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Vatican seeks couples to canonize for living marriage commitment

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — A Vatican official said the time is right for declaring more married couples as saints, especially given the "heroic" virtues needed to keep modern marriages together.

Monsignor Helmut Moll, writing in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* in August, said Vatican officials are sure such couples exist — but it is up to local churches to promote their sainthood causes.

"In this period when marriage and the family are being crushed under the strain of heavy burdens, there is a need for convincing examples," he wrote.

"Staying together in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, shows a heroic degree of virtue," he said.

Monsignor Moll, an official of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation and a consultant to the Congregation for



Sainthood Causes, said the Vatican is looking for couples who lived their marriage commitment fully.

"We mean two people whose love never faded, whose promise of mutual fidelity was never broken and who unmasked such false solutions as 'trial marriage' or 'limited marriage,'" he said.

"Yes, such couples exist! The majority live hidden lives. Most of them avoid the glare of public opinion," he said. For that reason, the congregation relies on local churches to start the ball rolling on sainthood causes.

For its part, he said, the Vatican has promoted procedures for canonization of married couples, and Pope John Paul II has said publicly he hopes to canonize a married couple. He said causes of couples have already been initiated in Switzerland, Austria and France.

He noted that some married couples already figure in the church's long list of saints, usually as martyrs. They include several persecuted couples who died for their faith in Roman times, pious couples who were also state authorities in medieval times and couples who were martyred during later evangelization campaigns in Japan and Korea.

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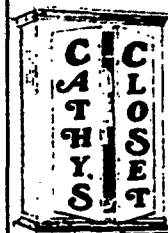
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