

Para que los matrimonios no fracasen

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La polémica sobre los divorciados vueltos a casar ha desviado la atención de los retos más importantes que tiene por delante el Sínodo sobre la familia: cómo enseñar a vivir el matrimonio a quienes desean casarse y a quienes ya están casados

Así lo recuerdan 48 destacados intelectuales en una [carta abierta](#) dirigida al Papa y a los participantes en el Sínodo, cuya primera fase tendrá lugar entre el 5 y el 19 de octubre:

Santo Padre, Eminencias y Excelencias,

¡Estamos contentos de que el Santo Padre haya captado la atención de todo el mundo y tanta buena voluntad hacia la fe cristiana! Como otras personas, estamos profundamente tocados por sus expresiones de amor y misericordia, que hacen resonar el amor y la misericordia de Cristo, sobre todo por los que están indefensos y abandonados.

En este contexto, alabamos la decisión de convocar un Sínodo extraordinario de obispos para examinar los retos del matrimonio y la familia. Como cada uno de vosotros, creemos que la familia es, como la misma Iglesia, la mayor manifestación institucional del amor de Cristo. Para cuantos deseamos amar como Él quisiera que amáramos, el matrimonio y la familia son indispensables, tanto como vehículos de salvación, que como baluartes de la sociedad humana.

Los papas recientes han subrayado muy claramente estos aspectos. Por ejemplo, el papa Benedicto XVI escribió que “el matrimonio es un instrumento de salvación no sólo para los casados, sino para toda la sociedad”. En la *Evangelii Gaudium*, escribió que “la contribución indispensable del matrimonio a la sociedad supera el nivel de emotividad y las necesidades contingentes de la pareja”.

Este Sínodo es una oportunidad para expresar verdades eternas sobre el matrimonio. ¿Por qué estas verdades cuentan? ¿Cómo representan el verdadero amor, no “exclusión” o “prejuicio” o cualquier otra acusación presentada hoy contra el matrimonio? Hombres y mujeres necesitan desesperadamente escuchar la verdad sobre el motivo por el cual, en primer lugar, deberían casarse. Y una vez casados, sobre por qué Cristo y la Iglesia desean que sigan siendo fieles el uno a la otra durante toda su vida en esta tierra. Además, cuando el matrimonio se hace difícil (como sucede a la mayor parte de las parejas), la Iglesia será una fuente de apoyo, no sólo para cada uno de los esposos, sino para el matrimonio mismo.

Santo Padre, usted ha escrito enérgicamente sobre la importancia de una nueva evangelización dentro de la Iglesia: “La comunidad evangelizadora se pone mediante obras y gestos en la vida cotidiana de los demás, acorta distancias, se abaja hasta la humillación si es necesario, y asume la vida humana, tocando la carne sufriente de Cristo en el pueblo”.

Podemos sugerir humildemente que, en el contexto del matrimonio y de la vida familiar, sus palabras son un llamamiento a la responsabilidad personal, no solo para nuestros esposos y nuestros hijos, sino para el matrimonio de los que Dios nos ha puesto al lado: nuestros parientes y amigos, los que encontramos en nuestras iglesias y en nuestras escuelas.

Lo que está en juego es mucho. Según un informe internacional de las tendencias de la infancia en 2013, “el aumento dramático de convivencias, divorcios e hijos fuera del matrimonio en las Américas, en Europa y en Oceanía en las últimas cuatro décadas sugiere que la institución matrimonial es mucho menos relevante en estas partes del mundo”. En Estados Unidos, la tasa de

matrimonios es la más baja jamás registrada, las convivencias se están convirtiendo rápidamente en una aceptable alternativa al matrimonio y más de la mitad de los nacimientos de mujeres menores de 30 años tiene lugar fuera del matrimonio. Entre otras innumerables asociaciones negativas, cada una de estas tendencias se ha vinculado con un valor neto menor, y menor movilidad económica, pobreza y *welfare* –en particular para mujeres y niños.

Entre los matrimonios existentes, muchos son frágiles y tensos. Entre el 40 y el 50% de todos los primeros matrimonios en Estados Unidos acabará en divorcio. Esta tasa aumenta netamente con cada matrimonio sucesivo, y la investigación sugiere que no es la baja calidad conyugal, sino el bajo compromiso.

Las consecuencias del divorcio y de la convivencia para los niños y adultos son muchos y diversos – de la pobreza y de los malos resultados educativos a una salud física más frágil, del menor compromiso conyugal en la edad adulta a la muerte precoz. Y aunque cada país es único, los estudios muestran que el impacto de estas tendencias se extiende en todo el globo. Un pequeño ejemplo de estos estudios: China, Finlandia, Suecia, Uruguay, México, Grecia, países de África y del Pacífico oriental asiático.

Los costes de la pornografía sobre las sociedades son muy significativos. Los estudios del impacto de la pornografía en las relaciones sugieren que es un factor importante en la destrucción de los matrimonios. Por desgracia, la investigación a largo plazo de los efectos de la pornografía sobre el matrimonio es virtualmente inexistente.

