitment. To live together you are just making a financial commitment, to share expenses, or to kind of try things out. Not a very strong commitment. Couples that have lived together for a long time sometimes think they should give marriage a shot. Not a very strong commitment. The level of commitment usually does not

change between living together and married. Marriage is not easy and to make a marriage work you have to have a very strong commitment to staying together and making this work.

There are many situations where married couple just cannot live together and stay legally married. You cannot be in a marriage alone, both people have to be working on the relationship and want to stay married. You cannot stay in an abusive situation. You cannot stay in a situation where your children are being abused. These are just a couple of examples, there are many more. We must never judge people who are divorced. You do not know what is going on in their relationship. You do not know what goes on at their house.

If you have a civil divorce, this does not change your status in the Church. I have spoken to many people who said that when they got divorced, they no longer felt welcome in the Church. This really saddens me. Going through a divorce is a very difficult time and people going through a divorce need the support of their Church community more than ever. Divorce people are welcome in the Church. If you know someone who is staying away because of a divorce, please invite them back.

Since a civil divorce does not change your status in the church, you cannot remarry in the Church without getting an annulment. If you are Catholic and your marriage was not witnessed by a priest or deacon, you can get a lack of form annulment. You have to file some paper work and the process takes about a month. If your marriage was witnessed by a priest or deacon, you need to get a full annulment which is a long process and usually takes several years. People who have gone through the process tell me that it leads to closure and healing. If you want to find out more about annulments or want to file, I will help you. Make an appointment with me at the office, and we can discuss it.

We need to support our married couples as much as possible. Alpha for married couple is starting February 16th. And to all you married couples, congratulations! At this time I want to invite married couples who are here today who would like to stand and renew their vows.