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Pope urges sympathy, outreach to couples whose marriages fail

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Those who recognize marriage as a sacrament, a divine blessing and a reflection of God's love for humanity should have even greater sympathy for husbands and wives whose relationships have failed, Pope Francis said.

"See how beautiful this love is, how beautiful marriage is, how beautiful the family is and how much love and closeness we must have for our brothers and sisters who have experienced the calamity of a failure in love," the pope said Feb. 28 at his morning Mass.

In the day's Gospel reading, Mark 10:1-12, Jesus tells his disciples that "what God has joined together, no human being must separate," and that divorcing a spouse and marrying another is committing adultery.

According to Vatican Radio, Pope Francis' homily focused on marriage as part of God's plan for man and woman and as a reflection of God's faithful love. He repeated the Gospel passage, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

But, the pope said, "when this love fails -- because many times it fails -- we must feel the pain of the failure and accompany those who have failed in their love. Not condemn them! Walk alongside them."

In the excerpts broadcast by Vatican Radio, Pope Francis did not mention the discussion about the family and the pastoral care of divorced Catholics that he had Feb. 20-21 with members of the College of Cardinals.

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