

Marriage Matters:

Marriage from a Catholic Perspective

“Catechesis to promote and protect marriage is greatly needed and is a significant responsibility. At the same time, let us be convinced that such catechesis is a great joy, for it is a great yes to the beauty and truth of marriage and the family as well as to the intrinsic dignity of all human persons. Our catechesis must open the door to this beauty.”

Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville for Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010.

The following is a sample outline .

- Please adapt to your program methodology (family catechesis, small groups, panel discussion, etc.)
- It is intended for grade levels 7 through confirmation to help students understand the beauty of the Catholic Church’s teachings on marriage. This can be done for individual age levels or collectively, depending on the structure and resources of your program.
- It is designed as a one hour lesson. Options are noted to accommodate your schedule.
- This is sample to assist you. If you have found other resources, please advise us so we can share them with other parish programs.
- The goal for this lesson is not to conduct a debate on same-sex marriage, but to provide a catechetical foundation on the positive vision of the Church’s teachings on marriage and family. Please see Archbishop Kurtz’s statement below.

It would be helpful to read the *Made for Life Resource Booklet* and *Viewer’s Guide* to get the full understanding of the issues involved. Quotes from these and other documents were used in preparing this material which

are included. You will find these in shaded boxes. The full text from these sources can be found at:

- Made for Life Resource Booklet: <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/children-resource-booklet/>
- Made for Life Viewer’s Guide: <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/children-viewers-guide/>
- Made for Each Other Resource Booklet: <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/sexual-difference-resource-booklet/>
- Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan (USCCB) <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/love-and-life/upload/pastoral-letter-marriage-love-and-life-in-the-divine-plan.pdf>

The DVD used in this curriculum: Made for Life from the USCCB. A copy was distributed to each parish at the Diocesan Leadership Day in February 2012. It may also be downloaded at: <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/children-video/>

Promoting the Dignity of Every Person

“An immediate challenge of our day, which questions the very core of marriage (and, hence, the family), is the proposal that persons of the same sex can legitimately marry. This issue brings with it much emotion and much confusion, even among Catholics. The Church is very clear about the intrinsic dignity of all people, including persons who experience same-sex attraction, and she continues to decry all forms of unjust discrimination. Still, some mistakenly see the Church’s protection of the true nature of marriage as discriminatory or unjust. This makes catechesis all the more important. When the nature of marriage is understood and the unique place of marriage and the family within society is grasped, then it becomes all the more clear how preserving marriage between one man and one woman is not a denial of rights, equality, or fairness to some, or a matter of discrimination. The path of chaste living and deep friendship ought to be in every person’s life. The Church decries all forms of unjust discrimination against persons with homosexual attraction. However, standing

for marriage between one man and one woman is a matter of justice, which is to be measured by truth and not by whim. Marriage is by its nature the permanent and exclusive union of one man and one woman, ordered toward specific goods essential for society and for the true development of the human person (see *Caritas in Veritate*, nos. 44 and 51). To treat different things differently is not unjust discrimination; it is a matter of justice. The law has a responsibility to uphold justice. For the state to arbitrarily redefine the unchangeable meaning of marriage would actually deny the rights of children and unfairly ignore the irreplaceable and vital roles and responsibilities of spouses and mothers and fathers. There are many ways to ensure the basic rights that flow from the intrinsic dignity of the human person; however, sacrificing the unique nature of marriage and the family should not be among them.”
Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville for Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010.

Materials Needed:

Available from the Office of Marriage & Family
omf@gw.stcdio.org or call (320) 252-4721

- “Prayer for Marriage” prayer card
- DVD “Made for Life”
- PowerPoint slides
- Note paper and pencil/pen for final activity

MARRIAGE MATTERS



Marriage Matters

Overview: In today’s society, marriage has been under attack. Yet, marriage is the oldest institution in the world and is the backbone of civilization.

Introduction: What we will do in this class is to offer you the wisdom and insights from a Catholic perspective, from data and lived experience.

- Open with Prayer. Prayer cards with the “Prayer for Marriage” from the diocese are available from the Office of Marriage & Family.

“The truth of the family, founded on marriage as the union of one man and one woman, is a truth accessible to reason. We “read” this truth in the language of the body and in the fundamental nature of the human person, created as male and female. History and societies testify to the irreplaceable role of marriage and the family as the key unit to any society and as the school of love and communion with others. The social sciences and all science and human investigation, as long as they are carried out at the service of truth, bear witness to the beauty of marriage and of spousal and familial love of a mother and a father.

