

The breakdown of the family in the United States has weakened our society. Divorce is so acceptable that some couples enter marriage with legal agreements in case the union does not last. Many children are being raised in single-parent households. The accessibility of birth control has increased sex outside of marriage. The legalization of abortion offers parents a grisly way to end responsibilities for their children. These circumstances weaken society, and they hurt individuals. People suffer disappointment and doubt about their commitments, sadness and depression.

That's the bad news. The good news is that when marriage works, it is an amazing thing. Our church calls it a sacrament. You might also call it a miracle. When a marriage is successful, we call it "happy", but even the most successful marriage has times of unhappiness. Marriages get measured over the long term, not on the basis of a bad day or a hurtful disagreement.

There is hope for our society because many people still think marriage is a good idea. Not all church marriages last forever, but couples get an extra boost from a religious ceremony. At church they express their faith in God and their hope that God will help them. They make their love public because they cannot keep quiet about it, and because they want the community to treat them not just as individuals, but as a couple.

The Book of Genesis praises the creation of woman. As the world was created, God saw each day that it was good. But at the beginning of today's reading, God says something is not good. It is not good for the human to be alone. God makes a suitable partner, drawing a rib from the human and making it into a woman. The first human then speaks for the first time: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The first words spoken by any human being in the bible are words of praise for a partner. The two, though different, become one.

Human partnership is a great privilege: You find another person with whom you share such an intense friendship that you feel like you have discovered a part of yourself that was lost or unknown. When two such persons marry, they spend a lifetime learning their differences and enjoying unity. Not all marriages succeed, but when they do, they are holy. They encounter the mystery of our creator God.