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## Pope recognizes church swims against current

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS) — The Catholic Church recognizes it is "going against the current" when it insists on the permanence of marriage, Pope John Paul II said.

But its teaching is based on the nature of true love, the good of couples and their children as well as on the teachings of Jesus, the pope said recently during a midday prayer.

With hundreds of visitors gathered in the courtyard of the villa at Castel Gandolfo, Pope John Paul offered special prayers for "couples in crisis," so they would "find again the freshness of their early love."

The pope called divorce a plague, which although legal in most countries, "represents one of the greatest defeats of human civilization."

"I know well that this aspect of the ethics of matrimony is one of the most demanding, and that sometimes one sees marriage situations that are truly difficult or even dramatic," he said.

The reality of difficult marriages is nothing new, the pope said, which is why divorce was "tolerated" in the Old Testament.

"Jesus explained the concession of Mosaic law because of 'the hardness of the human heart,' and did not hesitate to re-propose, in all its vigor, the original design of God" that a man and woman united in marriage would become one flesh.

And Jesus added, "they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let no one separate," the pope said.



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