The unique nature of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is a received truth. It is not arbitrary or made up. Neither is it old-fashioned, out of touch, or extrinsic to our identity and deepest concerns. Marriage is pre-political and even prereligious, received from the very hand of our Creator. As we know, truth is meant to be discovered and respected; only when this is the case are we truly free. Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “Truth, and the love which it reveals, cannot be produced: they can only be received as a gift.” Let us ponder some of the essential and unchangeable truths of marriage that should inform our catechesis today. “ Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the promotion and Protection of Marriage by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville for Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010.

History

- As old as records – through all societies – marriage was backbone of a secure environment
- Purpose of Marriage
 - Stability of society
 - Children’s protection
 - Passing down inheritance
 - Common Good



History of Marriage

Overview: Throughout the history of civilization, most societies needed a secure environment for the continuation of the species, a system of rules to handle the granting of property rights, and the protection of bloodlines. The institution of marriage handled these needs.

- Ask the students what they have seen from movies of through history, what they think the purpose of marriage was. This could include:
 - Economic reasons
 - Heredity—passing along wealth
 - More hands to work the family business, whether farming, or other.
- Marriage is for the common good, marriage was to ensure children were cared for and acted as a way to keep order in the community.

Purpose of Marriage

Overview: Through much of history, the relationship or being in love was not a prerequisite for marriage, although commitment to the institution was an expectation of society. Marriage was expected to last until death.

- Couples worked together in the family business which required laborers. Laborers were the wife, children, and extended family.
- Children were vital to the life and well-being of the family and to ensure their heritage was passed down. And, a large family was not only desired, but necessary to achieve this purpose.
 - During the Civil war, a couple needed to give birth to 7 children to have 2 children live to adulthood.
 - As the infant mortality ratio decreased, so did the need for large numbers of children.
 - In the twentieth century, the infant mortality rate dropped. In 1960, the statistics were 26 babies died to every 1,000 babies born. Now it is 6.9 babies die for every 1,000 born.

“...Blessed John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* that the future of the Church and of society depends on the family, which in turn depends on the good of marriage... While as Catholics we understand that the selfless love of man and wife that is open to children is both a sacrament and the center of the domestic church, non-Catholics can at least appreciate the fact that the marriage of one man and one woman is the best context for children to both come into the world and be brought up.” An interview with Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville in *The Catholic Servant*, June, 2012.

Weddings Today

Overview: Today, most Americans marry for love and not as much for economic reasons or sustaining the family business. We also choose who we marry. Culturally, the purpose of marriage has changed basically for the couple's happiness.

- Ask students, if they have attended a wedding. What do they remember happened at the wedding? (Kiss, said vows, lit candles, etc.)
- Explain that couple's today plan more elaborate weddings than previously, focusing on the their wishes for a nice day versus the celebration of the marriage for a lifetime. For example:
 - Average cost of a wedding in 2011 was \$29,000 (includes ring, dress, reception and honeymoon.) This is more than the down payment on a house.
 - The majority of the expenses are for expendable items, the reception, food, decorations, music and liquor.
 - Little money is allocated for preparation or learning skills to sustain marriage for a lifetime.
- While this is the popular view of marriage in our society today, God's plan is not about the party and the frills, but the marriage, as a permanent, life-long, commitment of one man and one woman in Christ.

Foundation for a Good Marriage

Overview: To understand marriage, we need to understand the need for a strong foundation. When the foundation for a building is solid and strong, the structure is sound and strong. Marriage is no different. Our foundation is Christ and His Church. To understand what Christ is asking of us in marriage, we need to look at Scripture.

Purpose: Relationship was not key

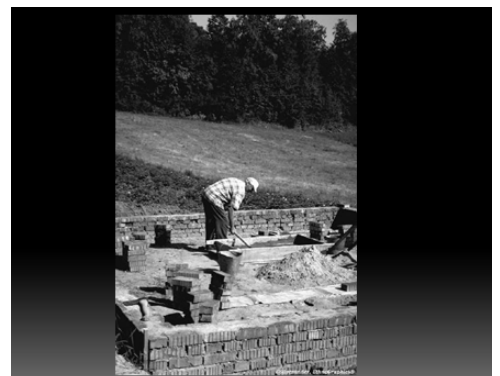


- Assumed marriage was until death
- Couple would work together – especially in an agrarian society
- Having children was vital
- Extended family were an integral part of the marriage
- Roles of the husband and wife were defined

