

**The Twenty Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**October 4, 2015**

Luigi Quattrocchi (d. 1951) and Maria Corsini (d. 1965) were married November 25, 1905. They raised four children. Luigi and Maria were beatified, as a couple, on Oct. 21, 2001. Their feast day is their wedding date. Wouldn't it be nice if all marriages worked out so well?

It's wonderful to think that the church through Luigi and Maria's beatification recognizes marriage and family life officially as a "state of holiness" for a couple. Yet we all know that the reality of marriage and family life are filled with difficulties.

Well, as they say, no news there. Even thousands of years ago, Moses attempted to deal with marital breakup by permitting some kind of divorce.

The Synod on the Family, which starts today in Rome, is an effort of the Catholic church to explore the current experience of marriage and family and to offer some help.

There is a desperate need for the church to do a better job of not only better preparing couples for marriage but also offering real support and encouragement to couples and families as they live out their day-to-day experiences and challenges.

As we hear in the readings today, there are basic principles and ideals for marriage. Right up front is the need for companionship: "It is not good for the man to be alone." Genesis tells us that God provides a companion, one who is

the equal of the man. In turn, the man leaves behind his birth family and becomes faithful to his wife.

Still, faithfulness has not always endured. And that is the point at which the Pharisees attempted to test Jesus: "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?"

Jesus responded, "What God has joined together, no one must divide."

That's true. That's the ideal.

But external pressures from society, culture and the economy all take their toll on family life. Many families around the globe, and even in our own community, are faced with such basic problems as homelessness, lack of food, unemployment, insufficient education and the list goes on and on.

Internal issues such as physical and mental health, domestic violence or unrealistic expectations developed during childhood, also contribute to the stresses of spouses, parents and their children.

The church in this Synod on the Family wants to be of service to families as they struggle with their realities.

There are many issues they will be discussing. The solutions are not clear. Practical forms on how parishes can accompany married couples and offering church assistance, like being able to offer the sacraments to divorced and remarried Catholics who do not have annulments, will certainly be discussed. Other issues — like how best to minister to families of mixed religion, how to deal with couples who are living together without benefit of matrimony, how to

minister and be welcoming to same-sex couples — all these things and more present significant challenges to those participating in this three week synod.

The ideals of a lifelong marriage and a stable family that are held up to us in the readings today are still valid. But we humans struggle to reach those ideals. We are limited and frail. We need to rely on God's understanding and mercy. And we need to realize that we are all in this together. And that is perhaps our biggest challenge. As a parish, we need to discover new ways of reaching out to married couples and families in order to foster growth and stability.

Why? Because God, in His nature, is not solitude.

God, in His nature is driven to share His love. God is so good that he can't keep it all to Himself.

In making man and woman with an inner drive to find themselves in each other, each finding their truest self in the other through marriage, God is expressing in our humanity His own inner reality.

May we remember every day during this Respect Life Sunday and the entire month that we are made to belong. In belonging to each other through marriage and as a parish, we reflect our belonging to God. In belonging to each other we share in God's life and love and in His own desire to belong to us.