



“Pope-saints/Marriage”

In the Gospel of Divine Mercy Sunday the Risen Jesus appears to his fear-filled Apostles and shows them the open wounds of his Passion. To their astonishment, the body of the Living One bears the marks of his dying. These signs of his defeat “remain” at the heart of the Easter Mystery, Pope Francis remarked in his homily—scandal and stumbling block and test of faith—“for those wounds are *essential for believing . . . that God is love, mercy, and faithfulness.*”

Pope Francis chose Divine Mercy Sunday to proclaim Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II saints of the Church. These men, the Holy Father said, “were not ashamed of the flesh of Christ; . . . and they bore witness before the Church and the world to God’s goodness and mercy.” Both men “lived through the tragic events of [the 20th] century, but they were not overwhelmed by them.” For both of these saints, “God was more powerful; . . . the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful.”

For his courage in convening the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis thinks of St. John XXIII as *“the pope of openness to the Holy Spirit.”* St. John Paul II Pope Francis considers *“the pope of the family”* because he so richly illuminated God’s original design for marriage as the one-flesh union of a man and a woman.

As the 21st century unfolds, we stand in great need of openness to the

Holy Spirit to defend the family from redefinition and disintegration. As the Oregon Catholic Conference recently noted, our state’s “constitutional marriage amendment was carefully considered and thoroughly debated prior to its overwhelming passage in 2004. It represents the express will of the people” of Oregon and, until overturned by a single Federal judge, was duly enacted state law, which the Attorney General was sworn to uphold. Refusing to defend it, she retroactively disenfranchised the majority who voted to preserve marriage as it has always been recognized.

In the wake of another judge’s invalidating decision in their state, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference protested that his “redefinition of marriage enshrines in law a denial of the rights of children to a mother and a father united in marriage”; for experience shows that “children thrive best in a stable family grounded on the marital union of one man and one woman.”

Since the Supreme Court decision last year, common-sense observations like these have rapidly become signs of intolerable bigotry. To mouth them publicly is to risk furious social-media vituperation and economic retaliation.

In the face of this increasingly antagonistic environment we need St. John XXIII’s openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and St. John Paul II’s unflinching courage in defending the truth of marriage. May their intercession gain us the strength to live through the foundation-shaking events of our young century and not be overwhelmed by them.