

## Knights Lecture 2 (9/21/2014)

What do you think of when we hear the word marriage? I'm sure some of you will think of your parents, others will think of aunts and uncles or grandparents.

Now what do you think of when you hear the word family? Brothers, sisters, cousins?

At last Sunday's Mass in St. Peter's Basilica Pope Francis presided over the marriage of twenty Italian couples. In his homily he spoke of the importance marriage and of families when he said, "It is impossible to quantify the strength and depth of humanity contained in a family: mutual help, educational support, relationships developing as family members mature, the sharing of joys and difficulties. Families are the first place in which we are formed as persons, and at the same time the "bricks" for building up of society."

"Families are the first place in which we are formed as person, and at the same time the 'bricks' for building up of society." Families, even when only between a married couple, are a society in and of themselves with its own rules and structures. When children and extended family become part of the family unit a sort of hierarchy is created. When cities, states, and countries are made up of strong family units like these they too become strong.

Unfortunately, marriages, which are the foundation for strong families, have become increasingly less common. To give you an idea of just how far marriage rates have slid in recent years; the United States Census Bureau reported that in 1965 marriage rate among young adults age 25-34 was about 85%. In 2009 the same Census Bureau reported that in the same age demographic only about 55% were married.

Earlier this year Pope Francis called for Synod on the Family, which will meet in October to discuss the pastoral challenges of ministering to families in the context of evangelization. Going back to his homily last Sunday it seems clear that the decline of marriage rates plays a huge role in the calling of the Synod, because without marriage and family mutual help, educational support, and the sharing of joys and difficulties comes much much harder.

So what can we do to address the rapid decline the last forty years of marriages and family growth? We can pray. We can be selfish and pray for ourselves; We can pray for our vocations to be fathers, whether that means spiritual father or familial father is dependent on each of our vocations. We can also be not so selfish and pray for each other; pray for your family, brother knights, and friends that we all find our vocation and have the strength to fulfill it.