Las leyes sobre el llamado “divorcio consensuado” en Estados Unidos y en muchos otros países han autorizado un sistema en que jueces y legisladores favorecen la disolución de los matrimonios, a menudo contra la voluntad de los esposos que permanecen fieles en el compromiso conyugal.

A pesar de la tristeza de estas tendencias, nos anima y fortalece la exhortación del Santo Padre: “Los retos existen para ser superados. Seamos realistas, pero sin perder la alegría, la audacia y la dedicación llena de esperanza”.

Quizás la nueva forma más valiente como podemos evangelizar a las parejas casadas (y por extensión a los futuros matrimonios de sus hijos) es construir pequeñas comunidades de parejas casadas que se apoyen mutuamente de manera incondicional en su vocación a la vida conyugal. Estas comunidades proporcionarían redes de apoyo basadas en vínculos de fe y familia, compromiso en el matrimonio para toda la vida y responsabilidad de uno por el otro.

Aquí ofrecemos algunas maneras prácticas para crear y sostener estas comunidades:

- Una Comisión del Pontificio Consejo para la Familia para llevar a cabo una investigación interdisciplinaria y longitudinal sobre el efecto de la pornografía y del “divorcio consensuado” en la crisis matrimonial.

- Educar a los seminaristas. Proporcionar cursos obligatorios que ofrezcan las pruebas de las ciencias sociales sobre los beneficios del matrimonio, las amenazas al matrimonio y las consecuencias del divorcio y de la convivencia para los niños y la sociedad.

- Formar a los sacerdotes a mostrar en sus homilias el valor espiritual y social del matrimonio, los retos contemporáneos a esta institución y la ayuda ofrecida por las parroquias a los matrimonios en crisis. Un estudio reciente ha revelado que el 72% de las mujeres católicas americanas afirma que la homilía dominical es la fuente primaria para formarse en la fe.

- Crear pequeñas y vibrantes redes de fuertes parejas casadas como mentoras a nivel parroquial, disponibles para dar a los esposos los instrumentos para mantener matrimonios sanos y duraderos.

- Educar a los parroquianos sobre la extraordinaria influencia que pueden tener sobre el matrimonio de amigos y familiares. Los datos de las ciencias sociales muestran que la presencia de familiares y amigos divorciados aumenta el riesgo de divorcio. En alternativa, los datos sugieren que los familiares y los amigos pueden aumentar el compromiso y la satisfacción en los matrimonios de los seres queridos a través de su ejemplo y apoyo.

- Alentar y apoyar la reconciliación de parejas casadas que se han separado o divorciado.

- Pedir a los obispos de todo el mundo que ordenen oraciones regulares durante la misa dominical por matrimonios fuertes y fieles.

- Apoyar los esfuerzos por preservar lo que es justo en las leyes existentes sobre el matrimonio, resistir a cualquier cambio de estas leyes que debilitaría ulteriormente la institución y restaurar procedimientos legales que defiendan el matrimonio como unión conyugal de un hombre y una mujer en la que se entra con una apertura al don de los hijos y que se vive de modo fiel y permanente como base de la familia natural.

- Apoyar la libertad religiosa en los procesos de divorcio. Muchos no saben que la libertad religiosa es violada rutinariamente por los jueces divorcistas, que ignoran o disminuyen los puntos de vista del cónyuge que intenta salvar el matrimonio, tener a los hijos en una escuela religiosa o evitar que el cónyuge que le ha abandonado exponga a los hijos a un *partner* sexual no casado. Poner en marcha un consorcio de abogados y legisladores para combatir este problema.

Realizar uno cualquiera de estos objetivos a escala internacional sería un gran paso adelante para matrimonios y familias. Llevarlos todos a cabo podría modificar del todo la crisis del matrimonio mundial.

Con vuestro liderazgo, intentaremos ayudar a los matrimonios a lograrse y a florecer dando el máximo valor al compromiso conyugal en todos los niveles de la sociedad, en cada rincón del mundo. Damos las gracias a Su Santidad y a vuestras Eminencias y Excelencias por haber emprendido esta tarea fundamental y os aseguramos nuestras oraciones por su gran éxito.

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LETTER

Holy Father, Eminences, and Excellencies,

We rejoice that the Holy Father has captured the world's attention and so much good will for the Christian faith! Like others we are deeply moved by his expressions of love and mercy, echoing the love and mercy of Christ, especially for those who are defenseless and abandoned.

It is in this context that we welcome the decision to convene an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops to examine the challenges to marriage and the family. Like each of you, we believe the family is, with the Church itself, the greatest institutional manifestation of Christ's love. For those who wish to love as He would have us love, marriage and the family are indispensable, both as vehicles of salvation and as bulwarks of human society.

