



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents
with young adults.



Marriage is a lifelong partnership of the whole of life, of mutual and exclusive fidelity, established by mutual consent between a man and a woman, and ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation of offspring.

~Catechism of the Catholic Church 1601

Do you remember the song “Love and Marriage” that Frank Sinatra sang in the play **Our Town**? Here are lyrics from this popular 1956 hit.

Love and marriage, love and marriage, Go together like a horse and carriage. This I tell ya, brother, you can't have one without the other.

Love and marriage, love and marriage. It's an institute you can't disparage. Ask the local gentry and they will say it's elementary.

Try, try, try to separate them, it's an illusion. Try, try, try and you only come to this conclusion:

Love and marriage, love and marriage, Go together like a horse and carriage. Dad was told by mother you can't have one You can't have none. You can't have one without the other.

It is hard to imagine that these lyrics might be acceptable in today's culture. For one, the lyrics imply that when you fall in love, you marry instead of live together. They suggest that marriage should be a union between a man and woman rather than between any two persons. And, they infer that separating love from marriage is deceptive and false rather than something real and wonderful. A lot has changed in our society's understanding of marriage since the 1950s.

Consider this. The number of people married today is at the lowest levels ever recorded. In the 1950s, two out of every three adults were married. Today, two out of every three adults will never marry. In the 1950s, divorce was nearly unheard of. Today, nearly 50% of those that choose to marry separate and/or divorce. And, in the 1950s, marriage was honored for its specific ability to create

children, promote family and foster healthy socialization. Today, marriage is honored for something else; private affection between loving persons.

Despite the decline in marriage and the current push to recreate marriage, recent studies continue to show that traditional marriage (between one man and one woman, established for a lifetime that is open to children) is more beneficial to spouses and to society than any other form of civil union. These benefits include an increased likelihood that moms and dads will have good relationships with their children, improved economic status and accumulated wealth, better physical health, a decrease in negative risk taking by the children raised within marriage, and longevity and well-being for the spouses. These benefits translate into increased school performance at all levels, a decrease in welfare dependency and healthcare costs, and increase in civil obedience and contribution.

There has to be some reason why traditional marriage retains its enduring goodness despite all the societal attempts to dishonor it or change its integrity. Why does it continue to bring joy to the spouses, security to children and stability to society, despite all the attacks it must defend? Perhaps, marriage endures because it is not a human institution but rather something created by God. Perhaps understanding marriage involves something other than human invention and logic. Could it be that a complete and honest understanding about marriage is to be found in the teachings of the Catholic Church?

In this day and age of endless debate and discussion about love and its relationship to marriage, it is necessary to take a close look at what the Catholic Church has to say about marriage. Church documents offer a fascinating history about marriage as both a vocation and a sacrament. They reveal the origins of and the qualities of marriage. The study and reflection of what God intends for marriage provides a proper understanding of this great institution and reveals its beauty and uniqueness.

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

Social science research shows that a _____ marriage is the best for children.

Children raised by parents who are married are more _____, _____ and _____ adjusted.

Children raised in a traditional marriage have greater _____ and lower _____.

The stability of a traditional marriage increases a child's _____.

Children raised in a traditional marriage have _____ family ties.

A traditional marriage provides children with _____ economic status.

Teach your youth about traditional marriage by:

- Sharing the benefits that come from the union of _____ man to _____ woman
- Loving and _____ your spouse
- _____ the sacrament of marriage
- _____ your youth to reserve sexual activity for marriage
- _____ for those who are married, engaged or called to marry.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. How has society's definition of marriage changed since the 1950s? Give examples.
2. If you asked your children to define marriage, what would they say? Would their definition be more like society's definition than that of the Catholic Church?
3. Current social research confirms the Catholic Church's teachings about marriage and child well-being. In your opinion, why do children fare better when they are raised in a home by their married parents?
4. What does it mean to be marriage-minded?
5. Why does an expectation of sexual abstinence until marriage support traditional marriage?

Most young adults expect to get married someday. If you think that God is calling your child to the vocation of marriage, you can do many things to improve their odds of a lifelong union with their spouse. Here is a list of questions that should be discussed with your young adult. Answers to the questions have been provided so that you can help your child learn more about Catholic marriage. Each question and answer will help you guide your child past harmful relationships and prepare them for their vocation in life.

Do you think you are called to be married?

When you marry in the Catholic Church, what promises will you make to your spouse? (Spouses promise to be faithful to one another, mutually exclusive, permanent and open to children.)

What does a successful marriage look like? (The common elements of a successful marriage include; the creation of family, mutual interest, appreciation, concern, tenderness, joy and shared faith.)

What is the purpose of dating? (Dating, also known as courtship, is a time when you are deciding if this person is meant to be your spouse. It is a time to get to know the person and determine if they are trustworthy and reliable. Dating is much more than spending time with a person who makes you feel good.)

Does having sex before marriage improve your chances of staying married forever? (No. Sex before marriage does not improve the chances of a lifelong marriage. In fact, it does just the opposite. Sex before marriage leads to manipulation, bad memories that are hard to forget, shame, possible diseases and lack of trust.)

Does living together before marriage lead to a better marriage? (Contrary to popular belief, living together before marriage is not likely to strengthen your marriage or prevent a future divorce. In fact, living together before marriage is linked to a less satisfying marriage and a higher divorce risk. And the more partners you live with, the more likely you are to divorce when you do marry.)

How old should a person be before getting married? (People who get married in their teens are two to three times more likely to get divorced than people who get married in their twenties or older. This is one of the reasons why parents should not allow single dating until after the age of 16.)

Do children help spouses to stay married? (Children can help spouses stay together when the mom and dad team up to raise the child. When the parents agree on how to raise the child and back each other up, children become the common purpose of the marriage and that helps the marriage grow stronger.)

Make a Plan

For The Student

You have probably thought about marriage and have wondered if you are being called by God to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage. Here is a list of questions that will help you determine if marriage is the right vocation for you. Answer each question and then discuss your answer with your parent(s). Thinking about this now will help you prepare for your God-given vocation, avoid harmful relationships and find happiness and joy in life.

Do you think you are called to be married? Why or why not?

If you marry in the Catholic Church, what promises will you make to your spouse?

What does a successful marriage look like?

What is the purpose of dating?

Does having sex before marriage improve your chances of staying married forever?

Does living together before marriage lead to a better marriage?

How old should a person be before getting married?

Do children help spouses to stay married? Explain your answer.

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