**A DIVORCE-FREE CITY**

By [Plinio Maria Solimeo](http://www.returntoorder.org/author/plinio-maria-solimeo/)

The family is one of the institutions most affected by the crisis in our decadent times. Religious and moral sentiments have practically disappeared as if torn to bits. The divorce rate is overwhelming — an estimated 50% of marriages fall apart. Added to this, there are illicit unions, which are common and seemingly without consequences.

That is why it does so much good to hear that despite the malice of the times, there is a city in this world that has not surrendered to universal depravity and in which family bonds are so strong that there is no record of divorce.

This privileged city is Siroki-Brijeg. Located in Bosnia, its approximately 26,000 inhabitants of Croatian origin have always been ready to defend their Catholic faith even in the face of the worst adversities. This is what happened, for example, during the Muslim invasion centuries ago. Then,  the country fell under the boot of atheistic Communism, when the faith was tested in every possible way.

Reports from several trusted Catholic sites say that “Siroki-Brijeg is remarkable … for, in the collective memory of all, there has never been a single divorce among the Croatian Catholics of the city.”[1](http://www.returntoorder.org/2019/03/the-only-divorce-free-city-in-the-world/?PKG=RTOE0643" \l "_ftn1)

What is the explanation for such a remarkable fact?

First, consistent with its profound Croatian tradition, the population of this city is almost 100% Catholic, and they live their faith very seriously. They consider it a point of honour to defend the indissolubility of marriage and the monogamous family formed by the union of a man and a woman – as stated in the country’s Constitution – with the blessings of the Church.

However, what marks this profoundly religious attitude is that they see marriage as a cross indissolubly united to the Cross of Christ. This leads spouses to face their union without romanticism, false expectations, or illusions. Realistically, they know that in this valley of tears everyone has defects. There is no mutual understanding without a mutual exercise of patience.

This Catholic view of marriage is what prevents the incidence of divorce and separations. However, this attitude finds physical expression in a custom. During their married life, the spouses find strength by praying together before the crucifix they held together during the religious wedding ceremony.

In this ceremony, the priest blesses the crucifix presented by the bride and groom. He then places the fiancée’s right hand upon that of the groom and covers them with a stole. The couple then makes their vows with their hands clasping the crucifix. The priest tells them they have found the ideal “partner” with whom they must share their lives with the following words: “You have found your cross! It is a cross that you must love and take with you every day of your lives. Know how to appreciate it.”

After kissing the cross, the spouses enthrone it in a place of honour in their homes, showing their profound belief that a family must be born of the cross.

When trials, misunderstandings, disagreements and difficulties common to all marriages arise, both spouses kneel before the crucifix and with unwavering faith ask for strength to endure them, for Our Lord’s yoke “is easy, and his burden, light.” This attitude is consistent with the belief that the cross will give them strength to overcome daily trials if they ground their marriage on it.

The spouses are keenly aware that if one abandons the other, they will abandon Christ. Experience teaches that the source of perseverance through which they will gain eternal life can only come from the Cross of Christ rather than any external factor.

The children born of these strong unions learn from a tender age to venerate the family crucifix and to direct their early prayers to the cross.

Children thus acquire a consistent formation to face the vicissitudes of life with a supernatural spirit.