



Marriage and Family What Matters Most, Part 2

December 29, 2008

This has been a great Christmas. Our son Wendell and his daughter Rebekah are about to arrive. And Emily and our grandson Max were just with us. As you may have heard me say before, Max, who is autistic, can be a handful. I marvel at Emily's love for him and at the strength God has given her to be such a good mother. I am so proud of her, as I am of my sons Chris and Wendell, and their families.

In fact, I experience no greater joy than simply basking in the love of my wife, children, and grandchildren.

But I am also aware of how painful Christmas can be for many who mourn the loss of loved ones, or who are separated from their families—in the military or through imprisonment, or most sadly, through broken relationships.

Especially at Christmas, we are reminded what a precious gift a healthy family is. And it's a time when I, myself, am very aware of the powerful and malevolent cultural forces that seek to tear families apart.

It's only natural that the enemy would seek to destroy families—precisely because the family is God's ordained instrument for the propagation of the human race, and a symbol of the loving fellowship within the Trinity.

And the best way to destroy the family is to destroy marriage. As author Christopher West writes in *Theology of the Body Explained*, the core of the family is the "one flesh union of spouses." That is, marriage between husband and wife.



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West goes on to explain that when a marriage is “open to God’s inspiration and ordered toward love and life, it builds families and, in turn, a culture of love and life.” West goes on to warn, however, that the first step in the disintegration of civilization—toward a “culture of utility and death”—is the devaluing of marriage.

He argues, quite rightly, that as the family goes, so goes the culture. I would dare to add “so goes the Church.” Given the state of marriage and the family within the Church today, that’s bad news.

According to researcher George Barna, divorce statistics for born-again Christians are virtually indistinguishable from those of non-Christians. Barna believes that “there no longer seems to be much of a stigma attached to divorce; it is now seen as an unavoidable rite of passage.”

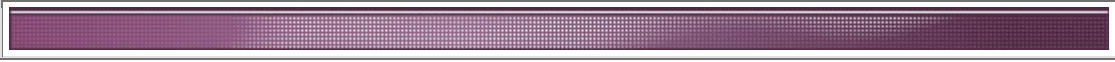
Well, I’m not for stigmatizing people or judging. But the Church simply cannot afford to allow believers to see divorce as unavoidable. The costs are too high. And if Christians cannot model healthy marriages and families to the culture, then who can?

So it’s up the Church, it’s up to you and me to strengthen marriages and families—beginning, of course, with our own.

So if your marriage is in trouble, get help. Reach out to members of your congregation who are contemplating divorce. Work with your pastor to make sure your church adequately prepares couples for marriage. Get involved in your community and your state to promote policies that protect traditional marriage and families. Visit BreakPoint.org, and we will point you to groups like Marriage Savers that can help.

And during this Christmas season, pray. Pray that God will preserve the institution of marriage and protect the family. Pray as if our civilization depends on it. Because as I said moments ago, it does.

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