

## HOMILY

### **135<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Celebration of Marriage** **Sunday, October 8, 2006**

**Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski**  
**St. John the Evangelist Parish**  
**Davison, Michigan**

Pat and Mike were sitting on a park bench solving all the problems of the world. Pat said to Mike, “Mike, do you think priests should get married?” Mike said to Pat, “I sure do. Why should they be any better off than the rest of us who are married hook, line and sinker?”

One of my friends is a Baptist minister. After a couple of visits to the rectory he remarked, “You know the difference between Baptists ministers and you Catholic priests—we have better halves—priests have better quarters.”

As we gather to celebrate marriage, perhaps it seems strange that a priest is standing here before you to talk about marriage. I am not married. I have never been married and I don't intend to get married. But in a way, I am married. I am married to the Church. I am married to God's people that I have been called to serve all the days of my life. Like marriage, my ministry 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.

Marriage has been around for a long time. In fact, as the reading from the Book of Genesis reminds us, the creation of man and woman was how it all began. Jesus, himself, speaks about the same passage in the gospel. Despite popular opinion, Jesus teaches that marriage is serious business to God. It is God's plan for the world. It is God's plan to provide for the very ones created in his image and likeness to be fulfilled. Who knows that better than each of you?

Likewise, who doesn't know that there are no perfect marriages? Though some say marriages are made in heaven, the truth of the matter is that good marriages are made through a lot of give-and-take here on earth!

There once was a wise and kindly woman, married to her equally wise and kindly husband for 65 years. They offered a different take on the old saying of marriage being a 50-50 proposition. "Marriage is a 100 percent proposition," she said. "Each one gives 100 percent to the other without counting the cost and without demanding anything in return." She and her husband regarded one another as God's gift and treated one another accordingly each day. Theirs was not a life without suffering or worry. Their love, a love that grew in direct proportion to their struggles, saw them through and enabled them to go on together.

A British couple holds the Guinness World Record for the longest marriage. Percy and Florence Arrowsmith married on June 1, 1925, and just celebrated their eighty-first wedding anniversary this past June. "I think we're very blessed," Florence, age 100, told the BBC. "We still love each other. That's the most important part." Asked for the secret of their long marriage, Florence said, "You must never be afraid to say 'sorry.' You must never go to sleep bad friends." Of course, she's right. There are times in every marriage for forgiving and forgetting and saying, "I'm sorry." By the way, Florence's husband, Percy, 105, said his secret to marital bliss was just two words: "Yes, dear."

While the second reading today from Hebrews is not about marriage, the author reminds us that our model for all we are and do should be Jesus, who did not hesitate to humble himself and suffer even death for our sakes. If married couples make the mind and heart and humility of Jesus their own, their relationship will thrive and, together, they will offer the world a witness that both edifies and encourages. I read somewhere that marriage becomes a success when two "MEs" turn the "ME" upside down and become one "WE."

Though, without a doubt, Florence and Percy have a great claim to fame, I think you have set a world record here. Do you realize what a powerful statement you each make 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 by the living out your vows to each other? This came through this weekend. Since many of you waited to come to Mass this afternoon, you weren't at your regular Mass on Saturday or Sunday. Your presence was truly missed! I, personally, thank you for your witness and presence as a couple, as a family, as a sacrament!

Pope John Paul II said in his message to families on World Family Day, "As the married couple grow so, too, the Church. As the married couple grow so, too, the society." You are the glue, the glow, the gift.

Tertullian, an ancient African Christian Father, wrote,

*"How beautiful is the marriage of two Christians who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice.... Nothing divides them...they are, in very truth, two in one flesh, and where there is one flesh, there is one spirit. They pray together, they worship together, they fast together, instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another.... They have no secrets from one another; they never shun each other's company.... Together, they visit the sick and assist the needy. They give alms without anxiety.... Hearing and seeing this, Christ rejoices. To such as these, He gives his peace. Where there are two together, there also He is present and where He is, evil is not."*

And where Jesus is, that which seems impossible becomes possible and the ideal becomes the norm.