

Affirmation of Faith Concerning Marriage and the Family

We, the Pastor and the Parochial Vicar, in union with the parishioners of Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church in Front Royal, Virginia, have signed the following Affirmation of Faith concerning Marriage and the Family as a sign of our fidelity to Christ and His Holy, Catholic Church.

Issues were raised and discussed during the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome (October 5-19, 2014), touching upon essential elements of the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Magisterium, resulting in much confusion amidst the laity, and distortion by the secular media, so that we find ourselves deeply stirred to manifest our fidelity to Our Lord and His Church by publicly reaffirming those parts of Catholic Doctrine that seem to have been put in doubt.

We thereby reaffirm our submission to the One, True Church, and plead with Pope Francis, Christ's Vicar on earth, to proclaim and defend the authentic teaching of the Magisterium against those within and without the Church who seek to misrepresent, dilute or contradict the truths relating to marriage and family life.

1. We believe that the Sacrament of Matrimony, as established by Jesus Christ Himself, which images His own union with His Church, is indissoluble. Marriage is a holy and irrevocable vow and promise, made to God, between one man and one woman which is to be open to the children, which He may want to send them, and commits the couple to lifelong fidelity. As a consequence of this vow, and the sacramental grace it effects, many wonderful families have been established and exist among us. Also the many flourishing families in our parish are outstanding witnesses of the Grace of God who enables them to be able to keep their promise to each other and to Him.
2. We believe that anyone who breaks that marriage bond and remarries outside the Catholic Church, without first securing an annulment, sadly places oneself in an irregular union which is objectively a grave mortal sin! Though we dare not judge the heart of any person, we must view such marriages as invalid, and lacking sacramental grace.
3. We believe, as St. Paul taught, that anyone living in the state of sin or being conscious of having committed any mortal sin, should not receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. To do so would result in sacrilege. Therefore, remarried divorced persons cannot be allowed to receive Holy Communion, until they manifest genuine repentance, followed by an amendment of life which removes them from an objective state of sin. Those who find themselves unable or unwilling to rectify their irregular situation are nonetheless children of God and should persevere in a life of prayer and penitence, not despairing of someday returning to His Grace and reception of the Sacraments. They should avoid presumption by not taking lightly their being in the state of sin, and be mindful of the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.
4. We hope and pray that all individuals who have put their own souls in jeopardy by choices which result in their alienation from the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, may find in our parish the inspiration and means to better form their consciences in accord with the teachings of Christ and His Bride, the Church.
5. We believe that God instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony primarily for the procreation of children and their education in eternal truths, unto *Vita Aeterna*. "Be fruitful and multiply." As a primary end of marriage is procreation, the Church must work to defend the traditional understanding of this Sacrament so that children may be welcomed and grow up with the blessing of two loving parents in a stable and enduring family life. "Let the little ones come to Me," Our Lord said. May they not find themselves to be "abandoned orphans of divorce."
6. We believe that God calls every Catholic family to be open to the children He intends to send, so that any form of artificial contraception or the selfish use of natural family planning, must be seen as objectively sinful and be strenuously opposed.
7. We believe that the family as planned by God is to be composed of one man married to one woman along with their children. Homosexual acts must be seen as intrinsically disordered as contrary to the Natural Law, thus the union of two homosexual individuals must never be seen as a "marriage" as such unions can never be open to procreation. At the same time, the Church must reach out to homosexual parishioners as She does to all those other members of the Church who may fail to live up to the high ideals of Christian chastity, which Christ has mandated

for all His children. Any pastoral programs or outreach to homosexuals in a parish must have as their goal a life of celibate chastity! Only repentance, conversion and a strong purpose of amendment, in fidelity to Catholic Truth, will enable the homosexual person to be fully free. All of us sinners all called to become Saints!

8. We believe that the Sacrament of Matrimony is necessary for a Christian man and a Christian woman to establish a common life together into which they can welcome the children God sees fit to send them. Any bond outside of that Sacrament, be it in the form of cohabitation, or of mere civil marriage without the blessing of the Church, is lacking in grace. It is objectively disordered and as such is an offense against God. We as a Catholic people must be faithful in living out the Works of Mercy, one of which is to "admonish the sinner." The Church must not fail to raise Her voice as She proclaims the fullness of the Gospel in regards to marriage and family life, avoiding any temptation to give into the "political correctness" of our time. And the Church must remind us all that we need God's Sanctifying Grace to be able to live up to His Commandments.
9. We believe that the Canonical Process of Nullity with all its carefully crafted elements of procedure is an expression of the care and mercy of the Church for the souls who have had a divorce and who seek to find out whether, before God, their first marriage was indeed a valid Sacrament or not. Any shortcuts in this process must be avoided lest we give the impression that an annulment is equivalent to a Catholic divorce, as some already view it. In every Diocese, there should be a sufficient number of priests to expedite cases so that a sound judgment can be rendered in a reasonable amount of time, remembering that "justice delayed is justice denied"!
10. We believe that Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are infallible guides in evaluating marriage and family life in order to promote the salvation of souls, which is the supreme law! True love and true mercy must be grounded in Truth if souls are to be saved. Therefore, any equivocation or laxity in the Church's pastoral practice must be excluded lest the Catholic people be left in a confusion, which appears to be increasing in our time, potentially resulting in the loss of many souls. Affirming doctrine, while at the same time instituting pastoral practices which can appear to undermine that same doctrine, would be a terrible risk to take, and create new dangers and obstacles, which could hinder one's sanctification and salvation. Some within our parish have themselves traveled the path of conversion and an amendment of life, and can thus affirm that only by such fidelity to the Gospel and discipline of the Catholic Church (always a Merciful Mother), can we truly love God in Himself, and then manifest that same love and mercy to others. True happiness comes only from union with God in Jesus Christ, Our Lord. He alone reveals the Truth that will ultimately make us free in this world and happy forever in the world to come.

Finally, and fittingly, we pray: May the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, protect that Church in these troubled times and assist Christ's Bride to be totally faithful to Him. It was the abundant love of God who sent His Blessed Mother to Fatima, in 1917, to warn us that "More souls go to Hell because of sins of the flesh (sins of impurity) than for any other reason." May Our Lady's admonition not go unheeded but rather sober all of us that we may be led to a deepening of our Christian lives in faith and practice.

May the Patron of our parish, Saint John the Baptist, as well as the Patron Saint of our Diocese St. Thomas More, who were both martyred for their defense of marriage, pray for the Church as it prepares for the Synod of Bishops next year!

Front Royal, 28 October 2014, Feast of Saint Simon Zealot and Saint Jude Thaddeus