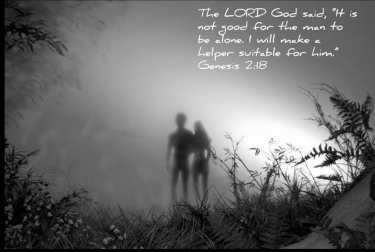
Weddings today



- Marry for love
- Celebration costs on average \$29,000
- Engagement period one year or longer
- Purpose: Happiness



What God started



What God Started

Overview: Men and women are created in the image of God (see Gen 1:27). This means that they have great dignity and worth. Since "God is love," (1 Jn 4:8) each person – created in God's image – finds his or her fulfillment by loving others. And, men and women are body-persons. The body – male or female – is an essential part of being human. Gender is not an afterthought or a mere social construct. The body shapes what it means to love as a human person.

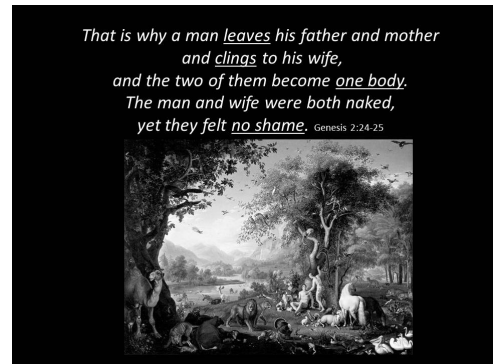
- Ask students what they remember about the Story of Creation or the Adam & Eve story.
 - The significance that we are made in His image and likeness.
 - That God said it was not good for man to be alone.
- Explain that God had a specific plan for us, for our happiness and care, and for making sure we continue to the next generations.
- That he brought the animals to the name to name them, but none were "suitable" for him
- That he made woman from the rib of the man, to be:
 - By him, but not identical
 - Yet equal in personhood, in dignity and respect
- He made us to fit together, not just intellect, but our bodies and personhood.

"Marriage is created at the same moment, and in the very same breath, as the creation of man and woman (see Mt 19:4-6; Gn 2:23-24). Marriage and human life go together. Marriage is a truth foundational to the very meaning of human life and is meant to be held sacred. It is a truth grounded in nature—not "nature" in the simple terms of trees and butterflies, but the nature of the human person, the nature of man and woman, which encompasses the whole person, body and soul." Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville for Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010.

- *God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female - he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.* Genesis 1: 27-28
- *...then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.* Genesis 2: 7
- *...The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him.* Genesis 2: 18
- *So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The LORD God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called 'woman,' for out of man this one has been taken." Genesis 2: 21-23*

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. The man and wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.
Genesis 2:24-25

- Explain how this Scripture illustrates a beautiful progression:
 - First the man leaves (making a commitment to abandon his other life),
 - Then he clings (cleaves, bonds or embraces)
 - Only then do they become one body (sexually, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually).
 - It was in following that progression that they felt no shame.



“God himself is the author of marriage” (GS, no. 48). When God created human persons in his own image, as male and female, he placed in their hearts the desire, and the task, to love – to give themselves totally to another person. Marriage is one of two ways someone can make a total self-gift (the other is virginity, devoting oneself entirely to God) (see FC, no. 11). Marriage is not something thought up by human society or by any religion – rather, it springs from who the human person is, as male and female, and society and religion affirm and reinforce it. The truth of marriage is therefore accessible to everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof. Both faith and reason speak to the true meaning of marriage.” (From the USCCB’s Defense of Marriage Frequently asked questions.)

What is marriage?

- Explain that we believe that marriage is :
 - Between one man and one woman
 - Forever—a commitment
 - Faithful—will only be with that person
 - A Covenant—an unbreakable bond with your spouse AND with God
 - Unselfish—a mentality that seeks to bring happiness to others, our spouse and our children
- Ask students why these elements are needed for a marriage to last?

“Marriage is the lifelong partnership of mutual and exclusive fidelity between a man and a woman ordered by its very nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (see CCC, no. 1601; CIC, can. 1055.1; GS, no. 48). The bond of marriage is indissoluble – that is, it lasts “until death do us part.” At the heart of married love is the total gift of self that husband and wife freely offer to each other. Because of their sexual difference, husband and wife can truly become “one flesh” and can give to each other “the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love” (FC, no. 14).