Recent popes have made these points abundantly clear. For example, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that, "Marriage is truly an instrument of salvation, not only for married people but for the whole of society." And, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Your Holiness wrote that "the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple."

This Synod is an opportunity to express timeless truths about marriage. Why do those truths matter? How do they represent true love, not "exclusion" or "prejudice," or any of the other charges brought against marriage today? Men and women need desperately to hear the truth about why they should get married in the first place. And, once married, why Christ and the Church desire that they should remain faithful to each other throughout their lives on this earth. That, when marriage gets tough (as it does for most couples), the Church will be a source of support, not just for individual spouses, but for the marriage itself.

You have written so powerfully, Holy Father, of the importance of a new evangelization within the Church: "An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others."

May we humbly suggest that in the context of marriage and family life your words are a call to personal responsibility, not only for our own spouses and children, but for the marriages of those God has put by our side: our relatives and friends, those in our churches and in our schools.

The stakes are high. According to a 2013 Child Trends international report: "Dramatic increases in cohabitation, divorce, and nonmarital childbearing in the Americas, Europe, and Oceania over the last four decades suggest that the institution of marriage is much less relevant in these parts of the world." In the United States the marriage rate is the lowest ever recorded, unmarried cohabitation is rapidly becoming an acceptable alternative to marriage, and more than half of births to women under 30 years of age now occur outside marriage. Among countless other negative associations, each of these trends has been linked to lower net worth and economic mobility, poverty, and welfare – for women and children, in particular.

Among existing marriages, many are fragile and strained. Between forty and fifty percent of all first marriages in the U.S. are projected to end in divorce. This rate rises sharply with each successive remarriage and research suggests the reason is not low marital quality, but weak commitment.

The consequences of divorce and cohabitation for children and adults are many and diverse – from poverty and lower educational achievement to poorer physical health; from lower marital commitment in adulthood to earlier death. And while every nation is unique, studies show that the impact of these trends spans the globe. A small sampling of such studies: China, Finland, Sweden, Uruguay, Mexico, Greece, Africa, and East Asian Pacific nations.

The costs of pornography to societies are significant. Studies of pornography's impact on relationships suggest it is a major contributor to the destruction of marriages. Unfortunately, long-term research on pornography's effect on marriage is virtually nonexistent.

So called "no fault divorce" laws in the U.S. and many other nations have licensed a system in which judges and lawyers facilitate the dissolution of marriages, often against the will of spouses who stand firm in their marital commitment.

Despite the bleakness of these trends, we are encouraged and made resolute by the Holy Father's exhortation: "Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment."

Perhaps the boldest new way we can evangelize married couples (and by extension their children's future marriages) is to build small communities of married couples who support each other unconditionally in their vocations to married life. These communities would provide networks of support grounded in the bonds of faith and family, commitment to lifelong marriage, and responsibility to and for each other.

Here we offer some practical ways to create and sustain such communities:

- Commission the Pontifical Council on the Family to conduct cross-discipline, longitudinal research on the role of pornography and "no fault" divorce in the marriage crisis.
- Educate seminarians. Provide mandatory courses covering social science evidence on the benefits of marriage, threats to marriage, and the consequences of divorce and cohabitation to children and society.
- Train priests to showcase in their homilies the spiritual and social value of marriage, contemporary challenges to it, and parish help for troubled marriages. A recent study found that 72% of American Catholic women say the weekly homily is their primary source for learning about the faith.
- Create small, vibrant networks of strong married couples as mentors at the parish level, available to give spouses the tools to sustain healthy, lifelong marriages.
- Educate parishioners on the extraordinary influence they can have on the marriages of friends and family. Social science data show that the presence of divorced family and friends increases one's own risk of divorce. Alternatively, the data suggest that family members and friends can increase commitment and satisfaction within marriages of those they love through their example and support.
- Encourage and support the reconciliation of married couples who are separated or have been divorced by civil courts.
- Request bishops worldwide to initiate regular prayers during Sunday Mass for strong, faithful marriages.
- Support efforts to preserve what is right and just in existing marriage laws, to resist any changes to those laws that would further weaken the institution, and to restore legal provisions that protect marriage as a conjugal union of one man and one woman, entered into with an openness to the gift of children, and lived faithfully and permanently as the foundation of the natural family.

- Support religious freedom in divorce courts. Many do not know that religious freedom is routinely violated by divorce judges who ignore or demean the views of a spouse who seeks to save a marriage, keep the children in a religious school, or prevent an abandoning spouse from exposing the children to an unmarried sexual partner. Begin a consortium of attorneys and legislators to combat this problem.

To accomplish any of these goals on an international scale would be a great step forward for marriages and families. To accomplish them all may turn the worldwide marriage crisis on its head.

With your leadership we will help marriages to succeed and flourish by placing the greatest value on marital commitment – at every level of society, in every corner of the world. We thank Your Holiness, Eminences, and Excellencies for taking up this vital task and you may be assured of our prayers for its great success.

SIGNEES

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