

Synod on the Family 10-4-15 (Lindsay)

I want you all to consider a word. That word is 'normative'. I will give you the definition: **Normative** means relating to an ideal standard or model, or being based on what is considered to be the normal or correct way of doing something.

We are going through an extraordinary time not only in our country, but in the world. There is an ongoing rebellion against any sort of standard, any sort of sense of what is normative. It is nothing short of amazing the amount of vitriol and hatred that is directed towards people that dare suggest that there is a correct way of constructing a family or conducting our lives in general. The setting of any type of standard is seen as an attack on personal freedom. It is ironic that the very same people opposed to any type of standard for personal morality have no qualms about proposing gigantic rates of taxation in order to force people to behave the way they see fit.

This week the synod of bishops will meet in Vatican City. The theme of their meeting will be "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world". They will meet from the fourth of October until the 25th of October. Please keep the bishops in your prayers. They have a tough and thankless job to do.

Make no mistake. The traditional family is under attack. This, of course, is a shame and will not turn out well. It cannot. The mistake that people are making is that they see the traditional view of marriage and divorce as set down in the teachings of the Church as a burden. In their view traditional Catholic teaching is an oppressive thing that needs to be struggled against so that a more progressive views of things may prevail. This view, of course, is incorrect. True progress is moving closer to the ideal God sets for us, not moving away. But the modern view of progressive means 'doing what I want to do when I want to do it'. People who have a toddler in the house will recognize this instantly as an infantile understanding, a lack of maturity. The toddler has an excuse, a toddler isn't expected to be a mature adult so allowances have to be made. It's sad and frustrating to see and hear fully grown adults acting like toddlers.

The Pharisees ask Jesus if it is lawful for a husband to divorce his wife. Moses allowed a man to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her, so what do you say to that, Jesus? But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, *God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh.* Therefore what God has joined together,

no human being must separate." This isn't open to interpretation, it is about as unequivocal as it gets. If you wish to follow Jesus, you must acknowledge that marriage is between a man and woman, full stop. It is non-negotiable. That is, if you want to follow Jesus. It is entirely possible to disagree with Jesus on this point, but if you do then you obviously don't believe that Jesus is God. In other words, it is impossible to believe that Jesus is God and in so-called same sex marriage at the same time.

But so many people, perhaps many of us, hear these readings, but do not hear a blessing. Far from it, some only hear a burden. They do not hear grace, something beautiful, a gift from God, but hear something which asks too much from us, something which, at the very least, sounds unreasonable.

No re-marriage after divorce? Really? In this day and age?

Many people—good people—struggle with this. They struggle with the teaching of no marriage after divorce, with the idea of marriage only between a man and a woman, that marriage is not to be contraceptive, but open to children.

A lot of people just say these teachings are too hard—coming from another time— it is not suitable; it is not realistic for the modern world.

And some people even leave the Church completely over this issue.

But I don't know why we should be surprised, Jesus told us that's what would happen. We should be saddened, but not surprised.

We must hold on to the ideal of what God wants for us. The Church cannot and will not back down on the definition of marriage. Pope Francis, on the one hand, has called upon the Church to hold firm to the ideal. He said that this synod invites people “to proclaim the Gospel of marriage and of the family.” The teachings are a Gospel—good news—because marriage demonstrates how God loves us unconditionally, indissolubly, and forever. The Church resists redefining marriage as anything else than what God does for us, saying that marriage is not just another disposable commodity in a disposable culture.

What the Church says is normative isn't going to always be popular. Indeed, if it were popular that would be a sign that it isn't normative. The world is always going to be against the Church. Why? Because the world is fallen and needs a Redeemer. But it is naive to expect the world to welcome the Redeemer.