“As Catholic, we learn from Revelation, especially in the Tradition of the Church, about the sacrificial and selfless love of a man and a woman committed to each other in a way that is open to life....Because marriage relates to the welfare of children, the good of marriage is a public good; it relates to the welfare of society as a whole. Therefore, though marriage is deeply personal, it is also a public affair—my gosh, you need to get a license to be married! Once we appreciate that, it is not surprising that both the Church and the state regulated marriage; it’s so intrinsically important to the well-being of both.” (An interview with Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville in *The Catholic Servant*, June, 2012.)

“Marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman is a sacrament. This means that the bond between husband and wife is a visible sign of the sacrificial love of Christ for his Church. As a sacrament, marriage gives spouses the grace they need to love each other generously, in imitation of Christ.” (Made for Each Other Resource Guide)

So What is Marriage?

- Life-long partnership
- Exclusive
- Indissoluble
- For good of spouses and children





Marriage is Made for Life

Marriage is Made for Life

- Explain that because God made us in such a way that when a man and woman come together in sexual intercourse, that there is a possibility that a new life will be created, marriage gives children the best environment to grow and learn to love and live.

“(See Gn 1:27-28) It is made to be open to the gift of the child and to serve life in manifold ways. No other human institution on the face of the planet has been naturally made to serve the purposes for which marriage has been designed— the union of a man and a woman as the basis of the family, a union ordered to the spouses’ good and to the procreation and education of children.

“Love and life are built into the very essence of marriage. In fact, love and life are inseparable. Authentic spousal love is always open to the gift of the other and the gift of life, and openness to life manifests true spousal love. Being open to receiving the gift of a child is not arbitrary or extrinsic to marriage. It’s not an extra. It’s what marriage is. It is part and parcel of what marriage is about, as the total gift of self between husband and wife. “A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment.” (Made for Life Resource Guide, USCCB)

“Children are a gift and a blessing.”

“Children are a gift and a blessing.”

- Show the first segment of the DVD “Made for Life” from the beginning to 2:33. (The title *Fathers and Mothers Matters* will appear where you should stop the DVD.)

“The couples in *Made for Life* all bear witness to the fact that the gift of self in marriage, which begins with the spouses, does not end with them. As Pope Paul VI taught, married love is *fruitful* because “it is not confined wholly to the communion of husband and wife; it also aims to go beyond this to bring new life into being.” Precisely because husband and wife are “made for each other,” their bond is “made for life,” made for fruitful love and for the adventure of fatherhood and motherhood by being open to the gift of a child.” (Made for Life Viewer’s Guide, page 4.)

Marriage Matters

so much, that God began all of creation around marriage and children

Marriage Matters

Marriage Matters so much, that God began all of creation around marriage and children and created a structure to nurture and sustain them in a healthy environment.

So, what about divorce?

Pharisees asked “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”



Overview: Be very sensitive as you approach this topic. For more information on divorce and single parenting refer to the *Made for Life Resource Booklet* pages 13-24.

- Explain that this was a very tricky question even in Jesus’ day, so much so that the Pharisees asked this question of Jesus. (Matthew 19:3)
 - The law of the Old Testament (the law of Moses) allowed a man to divorce his wife if a woman committed adultery.
 - In fact, if a woman was caught in adultery, she was to be stoned to death. (John 8: 3-5)
 - Being faithful in marriage is a big deal.

- Explain that this is a difficult question for us today.
 - When a couple prepares to get married , they are asked all kinds of questions and one is: “I could not remain married to my future spouse if he or she was every unfaithful to me.”
 - This is a very difficult question for most couples to answer.
 - Every couple entering marriage expects their marriage to last forever.
 - In the Rite of Marriage, we put a ring on each other’s finger and say the words, “take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The ring is a visible sign of the commitment they make and a sign to the world of their promise of their love.

How did Jesus reply?

- Explain that Jesus responded, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6)
- Talk about what Jesus is saying is that we didn’t understand how beautiful marriage is. When the Pharisees asked him, “Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?” He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Matthew 19: 7-8)
- Today, we still have a hard time understanding marriage and why a couple so in love on their wedding day, can separate years later. We have to rely on Jesus and His grace to help us.

