

*140th Jubilee Celebration of the
Sacrament of Marriage
September 25, 2011*

Homily

*Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski
The Catholic Community of
St. John the Evangelist &
Blessed Sacrament*

As we gather to celebrate marriage today, perhaps it seems strange that a priest is standing before you to talk about marriage. Father Carl and I are not married. We have never been married, and we don't intend to get married. But in a way, we are married. We are married to the Church. We are married to God's people whom we have been called to serve all the days of our lives. Like marriage, ours is not a job—it's a calling 24/7. Like marriage isn't for everybody, so too priesthood isn't for everybody. Like marriage, it is something that God has set in place in order to create some better good.

Whenever I hear about long-lasting marriages, I am reminded of the couple in their upper 70s who were celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary. It was a wonderful day but long and tiring with guests coming from out of town. Finally, the husband and wife were alone at the end of the day. The husband was hard of hearing and often guessed at what was being said. The wife said, "I'm so tired; finally we're through." He replied, "Oh yeah? Well after fifty years, I'm a little tired of you, too."

A long and happy marriage is a glorious but difficult achievement. I read somewhere that marriage becomes a success when two "mes" turn the "me" upside down and become one "we."

Have you noticed that there are no Ozzies and Harriets left on TV?

The veiled message on many TV programs is that marriage kills off real romance as surely as Round Up knocks out weeds. TV would have us believe that most married couples are frustrated, bored, antagonistic and about as romantic as a deodorant commercial.

Hollywood openly ridicules marriage. The pop star Madonna when asked about marriage replied, “Why would two intelligent people want to do that?”

In our culture, a culture increasingly becoming divorced from any Biblical or spiritual underpinnings, it is essential that someone stand up for the very institution which God created at the very dawn of time—marriage. Our children and our culture desperately need good marriage models. People speak about a shortage of vocations to the priesthood. There is an even greater shortage of vocations to marriage, marriages that not only stand the test of time, but also show what faithfulness and family are all about.

Having a life-long, loving commitment is hard work. Have you noticed that marriages aren't golden until 50 years? Gold has to be tested in the fire. Pure gold has all its impurities burnt off.

But is it worth it? Anybody can marry for richer and healthier and for better, but it is that old rhythm in those historic vows that make marriage what is: For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness as well as in health.

Marriage is not a game of power and control. It is not a matter of superiority and submission. Marriage is a partnership of mutual trust. Sometime you lead, sometimes you follow. Always you try to be dependable, reliable, trustworthy.

Just two weeks ago, we had a bittersweet happening. Two of our members died the same day—Jim and Celia Marshall. Jim died in his sleep. Celia died on the same day later in the evening. The next day would have been their 64th wedding anniversary.

Like most marriages, they had their share of struggles and sorrows. In fact, one of the conversations was who was going to die first. But to see them here at the altar side by side was something quite powerful. The Reading was from the Book of Ruth in the Bible. *“Wherever you go, I shall go. Wherever you live, I shall live. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God, too. Wherever you die, so shall I die and be buried there beside you.”*

Jim and Celia are buried beside each other in our cemetery.

Likewise, do you realize what a powerful witness each of you makes by being who you are? You are living testimony of how great marriages are possible and truly do take place.

Do you realize what a difference you make? This came through this weekend. Many of you waited to come to Mass until this afternoon and weren't at your regular Mass on Saturday or Sunday, sitting in the same pew that you always do. Your presence was truly missed.

On behalf of our parish, our Church, our world, we thank God for your witness and presence as a couple, as a family, as a living sign of what takes place when two people spend their lives together.

Our Holy Father in his message to families on World Family Day said, **“As the married couple grow, so too the Church. As the married couple grow, so too the society.”**

Thank you for your gift. You are the glue. We need your glow!

St. John the Evangelist

∞140th Jubilee ∞

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