

HOSPITALITY FOR

Unmarried and Engaged Couples

The number of couples in the US that choose to marry is declining and the number that choose to marry in the church is even fewer. We need to find new ways to invite unmarried and engaged couples into our parish communities and help them to understand God's plan for marriage and family. The parish community needs to find new and hospitable ways to evangelize couples and to promote and honor the sacrament. Marriage preparation should not be a class that happens in the year before the marriage, but an effort that starts with children's faith formation and youth ministry. We need to create in our young people an appreciation for the precious gift of marriage and family.



REFLECT

The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him. So the LORD God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the air, ...but none proved to be a helper suited to the man. So the LORD God ... took out one of his ribs ... and 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; ... That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. [Genesis 2:18-25](#)

The Lord, wishing to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on married love, has restored, perfected, and elevated it. A love like that, bringing together the human and the divine, leads the partners to a free and mutual self-giving, experienced in tenderness and action, and permeating their entire lives; this love is actually developed and increased by its generous exercise. [Gaudium et Spes, 48](#)

[Many] couples do not see the value of marrying in the Church or understand the difference between a sacramental and civil marriage. Respondents also frequently noted a negative perception of the Church's marriage preparation process (and declaration of nullity process in some cases) as being restrictive, cumbersome, and expensive. www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/strategies-promoting-marriage-church#challenges

[We] are troubled by the fact that far too many people do not understand what it means to say that marriage—both as a natural institution and a Christian sacrament—is a blessing and gift from God. We observe, for example, that some people esteem marriage as an ideal but can be reluctant to make the actual commitment necessary to enter and sustain it. Some choose instead to live in cohabiting relationships that may or may not lead to marriage and can be detrimental to the well-being of themselves and any children. www.usccb.org/resources/pastoral-letter-marriage-love-and-life-in-the-divine-plan.pdf

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is our parish a welcoming place for unmarried and engaged couples? When a couple calls or visits the parish office to inquire about getting married, how are they received?
2. What does the parish have to offer unmarried and engaged couples? What programs do we have that invite unmarried and engaged couples to explore sacramental marriages?
3. What do we do with children and teens in the parish to promote and encourage marriage?