Marriage Matters: enough that Jesus elevated it to a sacrament


- Remind the students that of the seven sacraments Marriage is unique because the husband and wife confer the sacrament on each other, and the priest acts as the witness.
- How do the students see married couples serving one another?
- How do the students see marriage contributing to the larger community,

“The Sacrament of Matrimony renews the natural institution of marriage and elevates it so that it shares in a love larger than itself. Marriage, then, is nothing less than a participation in the covenant between Christ and the Church. In the words of the Second Vatican Council,

“Spouses, therefore, are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by [this] special sacrament; fulfilling their conjugal and family role by virtue of this sacrament, spouses are penetrated with the spirit of Christ and their whole life is suffused by faith, hope and charity; thus they increasingly further their own perfection and their mutual sanctification, and together they render glory to God.” (Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, Page 31, USCCB)

including the church?

Jesus Replies



“Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”
Matthew 19:4-6

Marriage Matters

enough that Jesus elevated it to a sacrament

Male-Female Complementarity

Marriage does not exist merely for the reproduction of another member of the species, but for the creation of a communion of persons.



Male & Female Complimentarity

- Ask the students in what ways do they notice that men and women think react or do things differently. They could include:
 - Men are more factual, women more relational
 - Women talk more than men - Did you know: "A woman uses about 20,000 words per day while a man uses about 7,000."
 - Women prefer more visual and physical contact for conversation than men.

Show the DVD "Made for Life" from 6:00 minutes to end.

"Marriage does not exist merely for the reproduction of another member of the species, but for the creation of a communion of persons." (Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, USCCB)

"The bond of marriage involves one man and one woman who give themselves to each other in a permanent and exclusive way. The "connection," or communion, of husband and wife — a communion that arises from their promises of fidelity, indissolubility, and openness to life "in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health" — necessarily calls forth the gift of one whole person to the other. The vows speak this wholeness.

"Marriage depends upon sexual difference. In other words, the union and communion that marriage calls for, which is spoken in the vows, necessarily depends on the union of one man and one woman. True, people can unite with others in many ways. We speak of hearts joining through affection and friendship. Human beings join with others in enterprises great and small — as comrades, fellow citizens, neighbors, or colleagues. Every human heart longs for communion. But the heart of marriage is this mystery of communion in a very specific sense: A man and a woman really become one flesh. In the exclusive and permanent promise of husband and wife, they share a life together which is totally unique.

"Thus, marriage is the radical vow to love one other human being the way that God loves every human being: permanently, faithfully, and fully, with life-giving love. Marriage is a total gift of the self, not a partial or provisional loan. It is a union not only of hearts and minds, but of bodies and souls." (Made for Each Other Resource Guide, page 7)

Two Ends of Marriage

- Unitive (228)
- Procreative & Educative
 - *Married love itself is ordered to the procreation and education of children, for, after all, the first command given Adam and Eve is "be fertile and multiply" Gn1:28*



The Two Ends of Marriage

The meaning of sex in marriage:

- Unitive: Sex expresses and builds up unity (love, holiness of marriage, total sharing in marriage - not just bodies, meaning of "consummated")
- Procreative: Sex is life-giving—Sexual intercourse contains the potential to create children
 - Because bringing forth new life is seen as one of the most basic purposes of sexual intercourse, the Church teaches that every act of sexual intercourse should be open to life
 - Catholics value children
 - Discuss artificial contraception and why the church opposes it. (Contraception means "against conceiving.") Why does contraception contradict the church's teaching about sex as an expression of unity and openness to new life?
 - Natural Family Planning is in accordance with the Church, because it uses the natural biological signs in order to determine fertility.

“Married love itself is ordered to the procreation and education of children, for, after all, the first command given Adam and Eve is “be fertile and multiply” (Gn1:28)

“Men and women are made for each other, to reveal in the gift of the self to the opposite sex what it means to be not only human, but fully man and fully woman. “Husband” is a word that points to wife, as “mother” is a word that points to father — and each declares that our sexual passions are not mere appetites or playthings that point to pleasure — they call us forth on a great mission to give ourselves to each other and to the possibility of new life.

“The Church has always taught that it is wrong to separate the unitive and procreative meanings of marriage — “the two become one flesh.” This is because the unitive and procreative meanings of marriage cannot be separated. Sex speaks a language that only makes sense in marriage. Marriage is the context for sexual union, in which by a voluntary act of the will a man and woman consecrate their bodies and their whole lives simultaneously to each other and to the children who may arise from their sexual union. Marriage is indeed the giving of the whole person to the other, husband to wife and wife to husband, including one’s reproductive capacity. This unique gift of self makes marriage a good in itself.” (Made for Each Other Resource Guide, page 20)

Note: The next three slides are optional. While they do show the statistical outcome of the benefits of marriage, you may not want to use them for the younger grade levels (particularly the third slide of this set) or if time is an element.

