

EDITORIAL

The theme for this issue of Tripod is Marriage and the Family. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis' call to hold an extraordinary synod on this topic this coming Fall prompted us to choose this theme. We solicited articles on this theme from priests and laity in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Father Hyacinth from China presents the startling statistic that the divorce rate in China is now about 30%. That means that one out of every three marriages in China will end in divorce. That is fast approaching the divorce rate of the United States, where it is estimated that 50%, or half, of all marriages end in divorce. From their positions as parish pastors or married Catholic laity, our writers try to analyze the reasons for the high divorce rate in China. Causes listed are a change from a strict Confucian mentality, where parents arranged marriages for their children, to one where the children have freedom of choice based on the love the partners have for one another. Other reasons for the breakup of marriages range from pornography on the internet to the separation of married couples due to work obligations (e.g., the husband goes to work in the big city, while the wife stays at home in the country side).

However, the reason which made the biggest impression on this editor was Fr. Hyacinth's suggestion of a "lack of preparedness" for marriage. For Catholics, he and other authors point out, the Church gives little or no marriage preparation instructions to young couples before marriage. Due to immaturity, oftentimes the young couples do not understand the state they are entering into. They do not understand that true love demands sacrifice and mutual support between the spouses to make a marriage work. Our authors urge the Church to do more pastoral work in this area.

A former contributor, Father Alan Doyle, MM, from his experience at a migrant workers' center in Taipei, encourages Catholics, if at all possible to marry other Catholics. Citing statistics, he points out how having the same faith helps a married

couple to stay together and to grow in love. The faith also helps them in the raising of their children in the faith. Fr. Peter, in his article, mentions the Cana Conference and Marriage Encounter being introduced into his diocese. These movements have been helpful in strengthening marriages in the West. He also mentions a formation center in his Diocese, which runs pastoral ministry programs for married couples.

All of the abovementioned programs are good for preparing couples for marriage, as well as for supporting couples, who have already gotten married. It is good to see that young priests and Sisters are tackling marriage and family problems in their pastoral work. While the Church faces problems on the national level, like the selection of suitable candidates to be ordained bishops, which priests and religious at the local level may feel incapable of addressing, at least they can counsel and support their Catholics when they run into marital or familial problems. Such work not only helps the Church, but also helps society at large by fostering the development of wholesome families.

Finally, we cannot close this editorial without mentioning the destruction of churches and the removal of crosses from churches, which took place in the Wenzhou area of Zhejiang Province in May of this year. It has been reported that about 60 churches have been either completely destroyed, or have suffered partial damage. Past government leaders have praised religion's role in helping to raise the moral standards of society. One would think that instead of destroying churches, government leaders would be trying to enlist the churches' aid in the current campaign to stamp out corruption. Corruption also can have an adverse effect on family life. (PJB)