Majority of Americans Marry

From 2010 U.S. Census. Since most of us marry, we need to understand the beauty of marriage and learn how to make marriage a life-long, faith-filled commitment.

Married People are Healthier and Happier

- Single men have mortality rates 250% higher than married men.
- Single women have mortality rates 50% higher than married women
- Having a spouse can decrease your risk for dying from cancer.
- Single people spend longer in the hospital, and have a greater risk of dying after surgery
- Single men drink twice as much as married men, and one out of four say their drinking causes problems.
- Staying single can equate to knocking ten years off your life.

(The Case for Marriage Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher)

Married People are Healthier and Happier

- 40% of married people have sex twice a week, compared to 20-25% of single and cohabitating men and women.
- Over 40% of married women said their sex life was emotionally and physically satisfying, compared to about 30% of single women.
- For men, 50% of married men are physically and emotionally content versus 38% of cohabitating men
- 86% of the married people who rated their marriages as unhappy who stayed together rated the marriage as having improved five years later.

(The Case for Marriage Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher)

**Majority of Americans
(89%)
are married
by age of 30**

**Married People
are Healthier & Happier**

- Married men earn 10% - 40% more money
- Married people live longer as well and spend less time in hospital.
- Single men 2 x’s more, and 25 % say their drinking causes problems.

**Married People
are Healthier & Happier**

- Have sex Twice a week
 - Married People (40%)
 - Single and cohabitating (20-25%)
- More Emotional & Physically Sexually Satisfied
 - Married Women (Over 40%)
 - Single women (30%)
 - Married Men (50%)
 - Cohabitating men (38%)
- 86% of the married people who rated their marriages as unhappy who stayed together rated the marriage as having improved 5 years later.

Marriage Matters

to our society as a whole

Marriage Matters to Our Society as a Whole

People are healthier, more emotionally stable, drink less, and are happier. They make more money, in essence contributing to society at a higher rate.

“...protecting the true nature of marriage enhances, rather than diminishes, the intrinsic dignity of every human person. The spousal communion of one man and one woman serves the good of all people. Moreover, it is essential for the common good, the sum total of conditions that allow society to flourish while respecting the dignity of the person. The state is called to be at the service of marriage and the family, and it has a responsibility to respect the fundamental institution of marriage and its unique responsibilities for the life and good of society.” Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville for Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010.

“I think there are two major factors contributing to [the marriage] crisis. First, there has been a separation of love and life. By that I mean the bearing of children and the faithful love of husband and wife for each other has become separated in people’s minds. The second thing is a shift in the focus of marriage to what I’ll call mutual satisfaction. When satisfaction is no longer present, the marriage ends.” (An interview with Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville in The Catholic Servant, June, 2012.)

Children

- *“By its very nature ...marriage ... is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring*
- *Its crowning glory*
- *Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves. CCC 1652*

Children

- When reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it is easy to see how important children are to their families and in the life of the Church.
- Ask students about how they see children as “supreme gifts.” What do they see that illustrates this in their life?

“By its very nature ...marriage ... is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds Its crowning glory.

“Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1652)

“Because every child is an unrepeatable gift, no one can claim a “right” to have a child. “A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The ‘supreme gift of marriage’ is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged ‘right to a child’ may lead.” The proper attitude of parents toward a child is joyful receptivity and awe that the Creator would entrust this new life to a mother and father.

“Because the child is always a gift, it would make sense that any consideration of marriage’s meaning would take children seriously into account. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Children today are often seen as a “product” to be manufactured or obtained at whatever cost, or discarded at will. Pop culture icons show off their children as if they were “trophies.” In all of these instances, the child is used as an object, not respected as a gift. The proposal to redefine marriage to include two

persons of the same sex is a radical instance of “forgetting” the gift of the child. This proposal in effect subverts the most fundamental pro-child institution into a self-serving relationship defined in reference to the whims and desires of adults, not the needs of a child, the most vulnerable among us.

“Marriage protects the gift that every child is. As the union of husband and wife, marriage is the natural and proper context wherein every child ought to be welcomed as a gift. Children deserve to be conceived in love and received into an environment grounded in the unity between a mother and a father. In this way, marriage is uniquely made for stewardship over life, stewardship of the gift of children. Human experience across every human society attests to the singular role of marriage in keeping together a mother and a father in their shared task of parenting, of being stewards of the gift of new life.” (Made For Life Viewer’s Guide, page 6-7)

Marriage Matters to Children

- Explain that God’s plan relies on parents to nurture their children to become healthy and happy adults, by sharing and handing-on their faith with them.

“We need to rediscover the great gift of marriage’s openness to the child and all that such openness embraces. To welcome a child is to welcome hope. True conjugal love is always open to life (even for infertile or unintentionally sterile couples, as noted above); it does not intentionally withhold one’s fertility from the other. And it is only in the marriage between one man and one woman that openness to the gift of the child is interwoven into the very fabric of the relationship. Marriage is never a matter of only two consenting adults; rather, it has an intrinsic, fundamental structure for life-giving love, which is only possible in the spousal love of man to woman and woman to man. Marriage protects the fact that the child is always a great gift, meant to be the fruit of the loving union of husband and wife. A child is meant to have a mother and a father. Although we must continue to support the many heroic single parents who sacrifice so much for their children, we cannot lose sight of the rights of the child and the unique role of a mother and a father. Only a man can be father; only a woman can be a mother. Children depend on marriage.” Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville for Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010.

You may wish to add information from the latest studies on different family structures and their effects on children. They may be found at:
www.familystructurestudies.com

Why would one couple’s marriage matter to anyone else?

- Ask the students to think back in their own families.
 - Do they know or remember their grandparents, maybe even your great-grandparents? Think forward.
 - Have them think of their own brothers and sisters?
 - Do you ever hear your parents tell stories of when they were a kid?
 - Do you ever hear your grandparents share stories of when they grew up and talk about people that you never knew?
 - What we do, how we live our lives affects not only us, but the generations before and after us.

In 1999, the Diocese of Saint Cloud’s Office of Marriage & Family hosted a Mother-Daughter Breakfast with a style show of wedding dresses that were 50 years or older. Of the 19 dresses dating from 1909 to 1947, that were part of this style show, there were already 842 descendants from the brides who wore them.

Marriage Matters

to Children

Why would one couple’s marriage matter to anyone else?



Research has shown that we affect at least five generations



Marriage Matters

to our own families

Marriage is Fulfilled in the Kingdom of God



- [Marriage] is a sign of the Kingdom because the love of Christ moves the married couple to ever greater heights of love. (1097)
- Christian married love is a preparation for eternal-life. (1099)

Marriage Matters to Our Own Families

That is how much just a few marriages affected central Minnesota!

Marriage is Fulfilled in the Kingdom of God

- Explain how marriage helps us to be better people and to love and serve one another in our families, in our Church and in our society.
- Marriage helps us prepare for heaven.

“[Marriage] is a sign of the Kingdom because the love of Christ moves the married couple to ever greater heights of love.

“Christian married love is a preparation for eternal-life.” (Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, USCCB)

“Marriage is made for life, for communion, for mission. It is a mission for transmission—the transmission of life and love through the faithful, exclusive, permanent, and fruitful bond made by one man and one woman. Marriage is a great adventure, calling for heroic sacrifice through the gift of one’s self to another. Marriage is a sign of hope for the world, for it is the essential institution made to welcome and foster new human life as the gift that it is. In marriage, the family is built on the rock of spousal love, and mothers and fathers are united in their common and indispensable task in service of life. Through marriage, husband and wife are bound not only to each other, but also to the children given them by God, together in the great promise of fruitful love. No other institution serves such purposes or meets such needs. Marriage is unique for a reason.” (Made for Life Resource Booklet, page 27)

Marriage Matters

- *So much, that God began all of creation around marriage and children*
- *Enough that Jesus elevated it to a sacrament*
- *To our society as a whole*
- *To Children*
- *And to our own families*

Marriage Matters:

- So much, that God began all of creation around marriage and children
- Enough that Jesus elevated it to a sacrament
- To our society as a whole
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Marriage Matters!

Activity: Ask students to write a letter to their future spouse about what marriage means to them.

“Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the very welfare of society hinges on the health of the family, which depends on the strength of the institution of marriage as a place for children to be raised by a mother and a father. We should not shy away from defending something so integral to the common good.” (An interview with Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville in *The Catholic Servant*, June, 2012.)